Fathers and Sons

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF IVAN TURGENEV

Turgenev was born into the Russian noble class, to a poor cavalry officer and an heiress of a massive estate with 5,000 serfs. Though he grew up in luxury, his mother was authoritarian and sometimes cruel. He nevertheless developed a love of nature and an affection for peasant stories and lifestyles. Having grown up with international governesses, Turgenev was an avid "Westernizer" who studied in Berlin after his time at Petersburg University; he became a particularly enthusiastic student of German idealist philosopher G. W. F. Hegel. Turgenev believed that Russia would be best served by incorporating European Enlightenment ideals, and he strongly opposed the system of serfdom. He never married, but he had a lifelong affair with a French opera singer named Pauline Viardot, and he fathered an illegitimate daughter with one of his family's serfs. He has been described as the "un-Russian Russian" by some critics, the first Russian novelist to become broadly popular in Europe. *Fathers and Sons* was his masterpiece. While some were shocked by the mere depiction of Nihilism in the novel, others found the character of the nihilist Bazarov to be a libelous caricature. Unprepared for the outbreak of criticism, Turgenev considered giving up writing altogether. However, he authored a variety of novels, short fiction, including the ambitious novel *Virgin Soil*, the short story collection *Sportsman's Sketches*, and the play *A Month in the Country*.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The nihilist movement was a Russian philosophical movement that picked up steam in the 1860s, and the term was popularized by *Fathers and Sons*. Though the movement is difficult to define, its emphases included the rejection of all authorities (the Latin *nihil* means "nothing") and reliance on materialism and scientism instead of traditional principles, with an eye toward social and political transformation. Its main thinkers included Nikolai Chernyshevskii and Dmitrii Pisarev. Later, in the 1870s and 1880s, nihilism took on a politically revolutionary tone which culminated in the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, after which time nihilism was increasingly suppressed. The emancipation of the serfs, which took effect in 1861, is also mentioned several times in the novel. Serfdom was a feudal system that developed in medieval Russia; serfs could be bought or sold and lacked human rights, although they were entitled to basic protection and subsistence on their landlords' estates. The Emancipation freed millions of Russian serfs in households and on estates, granting them full citizenship for the first time, including the right to buy land.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

In the novel, the character Nikolai Kirsanov loves and quotes Alexander Pushkin, who is considered to be the founder of Russian modern literature—particularly for his novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin*, and another narrative poem, *The Gypsies*. Other Russian works from the 1860s which explore the fallout from nihilist ideas include Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and *Notes from Underground*. Turgenev's lesser-known novel *Rudin*, like *Fathers and Sons*, features reform-minded, cultured nobility who struggle to take effective action in the world. His novel *Home of the Gentry* features more of the lyrical descriptions of the Russian countryside that play such an important role in *Fathers and Sons*.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Fathers and Sons*
- **When Written:** 1860s
- **Where Written:** Russia
- **When Published:** 1862
- **Literary Period:** Realism
- **Genre:** Fiction
- **Setting:** Russia
- **Climax:** Bazarov's death
- **Antagonist:** Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov
- **Point of View:** Third person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

Nihilist Namesake. Vladimir Alexandrovich Bazarov (born Rudnev), a Marxist revolutionary, adopted the name "Bazarov" after the nihilist character in *Fathers and Sons*.

Tolstoy vs. Turgenev. In 1861, the year before *Fathers and Sons* was published, Leo Tolstoy challenged Turgenev to a duel. The challenge was apparently sparked by an argument over Turgenev's daughter, Paulette, and was thankfully patched up before the duel could take place.

PLOT SUMMARY

In 1859, 44-year-old Nikolai Petrovich Kirsanov is the owner of a modest Russian country estate. He waits at an inn for his son, Arkady, a recent graduate of Petersburg University, to arrive.

When Arkady's carriage arrives, he is accompanied by his "great friend" and mentor, whom Arkady introduces to Nikolai as Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov, a medical student. Nikolai is overjoyed to see his son, but during the journey home to Maryino, the family estate, he is conscious of a growing divide between them. When Nikolai mentions that his lover, Fenichka, has begun living in the house, he is deeply embarrassed, but Arkady reassures him, feeling proud of "his own more emancipated outlook."

When Fenichka doesn't appear at the breakfast table the next morning, Arkady rushes to introduce himself to her, but he compounds the awkwardness when he discovers that Fenichka and his father have an infant son, Mitya. When Pavel, Nikolai's sophisticated brother, joins the table, Arkady explains to his baffled father and uncle that Bazarov is a nihilist—someone who "looks at everything critically" and takes no principle for granted. When Bazarov appears, Pavel interrogates him about his rejection of all authorities, an exchange that leaves both men feeling hostile.

Over the coming weeks, Bazarov stays at Maryino, working on scientific experiments and befriending many of the servants, although he disdains Nikolai's and Pavel's backwater lifestyle and old-fashioned liberalism. Bazarov and Arkady often have philosophical arguments, too. Bazarov convinces Arkady to challenge Nikolai's love of poetry and Pushkin by encouraging him to read scientific works instead. When Arkady does, Nikolai feels hurt, musing to Pavel that he'd hoped for a closer relationship with Arkady, but that, despite his efforts to keep up with the times, they seem to have drifted too far apart. Pavel continues to pick fights with Bazarov, provoked by his repudiation of principles and institutions.

Arkady and Bazarov take a trip to the provincial town to visit Kolyazin, a politician and relative of Arkady's. They also see Sitnikov, Bazarov's shrill sycophant, and Madame Kukshin, an eccentric noblewoman who studies chemistry. Later, at the governor's ball in Kolyazin's honor, Arkady becomes infatuated with Madame Anna Odintsov, a clever young widow. Though Bazarov scoffs that "free-thinking women are monstrosities," he, too, is charmed by Anna and suggests that they go to visit her estate, Nikolskoye.

When Arkady and Bazarov visit Nikolskoye, Arkady soon finds himself dismissed to chat with Anna's shy sister, Katya, while Anna and Bazarov debate about art and human nature. During their weeks at Nikolskoye, Arkady and Bazarov drift apart as Bazarov and Anna spend more time together, and Arkady imagines himself to be pining for Anna even as he enjoys spending time in **nature** with Katya. Bazarov feels maddened by his growing attraction to Anna, thinking romance foolish and resisting her attempts to get to know him more intimately. One day, he fiercely embraces her, but she breaks away. When he apologizes, Anna says they have simply misunderstood one another. But when Sitnikov makes an awkward, uninvited visit, Arkady and a brooding Bazarov leave the estate for a visit to Bazarov's parents.

Bazarov's parents, Vassily and Arina (a retired army doctor and his wife), are overjoyed to see Bazarov for the first time in three years and welcome the pair with warm country hospitality. Vassily is undeterred by Bazarov's criticisms of his outdated medical knowledge, confiding in Arkady that he "worships" his only son. However, Bazarov is depressed about Anna and bored by country life, so they leave again within three days, leaving his parents stunned and grieving.

Back at Maryino, Bazarov immerses himself in scientific experiments again, while Arkady finds himself bored with Bazarov and restless to return to Nikolskoye. After 10 days, he hurries off to Nikolskoye on the pretext of showing Anna some old letters that her mother had once sent to Arkady's mother. When he arrives at the estate, he's surprised how delighted he feels when he first spots Katya.

In Arkady's absence, Bazarov befriends Fenichka, who likes his down-to-earth air and his advice on caring for Mitya. One day in the garden, he surprises Fenichka with a fervent kiss and resists her attempt to push him away. Pavel comes out of the bushes, having seen everything. Later that day, Pavel challenges Bazarov to a duel, and Bazarov agrees. It dawns on him that Pavel isn't fighting him on Nikolai's behalf, but that he's in love with Fenichka himself.

The next morning, they meet in a distant copse at dawn. Though they agree on the absurdity of what they're about to do, Pavel won't be deterred. Soon they're advancing toward each other with their pistols; Pavel shoots and misses, and Bazarov shoots without aiming and hits Pavel in the thigh. Bazarov immediately shifts into doctoring mode and determines the wound isn't serious, but Pavel must stay in bed for a week. Bazarov leaves Maryino the next morning, thinking, "These damned little gentry!" Privately, Pavel begs Fenichka to always love Nikolai, and he later makes Nikolai promise to marry Fenichka, no matter what the world thinks.

At Nikolskoye, Arkady's and Katya's friendship deepens. On his way to his parents', Bazarov stops by to tell Arkady what happened between him and Pavel. He adds that he and Arkady seem to have tired of one another and had better say goodbye. He later talks to Anna, and they agree that there are no hard feelings between them, and that love is "an imaginary feeling" anyway. The next day, Arkady stammers a proposal to Katya, and she happily accepts. Arkady and Bazarov bid each other farewell, Bazarov saying that Arkady isn't made for a lonely, nihilist existence, being "a good little liberal gentleman." Arkady is tearful, but he's quickly absorbed in his love for Katya.

At his parents', Bazarov isn't like himself—he seems restless and sad, and he even seeks out his father's company. Eventually he begins helping his father with the peasants' medical complaints. One day he conducts an autopsy of a typhus victim and cuts

himself. Within a few days, Bazarov is gravely ill with typhus himself. He sends for Anna. She arrives with her own doctor, who confirms that there's no hope for Bazarov's recovery. Bazarov spends his last lucid moments telling Anna how lovely she is. He dies the next day.

Six months later, Nikolai is giving a farewell dinner for Pavel, who's about to leave for Moscow on business. Last week, Nikolai and Fenichka got married, and so did Arkady and Katya. Everyone feels a little awkward and sad, but mostly happy.

Some time later, Arkady and Katya have a baby son named Nikolai. Arkady develops a passion for farming and improving Maryino, and Nikolai travels around promoting land reforms in support of the peasants. Pavel moves to Dresden, living a generous but melancholy life among Russian and English society circles. And in a remote graveyard, Vassily and Arina can often be seen weeping over Bazarov's grave, tending it with flowers that bespeak "life which has no end."

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Arkady Nikolayevich Kirsanov – Arkady is an idealistic 22-year-old Petersburg University graduate, newly returned to his home estate of Maryino, in a rural Russian province. He is the son of Nikolai and Masha. Arkady brings home his new friend and mentor, a nihilist named Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov. Arkady is attracted to Bazarov's nihilist ideas and takes a condescending attitude toward the old-fashioned views of his father and his uncle Pavel. However, he is kinder and less dismissive toward individuals than Bazarov is. He becomes infatuated with Anna Sergeyevna Odintsov, but when he visits her at her estate, he befriends her little sister Katya Sergeyevna Odintsov over a shared fondness for music and **nature**—things he represses around Bazarov. In time, his feelings for Anna fade as he realizes his affection for Katya. He desires to seek truth "closer to hand" in marriage, rather than through abstract theories like nihilism. He and Bazarov, no longer having much in common, part ways after Arkady and Katya become engaged. After marrying Katya, Arkady settles at Maryino and takes over the management of the estate. He and Katya have a son named Nikolai.

Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov – Bazarov is a self-confident young nihilist whom Arkady befriends at Petersburg University. He is the son of Vassily and Arina. Bazarov studies natural science, hoping to become a doctor, and he rejects authoritative principles in favor of a materialistic, utilitarian view of the world. When he visits Maryino with Arkady, he speaks scornfully of Nikolai's provincial ways and picks fights with Pavel. However, he gets along well with most of the servants and befriends Fenichka. Though Bazarov rejects love as imaginary and has a rather low opinion of women in general, he is attracted to Anna Sergeyevna Odintsov and enjoys debating with her. He refuses to pursue a relationship with her, since both agree that romance is foolish. However, he pines for Anna during a visit to his parents, whose doting affections he largely ignores. While visiting Maryino again, he forcefully kisses Fenichka, and Pavel challenges him to a duel as a result; he wounds Pavel and returns to his family estate, permanently parting ways with Arkady as he goes. At his parents', Bazarov is restless and unhappy, but he begins assisting his father's medical practice. He dies after contracting typhus while conducting an autopsy. His last words are to Anna, telling her how lovely she is.

Nikolai Petrovich Kirsanov – Nikolai, age 44, is a member of the Russian gentry. He was formerly married to Masha, with whom he had Arkady, and is in a relationship with Fenichka when the book begins; they have an infant son, Mitya. He owns "a respectable little property" in the provinces, consisting of a couple hundred serfs and 5,000 acres. His brother Pavel lives with him there. A progressive, Nikolai has divided up his property among his freed serfs and established a model farm. Nikolai has a romantic bent, loves observing nature, and enjoys reading the poetry of Alexander Pushkin. He looks forward to a closer relationship with Arkady and is concerned when Arkady returns home with Bazarov and nihilist ideas in tow. He dearly loves his son, however, and tries to take their deepening differences in stride. After Arkady parts ways with Bazarov and marries Katya, Nikolai reconciles with his son and shares the running of Maryino with him. Nikolai also marries Fenichka, with Pavel's blessing. He begins advocating among the peasants for land reform, although his positions are too mild for both his fellow gentry and the peasants he supports.

Pavel Petrovich Kirsanov – Pavel is Nikolai's brother, who is in his 40s, and lives on the Maryino estate with Nikolai. In his late 20s, Pavel fell in love with an eccentric woman of the aristocracy, Princess R., and resigned his military commission to follow her around Europe. Devastated after her death, he moved in with Nikolai and helps support his farm. Even though he lives in rural Russia and rarely goes into society, he dresses with impeccable style and is an Anglophile. Pavel, who considers himself a cultured progressive, can't stand Bazarov's nihilist pretensions and he repeatedly picks fights with the boy. Later, when he sees Bazarov kissing Fenichka (who reminds him of Princess R.), he challenges Bazarov to a duel, but is wounded himself. After he recovers, he urges Nikolai to marry Fenichka and eventually goes abroad himself, settling in Dresden.

Madame Anna Sergeyevna Odintsov – Anna Odintsov is a clever, wealthy young widow whom Arkady and Bazarov meet at Kolyazin's ball. Both men quickly become infatuated with her. Anna and her younger sister, Katya, were orphaned by a nobleman who ruined himself by gambling. Later, Anna married an eccentric, wealthy hypochondriac of 46, inheriting his

estate, Nikolskoye, after his death. She has always been subject to rumors because of her unusual marriage. Anna is kind but imposing, taking a sisterly attitude toward Arkady and engaging in intellectual debates with Bazarov. She has never had a clear goal in life and thus never feels satisfied; she has also never fallen in love, and when she and Bazarov are attracted to each other, she accepts his explanation that love is meaningless. Despite his unkindness, she hurries to Bazarov's bedside when he's dying. She later marries a young lawyer whom she might someday be able to love.

Katya Odintsov – Katya is Anna Odintsov's younger sister, age 18. Dominated by her sister and guardian, Katya is very shy and reserved. She spends most of her time playing the piano or playing with her dog, Fifi. She and Arkady develop a friendship over their shared fondness for music and **nature**. Arkady is able to see that Katya is proud and independent in her own way, and Katya recognizes that Arkady doesn't fit into Bazarov's world before Arkady even realizes this. Arkady slowly transforms under Katya's influence from a would-be nihilist radical to the more conventional, tender-hearted gentleman underneath. Katya and Arkady marry and have a son, Nikolai, settling on the Kirsanov estate of Maryino. She and Fenichka become good friends.

Fedosya Nikolayevna (Fenichka) – Fenichka is Nikolai's lover and the mother of his son Mitya. She is 23 years old, a delicate-looking young woman. She joined the household when Nikolai hired her mother as his housekeeper. After her mother died, Fenichka remained, and Nikolai fell in love. Nikolai is embarrassed about their irregular relationship, and Fenichka hides from Arkady at first out of shame. She befriends Bazarov because he's down-to-earth and good with Mitya. When Bazarov forcefully kisses her, however, she rejects him, and Pavel, seeing this, fights a duel with Bazarov over it. (Fenichka reminds Pavel of his only love, Princess R., and he is attracted to her as a result.) Later, Fenichka and Nikolai marry. She and Katya become good friends.

Vassily Ivanych Bazarov – Vassily is Arina's husband and Bazarov's father. He is an emotional, well-read, talkative, and hospitable rural gentleman. Vassily is a retired army doctor who now runs a country farm and doctors peasants on the side. He fiercely loves his son, and his life's ambition has been for Bazarov to fulfill his potential and become successful and famous. When Bazarov moves back home after years away, Vassily is overjoyed to have his son's assistance in his medical practice, but is troubled by his apparent unhappiness. He is in denial and heartbroken when Bazarov dies of typhus.

Arina Vlassyevna Bazarov – Arina is Vassily's devoted wife and Bazarov's doting mother. She is an "old school" Russian gentlewoman, devout, superstitious, and a believer in the firm distinction between gentry and peasant. She is also kind-hearted and an intelligent conversationalist. Arkady is won over by her charms, but Bazarov is slow to appreciate her maternal devotion. She is devastated when her "little Yevgeny" dies of typhus.

Victor Sitnikov – Sitnikov is an elegant, rather shrill, self-proclaimed "disciple" of Bazarov. He likes to move in the most fashionable circles in society. He introduces Arkady and Bazarov to Madame Kukshin and Madame Odintsov. When he shows up uninvited at Nikolskoye, however, the other two men abandon him, Bazarov rejecting him as a "lout."

Masha Prepolovensky – Masha was Nikolai's first wife and Arkady's mother who does not appear in the story. She was the daughter of Nikolai's landlord, and they fell in love, enjoying a blissful life for a little more than a decade before her premature death. Nikolai was devastated by her death and reminisces vividly of her in his later years. She was also friends with Anna Odintsov's mother.

Princess R. (Nellie) – Princess R. was an eccentric, inscrutable Russian aristocrat with whom Pavel fell helplessly in love in his youth. She was both a frivolous partier in society and tearfully devout in private. Pavel followed Princess R. around Europe for many years and was devastated for life by her premature death. Fenichka looks something like Princess R.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Piotr – Piotr is Nikolai's young servant. His "single turquoise ear-ring," dyed hair, and "mincing gait" mark him as a man of "the advanced modern generation." He also refuses to kiss his employer's hand, unlike the older servants. Piotr is the only witness to Bazarov's and Pavel's duel.

Matvei Ilyich Kolyazin – Kolyazin, 40, is a governmental privy councilor and a relative of the Kirsanovs. He is an up-and-coming politician and a progressive, vain and sly but good-natured. Arkady and Bazarov meet Anna Sergeyevna Odintsov when they attend a ball in Kolyazin's honor.

Madame Yevdoxia Kukshin – Madame Kukshin is an "advanced" young woman whom Sitnikov introduces to Bazarov and Arkady. She is separated from her husband, rather plain and disheveled-looking, and always on edge. She studies chemistry as a hobby and has invented unbreakable dolls' heads. Later she goes to Germany to study architecture.

Prokofyich – Prokofyich is an old-school servant in the Kirsanov household. He dislikes Bazarov.

Mitya – Mitya is the infant son of Nikolai and Fenichka, and Arkady's much younger half-brother.

Father Alexei – Father Alexei is Vassily and Arina's good-natured parish priest. He drinks wine and plays cards with Bazarov and Arkady.

TERMS

Nihilism – The nihilist movement (in Latin, *nihil* means "nothing") was a Russian philosophical movement that picked up steam in the 1860s, and the term was popularized by *Fathers and Sons*. Though the movement is difficult to define, its emphases included the rejection of all authorities and traditional institutions (such as marriage, the church, and governmental structures) and reliance on materialism and scientism, with an eventual goal of social and political transformation. Bazarov's nihilism is characterized by a particular disdain for the views of old-fashioned progressives who debated issues such as the oppression of the serfs but were, according to nihilists, insufficiently revolutionary in their actions.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

TRADITION AND PROGRESS

At the beginning of *Fathers and Sons*, Ivan Turgenev's controversial novel examining the tensions underlying 19th-century Russia, the stage is set for an explosive inter-generational conflict. This will be between Arkady and his mentor Bazarov, who are youthful "nihilists," and Arkady's father and uncle, tradition-minded gentry who see themselves as educated and progressive. While the novel was controversial just for entertaining nihilist ideas (which Turgenev's characters define as a rejection of all inherited principles), Turgenev actually undermines the utility of nihilism throughout the novel, before decisively rejecting it at the conclusion. Turgenev does this by portraying the nihilist Bazarov's life as a tragic failure, and portraying Arkady's family as ultimately happier—and more useful to Russia's progress—because of its embrace of inherited tradition. By contrasting the characters' lives in this way, Turgenev argues that, contrary to nihilist beliefs, individuals and society cannot meaningfully function without embracing tradition.

The younger generation's nihilism is nonsensical even to Arkady's relatively progressive father and uncle; they see it as antithetical to being "Russian" and thus unworkable for society. When Arkady explains Bazarov's nihilism to his family, they see it as an embrace of essentially "nothing." Nikolai points out that the word "nihilist" is derived from the Latin word "*nihil*," meaning "nothing," and Pavel adds that a nihilist "respects nothing." In response, Arkady claims that a nihilist simply "looks at everything critically" and "does not take any principle for granted." When Pavel asks whether such a position is necessarily a good thing, the most Arkady can say is that it's good for some people and bad for others. He doesn't have a clear vision for how nihilism can benefit society as a whole.

Pavel charges Bazarov with "living outside human society" and being un-Russian in his refusal to recognize principles. Russians, he argues, "hold tradition sacred, they are a patriarchal people—they cannot live without faith…" In other words, the essence of being Russian is to uphold traditional principles of patriarchal rule and religion, and submit to the authorities cherished by one's forebears. Bazarov argues in response, "We saw that our clever men, our so-called progressives and reformers never accomplished anything, that we were concerning ourselves with a lot of nonsense, […] while all the time the real question was getting daily bread to eat, when the most vulgar superstitions are stifling us..." Bazarov, then, doesn't hold any part of society sacred. While reformers occupy themselves with abstract questions, peasants are too superstitious and self-indulgent to make use of whatever freedoms they gain under reformist policies. He doesn't care if his outlook is properly "Russian" or not, since that, too, is presumably a meaningless construct.

The end of Bazarov's life is a failed search for meaning, even though he doesn't recognize or acknowledge that he's searching for something. After Arkady's engagement, Bazarov, having rejected his own chance at love, returns to his parents' home, but he quickly finds himself restless—his nihilistic mindset and rejection of tradition has left him in a state of meaningless unfulfillment. When Bazarov contracts a typhus infection in a moment of carelessness, his parents assure him that he'll be cured, but he won't hear of it: "You and mother must now fall back on your strong religious faith; here's an opportunity of putting it to the test." Bazarov speaks of his impending death as just another opportunity to do an experiment—his parents can find out if their faith can withstand sorrow or not.

Beginning to sink into delirium, Bazarov bids farewell to his would-be love, Anna Sergeyevna, saying, "My father will tell you what a loss I shall be to Russia . . . That's bosh, but don't disillusion the old man. […] And who is needed? The cobbler's needed, the tailor's needed, the butcher..." Ironically, Bazarov begins to acknowledge the emptiness of his own outlook just as his life begins to give way to nothingness. In contrast to his earlier confidence that "the times we live in […] should depend upon me," now Bazarov suspects that it's actually ordinary tradesmen who are the backbone of Russia and its best hope. His alleged greatness, then, is only valuable insofar as it might bring some comfort to his devoted parents. Thus, in contrast to his rejection of inherited tradition, he finds meaning in his death primarily in reference to his very traditional family.

At the end of the novel, things improve at Arkady's estate of

Maryino, which was initially falling into disrepair. This only happens after Arkady has tacitly rejected his former mentor's nihilism and embraced traditional patterns of living. On this traditional foundation, progress has a fighting chance, too, albeit a halting one.Earlier, Bazarov mocked Arkady for choosing to marry, and Arkady's marriage marked the end of their friendship. Bazarov says, "Your sort, the gentry, can never go farther than well-bred resignation or well-bred indignation, and that's futile." Bazarov sees Arkady's marriage as nothing more than filling the "empty space" in his life with marriage; there's no inherent goodness or meaning in the institution. But it's only after marriage that Arkady's life takes on a definite form and direction, as he takes an interest in the practical work of improving the farm—work which Bazarov would have earlier dismissed as useless. By ending the novel with Nikolai's somewhat ineffectual but well-intentioned land reforms, not with Bazarov's nihilism, Turgenev suggests that Russian society must find its way forward through more gradual measures, not radical ones that reject tradition.

By portraying Arkady's life as ultimately conforming more and more to traditional Russian structures, and by portraying Bazarov's more radical life as ultimately an empty tragedy, Turgenev finally repudiates nihilism as a harmful, ineffective way of viewing the world and argues that tradition plays an important role in the health of society.

NATURE VS. MATERIALISM

Arkady Kirsanov's nihilist mentor, Yevgeny Bazarov, holds that "**Nature** is not a temple, but a workshop." As Bazarov and Arkady wrestle with questions regarding the nature of human life, Bazarov consistently views nature as a mechanistic force—something that can be understood through formulas and controlled through scientific methods. This view has implications for his view of human beings and society, which are, to him, just expressions of mechanical nature. But by portraying nature itself as a character whose vitality suffuses the story—alongside and in spite of humans' abstract reasonings about it—Turgenev argues that nature cannot be reduced to a mere mechanical force, but must be respected as mysterious and life-giving in its own right.

Bazarov has a mechanistic conception of nature, and this conception of nature extends to his understanding of human beings and society. Visiting Arkady's father, the two young men discuss the nature of reality while gazing at a sunset. Bazarov asserts, "What is important is that two and two make four, and the rest is just trivial." When Arkady suggests that nature might have some significance, Bazarov retorts, "Nature, too, is trivial, in the sense you give to it. Nature is not a temple, but a workshop, and man's the workman in it." Turgenev's image of the "beautiful" fields in the sunset is intentional. Arkady senses that there is something more to natural beauty than mere math, but for Bazarov, nature can be studied and even mastered according to human whims.

Bazarov's mechanistic view of nature extends to his understanding of human beings. He tells Anna Sergeyevna that it's not worth studying human beings individually: "All men are similar [...] Each of us has a brain, spleen, heart and lungs of similar construction; and the so-called moral qualities are the same in all of us." In other words, even human beings are reducible to their constituent parts and have no unique, inherent value that's worth examining. When Anna Sergeyevna asks if there's no difference, then, between good and bad people, Bazarov explains, "We know more or less what causes physical ailments; and moral diseases are caused by the wrong sort of education, by all the rubbish people's heads are stuffed with [...] Reform society and there will be no diseases." In other words, Bazarov's mechanistic view of humanity and society means that, if only people are educated properly, moral disorder will be taken care of; there's no need to account for differences in human character. Here, as before, nature can be reduced to a mathematical formula or a method.

In contrast to this mechanistic view of nature, throughout the novel, nature is often portrayed as almost a character in itself—a character closely tied to the human yearnings commonly expressed through poetry and art. Nature is so full of inherent life and poetic meaning that it frequently disrupts human attempts to reason in material terms, no matter how one tries to resist its power. This is demonstrated when Nikolai, while admiring his estate's natural beauty, muses about Arkady's new principles: "'But to reject poetry, to have no feeling for art, for nature?' [...] O Lord, how beautiful it is!' [...] and his favourite verses almost rose to his lips when he remembered [Arkady]—and he restrained himself." For Nikolai, the beauty of his farm exerts a strong spiritual pull, prompting him to recite poetry, and he has to consciously refrain from indulging that impulse, thinking it pulls him away from his materialistically-minded son.

Even when Pavel challenges Bazarov to a duel one morning, nature carries on as exultantly as it always does: "It was a glorious fresh morning; tiny mottled cloudlets hovered overhead like fleecy lambs in the clear blue sky; fine beads of dew [...] sparkled like silver on the spiders' webs; [...] in every quarter of the heavens the larks poured out their song." Despite Bazarov's materialistic claims and the foolish antipathy of the two men, nature carries on with irrepressible life and richness. This suggests that, despite flawed human nature, nature remains beautiful and self-sustaining in its own right.

Finally, nature, with all its persistent vitality, has the last word in the novel, outliving Bazarov himself. After Bazarov dies of typhus, his parents regularly visit his grave and weep: "However passionate, sinful and rebellious the heart hidden in the tomb, the flowers growing over it [...] speak to us not only of eternal peace, of the vast repose of 'indifferent' nature: they

tell us, too, of everlasting reconciliation and of life which has no end." Contrary to what Bazarov had maintained during his life, nature is not "indifferent," Turgenev argues; in fact, it outlasts human lives with their self-importance, hinting at a life that transcends human limitations. In other words, it's the opposite of the mechanistic force Bazarov tries to master during his own short life—a self-renewing phenomenon that even hints at a spiritual life outlasting the grave.

LOVE VS. NIHILISM

In *Fathers and Sons*, Bazarov says, "A decent chemist is twenty times more useful than any poet." Bazarov's scientific and nihilistic worldview doesn't leave any room for the romantic as a genuine or useful phenomenon. His protégé, Arkady, agrees with him at first, but over the course of the novel, the young men's interactions with the sisters Anna and Katya Sergeyevna begin to challenge their outlooks on love, and they respond differently, with consequences for the future course of their lives. By portraying romance as the thing that finally drives a wedge between Arkady and Bazarov, Turgenev argues that love is far more valuable than Bazarov's nihilistic, materialistic worldview.

Bazarov refuses to admit that romance is a real phenomenon, reflecting the nihilistic belief that relationships are meaningless, superficial displays. When Arkady tells Bazarov about the romantic heartbreak that has dogged his uncle Pavel's life, Bazarov retorts, "…[W]hat are these mysterious relations between a man and a woman? […] That's all romantic rot, mouldy aesthetics. We had much better go and inspect that beetle." In other words, human relations, including alleged romance, are reducible to scientific observations; any claim to the contrary is "rot," and one makes better use of one's time by studying an insect specimen than by speculating about love.

Although spending time with Anna Sergeyevna, an "emancipated" noblewoman, awakens romantic feelings in Bazarov, he fights these emotions, as his feelings for her "at once tortured and maddened him, and […] he would promptly have denied [them] with scornful laughter and cynical abuse." Because he's so committed to the belief that relationships are merely physiological phenomena, he refuses to make room in his life for romantic feelings when they emerge naturally.

Anna is also somewhat of a nihilist, even if she doesn't identify herself as such. She refuses to acknowledge that she loves Bazarov: "The pressure of various vague emotions [had] […] forced her to look behind her—and there she had seen not even an abyss but only a void…chaos without shape." Even though Anna doesn't call herself a nihilist, the haunting presence of this shapeless "abyss" hints at the emptiness of a way of life that doesn't grant love's reality.

Later, Bazarov speaks to Anna Sergeyevna about their past feelings for one another, agreeing to let that "dream" fade into the past, since love "is a purely imaginary feeling." Both "believed they were speaking the truth. Was the truth, the whole truth, to be found in their words? They themselves did not know […] each appeared to have complete faith in the other." This suggests that, despite their shared nihilism and their attempts to deny love on that basis, love is still a natural, inevitable force that affects both Bazarov and Anna regardless.

Arkady's growing affection for Anna Sergeyevna's younger sister, Katya, begins to wear down his nihilism rather than reinforce it. Consequently, this challenges his blind devotion to Bazarov. When Arkady grows disenchanted with Bazarov, he finds himself thinking of Katya instead. Just 10 days later, he abandons Bazarov, galloping off to rejoin Anna and Katya. This sudden gesture of independence shows both Arkady's emergence from his nihilistic mentor's shadow and the romantic feelings that won't be repressed, even though he hasn't yet admitted his love for Katya.

Katya's loving influence tangibly changes Arkady, both in mindset and appearance—suggesting that love is a transformative influence in people's lives, even when they've erected philosophical barriers against it. As they spend most of their time together at her estate, Katya observes that Arkady is no longer under Bazarov's influence: "He's a wild beast, while you and I are domestic animals." Though Arkady protests, he soon acknowledges that Katya has tamed him, particularly by forcing him to acknowledge the reality of romantic love.

Proposing to Katya, Arkady asserts, "I still want to devote all my energies to the pursuit of truth; but I can no longer seek my ideal where I did before; I perceive it now . . . much closer to hand. […] My eyes have recently been opened, thanks to a certain emotion…" In other words, in his friendship with Bazarov, Arkady's search for truth was fruitless. "A certain emotion"—love—was necessary in order for him to seek truth rightly, and only by opening himself to love's existence—at a distance from Bazarov—could he realize this.

Later, when Bazarov learns of the couple's engagement, he agrees that Arkady has changed: "It strikes me that you have parted from me already. You look so spruce and smart […]A romantic would say, 'I feel our paths are beginning to diverge,' but I will simply say that we are tired of each other." Arkady's newfound love has even transformed his appearance. But Bazarov doesn't attribute much importance to this transformation or the resultant parting of ways—the two friends are bored with each other, that's all. There's still no room in Bazarov's outlook for love.

On his deathbed, when Bazarov summons Anna to his bedside, he can't quite admit that he loves her: "Love is a form, and my particular form is already disintegrating. Better let me say—how lovely you are!" Yet even this could be read as a concession on Bazarov's part—a person can embody "loveliness" even if love isn't a self-existent phenomenon. And six months later, two weddings occur at Arkady's home estate:

Arkady's and Katya's and his father's marriage to his longtime lover, Fenichka. The conclusion of the novel with weddings decisively confirms Turgenev's argument in favor of romance as something real, a more enduring and life-affirming philosophy than nihilism.

GENERATIONAL CONFLICT

At the beginning of *Fathers and Sons*, both Arkady and Bazarov are reunited with their parents after years away, and both struggle to come to terms with the contrast between their university-educated, cutting-edge outlook on life and the more traditional ways still embraced by their families of origin. While Arkady initially feels superior and thinks it's up to him to transform his father Nikolai's way of life, by the end he's assimilated back into his father's household, and his family is thriving. Bazarov, however, resists such adaptation and dies unhappily, his family line dying out. Through this contrast between two episodes of generational conflict, Turgenev argues that families experience healthy growth when there is an attempt to negotiate and assimilate generational differences, whereas an attempt to make a clean break, as Bazarov does, is ultimately fruitless.

At the beginning of the novel, Arkady enjoys his newfound sense of educated superiority over his father, which ultimately creates a rift between them. When his father feels awkward about his lover, Fenichka, having moved in with him, Arkady responds in a rather condescending way, experiencing "a feeling of indulgent tenderness for his good, kind father, though mixed with a secret sense of superiority." Arkady enjoys the position of being "enlightened" and allowing for his father's choices. When Arkady catches sight of his father's properties, his "heart [sinks]" and he thinks, "It just can't go on like this: this must all be transformed…but how are we to do it, how should we begin?" Arkady's reaction is symbolic of his overall perception of his father as backward, or at least as insufficiently progressive—his life has to be transformed, and Arkady is the one to do it.

Nikolai is distressed by the gulf that has opened between himself and his son, especially given his own attempts to remain informed and supportive of progress: "I have done well by the peasants, set up a model farm, so that all over the province I am known as a *radical* […] and yet here they are saying I'm over and done with." Nikolai goes on to relate that, as he was reading Pushkin, Arkady had come up to him and, "with an affectionate look of pity on his face," taken away the copy of Pushkin and handed him *Stoff und Kraft*, a 19th-century work of scientific materialism. The young son's attempts to educate his father feel hurtful to Nikolai, especially given Nikolai's efforts to go above and beyond to understand his son and keep up with developing ideas. The result is deepened alienation, not the closer relationship he's longed for.

When Arkady and Bazarov visit Bazarov's parents, a village doctor and his wife, Bazarov notices that his parents' less "advanced" lives have something that he lacks. Bazarov's refusal to compromise on the generational differences between himself and his parents does not lead to a better life for him—rather, it only makes him more aware of the void in his life.

Arina Vlassyevna, Bazarov's mother, is portrayed as the epitome of "old school" devoutness and superstition, but nonetheless a treasure: she "was a true Russian gentlewoman […] Nowadays such women as she have ceased to exist. Heaven only knows whether this should be a matter for rejoicing!" In other words, Arina doesn't fully belong in Russia as it's emerging in the modern world, but as women like her fade into history, Russia loses something essential to its culture, too.

Bazarov acknowledges that his philosophically consumed life compares poorly to his parents' happier one. "I'm thinking what a happy life my parents lead!" he tells Arkady. "[M]y parents […] are so busy, they don't worry about their own insignificance. It doesn't stick in their throat . . . whereas I . . . I feel nothing but depression and rancour." Even Bazarov, then, who scorns much of his parents' lifestyle and never overcomes a sense of estrangement from them before he dies, can't help seeing that his rejection of their approach to life has cost him something he can't regain—namely, the sense of purpose and contentment that comes of managing a household and embodying traditional roles.

Arkady is able to integrate back into his father's lifestyle and enjoy a harmonious life by his side, while a listless Bazarov refuses to fit in and ultimately dies. This ultimately demonstrates the importance of respecting and assimilating with one's family, rather than resisting generational differences. By the end of the novel, Arkady falls in love with Katya, marries, and moves home to Maryino, his father's estate, to assist Nikolai in modernizing the farm. His own family begins to blossom alongside Nikolai's, who has a new wife and young child himself. Arkady's acceptance of Nikolai and integration into the traditional family structure ultimately allows him to live a meaningful life and continue his familial line.

Bazarov, by contrast, dies in his parents' home, having never become comfortable there. Although Bazarov expresses appreciation for them on his deathbed, his parents are left to grieve their only child, and Bazarov's nihilism symbolically dies, too, without being passed on to a future generation. Fittingly, then, given Turgenev's favoring of Arkady, Arkady's family shows promise of thriving twice as much as before—two weddings conclude the book, and both marriages yield sons of their own. This fruitfulness suggests that the effort to struggle with and assimilate generational differences, as painful and disruptive as the process might be, is ultimately healthy for families, strengthening them for generations to come.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

NATURE

In *Fathers and Sons*, nature symbolizes the enduring, irrepressible vitality of the world. Turgenev uses nature in this way as a pointed critique of nihilism, which views the natural world as a mechanical force that can be dissected and used at will. The latter view is summed up when Bazarov tells Arkady, "nature is not a temple, but a workshop, and man's the workman in it." Bazarov embodies this perspective throughout the story as he dissects frogs, studies beetles, and regards human beings as specimens, not as individuals worth knowing and loving. However, Turgenev often uses moving descriptions of the natural world to implicitly mock such an outlook, as when Nikolai Kirsanov gazes across his fields: "a few late-homing bees hummed lazily and drowsily among the lilac; swarms of midges hung like a cloud over a single far-projecting branch. 'O Lord, how beautiful it is!' [he] thought," even as he recalls Arkady's foolish attempt to school him in materialist writings. Nature is even awarded the novel's final word, as the flowers decorating Bazarov's grave declare that life is in some sense eternal, defying scientific understanding: "the vast repose of 'indifferent' nature [tells] us, too, of everlasting reconciliation and of life which has no end."

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin edition of *Fathers and Sons* published in 1965.

Chapter 1 Quotes

Husband and wife lived very comfortably and quietly: they were hardly ever apart—they read together, sang and played duets together at the piano; she grew flowers and looked after the chickens, while he went hunting now and again and busied himself with the estate, and Arkady grew and grew—comfortably and quietly like his parents. Ten years passed like a dream. In 1847 Kirsanov's wife died. The blow nearly killed him and in a few weeks his hair turned grey. In the hope of somewhat distracting his thoughts he decided to go abroad . . . but then came the year 1848. Reluctantly he returned to the country and after a fairly prolonged period of inactivity he set about improving the management of his estate. In 1855 Nikolai Petrovich brought his son to the University; he spent three winters with him in Petersburg, seldom going out anywhere and trying to make friends with Arkady's youthful fellow students. But this last winter he had not been able to go to Petersburg, and so we meet him, quite grey now, stoutish and a trifle bent, in this month of May 1859, waiting for the arrival of his son, who has just taken his degree as once he himself had done.

Related Characters: Arkady Nikolayevich Kirsanov, Masha Prepolovensky, Nikolai Petrovich Kirsanov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 75

Explanation and Analysis

This quote introduces the background of Nikolai Kirsanov, the primary father among the father-son pairings that are explored throughout *Fathers and Sons*. It shows how Nikolai's life has been, in a certain way, a series of ambitions frustrated by tragedy and revolution. He and his wife, Masha, lived an idyllic, dreamlike existence in the country, seeking nothing but the enjoyment of one another's company and the flourishing of their son, Arkady. But Masha's death shattered the dream and forced Nikolai to reorient his entire life. Toward that end, he considered going abroad, but revolutions broke out in many European nations during 1848, thwarting his ambition to start fresh. So he resigned himself to a quiet farming life while pouring himself into supporting his son. Not only did he put Arkady through university, but Nikolai sought to remain an active presence in Arkady's life, keeping step with Arkady's interests and, perhaps, hoping to shape Arkady's ambitions in light of the way his own have been cut short. Now that Arkady has graduated and is returning home, Nikolai hopes they'll run the estate together. He is unprepared for the way Arkady's newfound convictions and ambitions will once again thwart his own hopes for the future. Thus this quote

sets up a perennial struggle that will be explored as the story goes on—the ways that generations strive with one another in light of shifting, often conflicting views and desires for the world around them.

Chapter 3 Quotes

"Of course I ought to be ashamed," Nikolai Petrovich replied, turning redder and redder.

"Stop, papa, stop, I implore you!" Arkady exclaimed, smiling affectionately. "What a thing to apologize for!" he thought to himself, and his heart was filled with a feeling of indulgent tenderness for his good, kind father, though mixed with a secret sense of superiority. "Please don't," he repeated again, unable to resist a conscious enjoyment of his own more emancipated outlook.

Nikolai Petrovich glanced at him through the fingers of the hand with which he was still rubbing his forehead and something seemed to stab his heart . . . But he immediately reproached himself for it.

Related Characters: Arkady Nikolayevich Kirsanov, Nikolai Petrovich Kirsanov (speaker), Fedosya Nikolayevna (Fenichka)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 82

Explanation and Analysis

As Nikolai and Arkady journey home together for the first time since Arkady graduated from Petersburg University, Nikolai admits to his son that his lover, Fenichka—who is Arkady's age and with whom, unbeknownst to Arkady, Nikolai already has an infant son—is now living with him. Arkady reacts with "indulgent tenderness" to his father's old-fashioned scruples. This quote is interesting because it sheds light on the nature of their generational divide. Nikolai is sufficiently "progressive" that he enters into a rather non-traditional relationship, yet he is still embarrassed to carry on such a relationship openly, especially in front of his son. Arkady thinks such awkwardness is unnecessary and takes pleasure in the fact that he can reassure and console his father in this regard. Arkady's pleasure in being more "emancipated" isn't lost on Nikolai, and to him it foreshadows a deeper divide between the two of them—something that evokes a sense of loss for which he "reproaches" himself. This both sums up the complexity of the divide between them and sets the tone for the discomfort the two will navigate through in the coming months.

Chapter 5 Quotes

"What is Bazarov?" Arkady smiled. "Would you like me to tell you, uncle, what he is exactly?"

"Please do, nephew."

"He is a nihilist!"

"A what?" asked Nikolai Petrovich, while his brother lifted his knife in the air with a small piece of butter on the tip and remained motionless.

"He is a nihilist," repeated Arkady.

"A nihilist," said Nikolai Petrovich. "That comes from the Latin *nihil* - nothing, I imagine; the term must signify a man who . . . who recognizes nothing?"

"Say - who respects nothing," put in Pavel Petrovich, and set to work with the butter again.

"Who looks at everything critically," observed Arkady.

"Isn't that exactly the same thing?" asked Pavel Petrovich.

"No, it's not the same thing. A nihilist is a person who does not take any principle for granted, however much that principle may be revered."

Related Characters: Nikolai Petrovich Kirsanov, Pavel Petrovich Kirsanov , Arkady Nikolayevich Kirsanov (speaker), Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 94

Explanation and Analysis

The morning after Arkady arrives home from university with Bazarov as his guest, he introduces Bazarov's nihilist principles to his father and uncle. Nihilism was a school of thought that was newly emergent in Russia at the time *Fathers and Sons* was written in 1862. It held that all authorities should be rejected and that only what was useful and rational should be retained; social institutions should be torn down in order to make way for a society structured on such utilitarian ideas. By placing Arkady's announcement in the midst of a peaceful, domestic scene at the breakfast table, Turgenev effectively recreates the bombshell feeling of such radical perspectives emerging in Russian society—even among well-mannered, upper-class society that fancied itself to be reasonably progressive. Uncle Pavel's polite bafflement, butter knife in the air, no doubt echoes the reactions of many readers at the time, too.

Thus Turgenev's exploration isn't primarily meant to explore the particular tenets of nihilism itself, but the conflicts engendered by new ideas. Indeed, many readers of *Fathers and Sons* weren't particularly happy with Turgenev's portrayal of nihilism in itself—some radical thinkers found Bazarov to be a libelously unlikeable figure, while others found the articulation of nihilist ideas offensive in itself.

Chapter 7 Quotes

"But remember the sort of education he had, the period in which he grew up," Arkady rejoined.

"The sort of education he had!" Bazarov exclaimed. "Everyone ought to educate himself—as I've done, for instance . . . And as to the times we live in, why should I depend upon them? Much better they should depend upon me. No, my dear fellow, all that is just empty thinking! And what are these mysterious relations between a man and a woman? We physiologists know what they are. You study the anatomy of the eye; and where does that enigmatic look you talk about come in? That's all romantic rot, mouldy aesthetics. We had much better go and inspect that beetle."

Related Characters: Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov, Arkady Nikolayevich Kirsanov (speaker), Pavel Petrovich Kirsanov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 105

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Arkady has just finished giving Bazarov his uncle Pavel's personal history, believing that Bazarov wouldn't give Pavel such a hard time about his "outdated" beliefs if he understood a little something about how difficult Pavel's life has been. In particular, Pavel has wasted much of his adult life pining for a woman he had loved and followed around Europe in his youth, but who'd become nearly insane and died after rejecting him. Contrary to Arkady's expectations, Bazarov doesn't see Pavel's personal history as having any mitigating effect on his outlook or the way he should be treated. Bazarov maintains that, like himself, each person has a responsibility to educate him- or herself according to the theories of the times. Furthermore, it's useless to waste one's life on romance, which has no inherent meaning; it's just a ridiculous interpretation of sensations that are reducible to the study of anatomy or physiology. Because of that, time is much better spent examining a beetle specimen than pondering someone's history. While this sounds amazingly dismissive, it fits into Bazarov's overall materialist outlook, which only prizes what's scientifically measurable and useful to society.

Chapter 9 Quotes

"And there's no doubt these good peasants are taking your father in properly: you know the saying – 'the Russian peasant will get the better of God himself.'"

"I begin to agree with my uncle," remarked Arkady. "You certainly have a poor opinion of Russians."

"As if that mattered! The only good thing about a Russian is the poor opinion he has of himself. What is important is that two and two make four, and the rest is just trivial."

"And is nature trivial?" said Arkady, staring thoughtfully at the parti-coloured fields in the distance, beautiful in the soft light of the setting sun.

"Nature, too, is trivial, in the sense you give to it. Nature is not a temple, but a workshop, and man's the workman in it."

Related Characters: Arkady Nikolayevich Kirsanov, Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov (speaker), Nikolai Petrovich Kirsanov

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 116

Explanation and Analysis

Nature has a recurrent role in *Fathers and Sons*, particularly at moments of personal or intergenerational conflict. Here, Arkady and Bazarov have just been discussing Bazarov's nihilist views—in such debates Bazarov typically gets the upper hand. Yet Arkady is shown to be far more sensitive and responsive to his natural surroundings. Even as Bazarov critiques the idea that anything beyond what's mathematically provable has significance, Arkady notices the beauty of the surrounding landscape and isn't ready to reject the idea that nature has significance in its own right. Bazarov, by contrast, believes that nature has significance only insofar as humans make something of it, imputing meaning to it through their transformative efforts—hence nature "is not a temple, but a workshop." This point of view fits with Bazarov's overall downplaying of the particulars of human nature—human beings' feelings and experiences are mostly reducible to chemical reactions, so the nature world, too, is best understood by being broken down into its constituent parts, not by imputing some transcendent meaning to the whole.

Chapter 10 Quotes

"We saw that our clever men, our so-called progressives and reformers never accomplished anything, that we were concerning ourselves with a lot of nonsense, discussing art, unconscious creative work, parliamentarianism, the bar, and the devil knows what, while all the time the real question was getting daily bread to eat, when the most vulgar superstitions are stifling us, when our industrial enterprises come to grief solely for want of honest men at the top, when even the emancipation of the serfs - the emancipation the government is making such a fuss about - is not likely to be to our advantage, since those peasants of ours are only too glad to rob even themselves to drink themselves silly at the gin-shop."

Related Characters: Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov (speaker), Pavel Petrovich Kirsanov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 126

Explanation and Analysis

Here Bazarov is debating with Pavel about Pavel's old-style progressive views versus the nihilist views that were gaining currency among university students at the time. Part of the conflict has to do with the self-conception of Pavel's generation as being reform-minded and progressive—for example, being concerned for the emancipation of the serfs (a reform that went into effect just before *Fathers and Sons* was published, in 1861), reforming government and law such that serfs could enjoy full citizenship, and creating art to help promote these aims. Bazarov's views flatly undercut that self-conception. Bazarov sees such progressives—"clever men" like Pavel himself—as never having achieved anything worthwhile, as simply discussing ideas endlessly without actually achieving lasting changes in society. He also sees the peasant class as being too burdened with superstition and other vices to make the best use of whatever freedoms the emancipation movement might afford them. While it's not unusual for a younger man to critique the older generation's insufficiently radical reforms in this way, Bazarov's nihilism is uniquely jarring because of its impulse to destroy existing structures rather than reform them.

Chapter 11 Quotes

The rays of the sun on the farther side fell full on the clump of trees and, piercing their foliage, threw such a warm light on the aspen trunks that they looked like pines and their leaves were almost dark blue, while above them rose an azure sky, tinged by the red glow of sunset. Swallows flew high; the wind had quite died down; a few late-homing bees hummed lazily and drowsily among the lilac; swarms of midges hung like a cloud over a single far-projecting branch. "O Lord, how beautiful it is!" thought Nikolai Petrovich, and his favourite verses almost rose to his lips when he remembered Arkady's *Stoff und Kraft* - and he restrained himself; but he still sat there, surrendering himself to the mournful consolation of solitary thought.

Related Characters: Arkady Nikolayevich Kirsanov, Nikolai Petrovich Kirsanov

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 131

Explanation and Analysis

Ludwig Büchner was a 19th century physiologist and physician who championed scientific materialism in his magnum opus, *Stoff und Kraft*. Scientific materialism essentially holds that natural elements are all that exist, thus everything we experience can be explained in terms of scientific principles—a view held to be so extreme in Büchner's day that he was forced to retire from his university post. One can see how such a view would fit fairly easily with Bazarov's and Arkady's overall nihilist commitments, which argue that only what's measurably useful is worth preserving. The reference to Büchner's materialist work, right next to a detailed description of the beauties of nature on Nikolai's estate, is not accidental. For Turgenev, descriptions of nature are always a way of depicting the ongoing vitality of nature, beyond and in spite of the conflicts in human society. This contrast takes on special poignancy here, as the natural beauty—and the joyful exclamation it prompts from Nikolai—seems to stand almost as Turgenev's rebuke to the flat materialism endorsed in *Stoff und Kraft*, the book Arkady has given his father to read. Nikolai's poetic spirit, always observant and sensitive to the beauties around him, is also on display, as well as his heart-rending desire to respect Arkady and come to terms with the widening gulf between the two of them.

Chapter 16 Quotes

"And so you have no feeling whatsoever for art?" she said, leaning her elbow on the table, a movement which brought her face closer to Bazarov. "How can you get on without it?"

"Why, what is it needed for, may I ask?"

"Well, at least to help one to know and understand people."

Bazarov smiled. "In the first place, experience of life does that, and in the second, I assure you the study of separate individuals is not worth the trouble it involves. All men are similar, in soul as well as in body. Each of us has a brain, spleen, heart and lungs of similar construction; and the so-called moral qualities are the same in all of us - the slight variations are of no importance. It is enough to have one single human specimen in order to judge all the others. People are like trees in a forest: no botanist would dream of studying each individual birchtree."

Related Characters: Madame Anna Sergeyevna Odintsov, Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 160

Explanation and Analysis

In this exchange, Bazarov is having a discussion with Anna Odintsov, a clever, wealthy young widow he and Arkady visit together. On one level, their conversation further sheds light on Bazarov's nihilist beliefs. From Bazarov's remarks about Arkady's uncle Pavel earlier in the book, it's already clear that he doesn't see individual human characteristics as significant. The dissection of frogs tells us more, in his view, about humans as living beings than someone's life story would do. And just like studying an individual frog, tree, or other natural specimen tells a scientist most of what he needs to know about the respective species as a whole, so does knowledge of one human "specimen" inform us sufficiently about human traits more broadly. On another level, this exchange shows the emerging dynamic between Bazarov and Anna Odintsov. Through their intellectual debates, they quickly develop a romantic attraction for one another, but they just as quickly convince themselves that, because romance is no more than a physiological phenomenon, they should not pursue a long-term commitment.

Chapter 19 Quotes

"I can see you're still a fool, my boy. The Sitnikovs of this world are essential to us. I—I would have you understand—I need such louts. It is not for the gods to have to bake bricks! . . ."

"O ho!" thought Arkady, and only then in a flash did all the fathomless depths of Bazarov's conceit dawn upon him. "So you and I are gods, are we? Or rather, you are a god while I'm one of the louts, I suppose?"

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

Related Characters: Arkady Nikolayevich Kirsanov, Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov (speaker), Victor Sitnikov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 187

Explanation and Analysis

Arkady and Bazarov have been staying on Madame Anna Odintsov's estate for a few weeks, and the experience has put distance between the two friends—first because they've divided up into separate couples (Bazarov with Anna, and Arkady with Katya), and second, because the distance has served to reconnect Arkady with some of this own interests (such as nature) and has led him to question Bazarov in turn. When the obsequious Sitnikov, another protégé of Bazarov's, shows up and awkwardly breaks up the party, Arkady is grieved, having grown comfortable in the Odintsov household. Bazarov tells Arkady he's foolish for resenting Sitnikov; personally, he needs silly hangers-on like Sitnikov. He needs such lower sorts of people, he implies, to support him in his loftier work. Though Bazarov is really covering for his reluctance to leave Anna behind (a fact that's no more transparent to himself than to Arkady), the tone is sufficiently snobby to break through Arkady's idolization of Bazarov. He recognizes just how arrogant Bazarov really is, as well as the fact that in Bazarov's eyes, he's a "lout" much like the laughable Sitnikov. The fissure between them continues to widen as they go on to visit Bazarov's family, and from there Arkady begins to yield to his yearnings for a more conventional family life.

Chapter 20 Quotes

"In the province . . . Of course, you know better, gentlemen; how could we keep up with you? You are here to take our places. When we were young there was a so-called humoralist—one Hoffmann—and a certain Brown with his vitalism. They seemed quite ridiculous to us but they had great reputations in their day. Now with you someone new has taken the place of Rademacher, and you bow down to him, but in another twenty years no doubt it will be his turn to be laughed at."

"Let me tell you by way of consolation," said Bazarov, "that nowadays we laugh at medicine in general, and worship no one."

Related Characters: Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov, Vassily Ivanych Bazarov (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 197

Explanation and Analysis

When Bazarov and Arkady visit Bazarov's father, Vassily, a retired army doctor, Vassily is eager to share with them anecdotes of his own rural doctoring among the peasants. His stories don't go over very well, as Bazarov criticizes the outdated remedies and theorists his father references. Bazarov particularly mocks Vassily's persistence in following Rademacher, a German physician who flourished in the first half of the 19th century, recommending many homeopathic remedies that were seen as quite challenging to the medical establishment of the time. Like Arkady's father, Vassily finds himself in the position of being sadly outdated in the view of the younger men, though as a scientist, he's more accustomed to being outpaced. Nevertheless, as with Arkady and Nikolai, Vassily finds himself alienated from his son and condescended to—all the more because Bazarov admits that he doesn't hold the field of medicine or any of its authorities in reverence. Though Arkady retains a fierce love for his father that ultimately brings them back together, Bazarov's outlook doesn't leave room for such loyalty, and he dies still somewhat estranged from those who love him.

Arina Vlassyevna was a true Russian gentlewoman of the old school; she ought to have lived a couple of centuries earlier, in the days of Muscovy. Very devout and emotional, she believed in fortune-telling, charms, dreams and omens of every conceivable kind; she believed in half-crazy visionaries, in house-spirits, in wood-sprites, in unlucky encounters, in the evil eye, in folk remedies, in salt prepared on Maundy Thursday, and the imminent end of the world; [...] Arina Vlassyevna was very kindhearted, and in her way far from stupid. She knew that the world is divided into the gentry who were there to give orders and the common people whose duty it was to serve—and so she felt no repugnance against servile behaviour and obsequiousness; but she was always gentle and considerate with subordinates, never let a single beggar go away empty-handed, and though she gossiped at times she never criticized anyone [...] Nowadays such women as she have ceased to exist. Heaven only knows whether this should be a matter for rejoicing!

Related Characters: Arina Vlassyevna Bazarov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 202

Explanation and Analysis

This quote provides a description of Bazarov's mother, Arina, shortly after Bazarov and Arkady have arrived for a visit. Arina is described as being so "old school" that she would have more properly belonged to Muscovy—the Russian monarchy in the late medieval period. The catalogue of her beliefs and traits is intentionally somewhat rambling and internally contradictory. Her devout Orthodox religious belief is bound up with old peasant folkways and outright superstitions. She holds unswervingly to the class division between peasant and gentry, seeing it as an indelible part of the natural order. Yet, at the same time, she's kind, generous, and intelligent in her own way. More than he does in any of his descriptions of male characters, like Nikolai or Vassily, Turgenev displays—even implicitly praises—the interwoven complex of beliefs and influences that make up most people's internal world. Interestingly, he never shows Bazarov directly interacting with his mother's beliefs. While no doubt Bazarov would have dismissed much of his mother's worldview as foolishness, Turgenev implies that in so doing, Bazarov would miss much of the richness that makes people worth knowing, even if not all of it "makes sense."

Chapter 21 Quotes

"You have made me utterly and completely happy," he said, still smiling all the while. "I ought to tell you, I . . . worship my son! I won't even speak of my good wife—we all know what mothers are!—but I dare not show my feelings in front of him, because he doesn't like it. He is against every kind of demonstration of feeling; many people even find fault with him for such strength of character, and take it for a sign of arrogance or lack of sensibility; but men like him ought not to be judged by any ordinary standards, ought they? [...] And I not only worship him, Arkady Nikolayevich, I am proud of him, and the height of my ambition is that some day the following lines will appear in his biography: 'The son of an ordinary army-doctor, who was able, however, to recognize his talents early in life and spared no pains for his education . . .'" The old man's voice broke."

Related Characters: Vassily Ivanych Bazarov (speaker), Arkady Nikolayevich Kirsanov, Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 205

Explanation and Analysis

When Arkady and Bazarov visit Bazarov's parents, Arkady chats privately with Bazarov's father, Vassily. Vassily asks for Arkady's honest assessment of his friend and mentor, Bazarov, and Arkady readily admits that he thinks Bazarov is the most remarkable man, destined for greatness. This praise moves the older Bazarov to tears. This exchange shows another aspect of the father-son relationship as depicted throughout the novel. Vassily, like Arkady's father Nikolai, recognizes that his son has surpassed his own achievements, and Bazarov's "advanced" worldview will perhaps never line up with his own. However, his greatest desire is for Bazarov to rise above his humble upbringing and achieve more than his father, a provincial doctor, ever could. By contrast, Nikolai seems to desire that Arkady aspire to a similar station as a member of the rural gentry and essentially sustain his own aspirations as a landowning farmer. This contrast speaks to the different kinds of father-son generational tensions that can exist; the son's outlook and aspirations are seen as in some sense a realization of, or even a threat to, the aspirations of the father.

"I'm thinking what a happy life my parents lead! At the age of sixty my father can still find plenty to do, talks about 'palliative measures,' treats patients, plays the bountiful lord of the manor with the peasants - has a gay time of it in fact; and my mother's happy too: her days are so chockful of all sorts of occupations, sighs and groans, that she doesn't know where she is; while [...] here I lie under a haystack. . . . The tiny bit of space I occupy is so minute in comparison with the rest of the universe, [...] And yet here, in this atom which is myself, in this mathematical point, blood circulates, the brain operates and aspires to something too . . . What a monstrous business! What futility!"

Related Characters: Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov (speaker), Arkady Nikolayevich Kirsanov, Arina Vlassyevna Bazarov, Vassily Ivanych Bazarov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 208

Explanation and Analysis

Bazarov's and Arkady's visit to Bazarov's parents is ultimately a depressing one for Bazarov. Here, he and Arkady rest under a haystack while Bazarov, still full of heartache after his failed love affair with Anna Odintsov, muses on the contrast between his parents' lives and his own. Though by all appearances leading an insignificant, retired life in the country, Bazarov's parents are content—both keep themselves busy with meaningful hobbies and the everyday business of household management. Even though Bazarov scorns his parents' "petty" concerns, he also envies them, in a sense. He is dismayed as he reflects on his own insignificance in the vastness of space and time—an "atom" who "aspires," even if those aspirations amount to no more than chemical urges. This discontentment and fear of "futility" in Bazarov show that, despite his outward confidence in his beliefs, he struggles to reconcile his scientific materialism (the belief that everything's reducible to biological explanations) with the much greater happiness he sees in those around him. Arkady ends up reconciling this tension in favor of conventional marriage; Bazarov is never able to reach a satisfactory reconciliation, suggesting Turgenev's own rejection of the sufficiency of nihilism.

"I feel particularly sorry for your mother."

"Why? Has she won your heart with her strawberries and blackcurrants?"

Arkady looked down at his feet. "You don't understand your mother, Yevgeny. She's not only a fine woman, she's very clever really. This morning she talked to me for half an hour, and everything she said was so to the point and interesting."

"I suppose she was expatiating upon me all the time?'

"We didn't talk only about you."

"Maybe as a detached observer you can see more clearly than I do. If a woman can keep up a conversation for half an hour, it's already a good sign. But I'm going all the same."

Related Characters: Arkady Nikolayevich Kirsanov, Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov (speaker), Arina Vlassyevna Bazarov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 218

Explanation and Analysis

Arkady is grieved when Bazarov announces that he's cutting short his visit to his parents, despite not having seen them for the past three years. Arkady tries to point out to his friend how devastated his adoring parents will be. Bazarov replies with characteristic sarcasm. When Arkady argues that Bazarov hasn't given his mother a real chance, Bazarov rather arrogantly assumes that he is the only subject his mother has to talk about. Bazarov's words suggest that his nihilist beliefs often fail to do justice to the complexity of the people around him. They also hint, as elsewhere in the story, that he has a rather misogynist outlook, not believing that women are capable of reasonable conversation. His remark that Arkady is a more "detached observer" also shows that Bazarov bases human relationships largely on empirical observation—what he sees firsthand—rather than letting his heart into the relationship. This is perhaps the biggest difference between himself and Arkady, and the trait that, in Turgenev's view, turns out to be Arkady's saving grace and Bazarov's downfall.

"He has gone, left us!" he faltered. "Gone, because he found it dull here with us. I'm a lonely man now, lonely as this finger," he repeated again and again, and each time he thrust out his hand with his forefinger pointing away from the rest. Then Arina Vlassyevna came to his side and pressing her grey head to his grey head she said: "It can't be helped, Vasya. A son is an independent person. He's like a falcon that comes when he wills and flies off when he lists; but you and I are like the funguses growing in a hollow tree: here we sit side by side, not budging an inch. It is only I who will stay with you always, faithful for ever, just as you will stay with me."

Related Characters: Arina Vlassyevna Bazarov, Vassily Ivanych Bazarov (speaker), Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 221

Explanation and Analysis

This quote, a moving portrait of the lonely elderly parents of an only son, occurs after Bazarov and Arkady have departed from the Bazarovs' home, cutting short the first visit Bazarov has made in several years. The image of "grey head" pressed against "grey head" is an intentional one, as Turgenev drives home the contrast between generations. Arina's poignant comments emphasize this difference, as well. Young sons (falcons) are dynamic, oriented toward action and change; parents (fungi) are stagnant, unmoving, and seldom change. The older generation, in consequence, only have one another to lean upon for support. This sorrowful summary of Bazarov's relationship with his parents suggests that each generation is forever beyond the reach of the previous one, no matter how much the older generation loyally sacrifices for the younger. Even in their loneliness, Vassily and Arina remain unstintingly loyal to their only son, whose education they provided in the hope that he would succeed beyond their wildest dreams—no matter what it cost them.

Chapter 24 Quotes

"We shall fire two shots and, as a precaution, let each of us put a letter in his pocket, holding himself responsible for his own demise [...] So everything is arranged—By the way, I don't suppose you have pistols?"

"How should I have pistols? I am not a fighting man."

"In that case I offer you mine. You may rest assured that I have not shot with them these five years."

"That is very comforting news." Pavel Petrovich picked up his cane... "And now, my dear sir, it only remains for me to thank you and leave you to resume your studies. I have the honour to bid you good-day.'

"Until we have the pleasure of meeting again, my dear sir," said Bazarov, escorting his visitor to the door.

Related Characters: Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov, Pavel Petrovich Kirsanov (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 237

Explanation and Analysis

It's established earlier in the novel that Pavel and Bazarov hate each other, with the strongest animosity on Pavel's side. When Pavel sees Bazarov planting an unwanted kiss on Fenichka (for whom Pavel harbors his own romantic feelings), it's the last straw, and here he challenges Bazarov to a duel—an enactment of the generational conflict that's mostly remained limited to verbal arguments thus far. Dueling was actually forbidden in imperial Russia, but was not unheard of—in fact, it's a major component of *Eugene Onegin* (a favorite story of Nikolai's) and its author, Pushkin, himself was killed in a duel. Pavel's and Bazarov's duel could be a deliberate callback to that classic Russian work. In any case, the unfailingly decorous exchange lends a note of humor and absurdity to the situation—the two set the parameters for their duel with the most gentlemanly politeness, masking the simmering hostility that has sparked the whole situation. Fortunately, neither man is killed in their duel the next day, and the occasion seems to give vent to their mutual dislike and allow both to move forward with their lives.

Chapter 25 Quotes

"Let bygones be bygones," she said, "especially as, to be quite frank, I was also to blame, if not by being coquettish, then in some other fashion. In short, let us be friends as we were before. The other was a dream, was it not? And who ever remembers dreams?"

"Who indeed? And besides, love . . . is a purely imaginary feeling."

"Really? I am very glad to hear you say that."

So spoke Anna Sergeyevna, and so spoke Bazarov, and they both believed they were speaking the truth. Was the truth, the whole truth, to be found in their words? They themselves did not know, and still less does the author. But in the conversation that followed each appeared to have complete faith in the other.

Related Characters: Madame Anna Sergeyevna Odintsov, Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 262

Explanation and Analysis

Bazarov drops by Anna Sergeyevna's estate on the way back to his parents' house at the end of the novel. When the two last parted, both were heartbroken over a botched love affair—seemingly unable to admit their feelings for each other. This is in large part because Bazarov steadfastly maintains that love is just a biological condition, and that emotions themselves are meaningless. Reunited now, they're able to apologize and speak peaceably to one another, but the unresolved tension between them still lies beneath the surface—Bazarov refuses to conceive of love as something real, and Anna goes along with this, consigning love to the realm of nonsensical dreams. In a rare moment of commentary, the narrator observes that it's impossible to know whether each of them genuinely believed what they said—hinting that perhaps, deep down, they will always be attracted to each other. Even on his deathbed, Bazarov can't confess his love for Anna, but the fact that he summons her there and speaks his final words to her perhaps says more than the actual words he uses. Turgenev therefore suggests that love is something real regardless of people's attempts to theorize about it.

Chapter 26 Quotes

"I am now no longer the conceited boy I was when I first arrived here," Arkady continued. "I have not reached the age of twenty-two for nothing; I still have every wish to lead a useful life, I still want to devote all my energies to the pursuit of truth; but I can no longer seek my ideal where I did before; I perceive it now . . . much closer to hand. Up till now I did not understand myself, I set myself tasks beyond my capacity... My eyes have recently been opened, thanks to a certain emotion ... I am not expressing myself very clearly but I hope you will understand me . . ."

Related Characters: Arkady Nikolayevich Kirsanov (speaker), Katya Odintsov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 266

Explanation and Analysis

After a restless visit back home, Arkady makes a beeline to Madame Odintsov's house. He thinks he's still infatuated with her, but as soon as he arrives, he's surprised to find himself drawn to his friend Katya, Anna's younger sister. In this quote, he makes a fumbling but sincere proposal to Katya. Within the story, the proposal also serves to decisively divorce Arkady from his mentor Bazarov's approach to life. While Arkady still wishes to be "useful"—the watchword of nihilism—he now finds meaning not in abstract ideas, rejection of principles, or destruction of institutions, but rather in a person. This is a frank repudiation of Bazarov's reduction of all emotion to biology, not to mention his rejection of marriage as a bankrupt institution. Arkady's eyes "have been opened" not by scientific observation, but by love—a form of enlightenment in stark contrast to the one he claimed to have undergone at the beginning of the novel. His choice of Katya and marriage, therefore, is an unmistakable declaration of independence from Bazarov and an identification with another type of life entirely.

"You see what I'm doing: there happened to be an empty space in my trunk, and I'm stuffing it with hay; it's the same with the trunk which is our life: we fill it with anything that comes to hand rather than leave a void [...] And now, in parting, let me repeat . . . because there is no point in deceiving ourselves—we are parting for good, and you know that yourself . . . you have acted sensibly: you were not made for our bitter, harsh, lonely existence. There's no audacity in you, no venom: you've the fire and energy of youth but that's not enough for our business. Your sort, the gentry, can never go farther than well-bred resignation or well-bred indignation, and that's futile."

Related Characters: Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov (speaker), Katya Odintsov, Arkady Nikolayevich Kirsanov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 271

Explanation and Analysis

Having closed the door on the possibility of a romantic relationship with Anna Sergeyevna, Bazarov is packing to leave Nikolskoye for good. Before he goes, he chats with Arkady about the latter's new engagement to Katya Odintsov. Quite insultingly, he likens Arkady's election of marriage to filling a void in one's trunk; in the same way, Arkady, he suggests, is filling a hole in his life—not making a meaningful choice. He is also forthright about the fact that Arkady's choice marks the end of their friendship. By choosing marriage, Arkady proves that he's not cut out for the solitary, bitter existence of the committed nihilist. Bazarov says this is because Arkady is from the gentry class, and so he can't venture any farther than futile sentiment; he's not made for the real work of destroying institutions. Ironically, Bazarov's statement suggests that people's background really does have a determinative, shaping effect on their actions; people don't make choices in a vacuum. In any case, Arkady's choice of a conventional life means that he and Bazarov can no longer have a meaningful association with one another. Bazarov might have "audacity" and "venom," but his beliefs seem to consign him to a friendless future with only his convictions for company.

Chapter 28 Quotes

Supporting each other, they walk with heavy steps; they go up to the iron railing, fall on their knees and weep long and bitterly, and long and yearningly they gaze at the silent stone beneath which their son is lying; exchanging a brief word, they brush the dust from the stone, set a branch of a fir-tree right, and then resume their prayers, unable to tear themselves away from the place where they feel nearer to their son, to their memories of him.... But are those prayers of theirs, those tears, all fruitless? Is their love, their hallowed selfless love, not omnipotent? Oh yes! However passionate, sinful and rebellious the heart hidden in the tomb, the flowers growing over it peep at us serenely with their innocent eyes; they speak to us not only of eternal peace, of the vast repose of 'indifferent' nature: they tell us, too, of everlasting reconciliation and of life which has no end.

Related Characters: Yevgeny Vassilyich Bazarov, Arina Vlassyevna Bazarov, Vassily Ivanych Bazarov

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 295

Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes at the very end of the novel, as Vassily and Arina visit their son Bazarov's grave. On the surface, it's a despairing quote—the bereaved parents, who'd invested all their efforts in their son's flourishing, are forever without him, sapping the meaning from their lives. Yet Turgenev quickly undercuts the implication that the Bazarovs' lives—and their tears— have been meaningless. Their love, he suggests (despite Bazarov's insistence that love is a meaningless, physiological sensation) outlasts the grave. And the "nature" that Bazarov had likewise dismissed as a mere "workshop" for humanity, not a "temple" in its own right, not only "speaks" but has the final word in the novel. Nature testifies to an everlasting life and an ultimate reconciliation of things beyond the grave. By giving this final voice to nature, Turgenev passes his final verdict on nihilism and materialism—these can't bring lasting meaning to human life, and there *are* transcendent realities which have true meaning, despite humans' inability to measure them. However, he offers reconciliation to Bazarov, too—even his nihilist character, rebellious to the last, is not beyond the reach of the power of human love.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

On May 20th, 1859, a Russian gentleman in his early forties waits impatiently on the porch of a coaching-inn with his servant, Piotr, who is "a man of the advanced modern generation."

The novel opens with the palpable excitement of an anticipated reunion. Because the gentleman's servant is "advanced" (or old), a hint of generational conflict is present from the beginning, also foreshadowing greater conflict to come.

The man's name is Nikolai Petrovich Kirsanov. Ten miles from the inn, he owns "a respectable little property" of a couple hundred serfs and 5,000 acres. He has divided up the land among the peasants and begun a farm.

Nikolai is a relatively modest landowner, but even in his gentry status, the question of the rights of the serfs—a central controversy in Russia at the time Turgenev wrote— will come to the fore. Nikolai's division of his land suggests that he has at least some reformist sympathies.

Nikolai's father, Piotr Kirsanov, had been an army general who served in 1812, a "coarse, semi-illiterate but good-natured type of Russian" with considerable influence in the provinces. Nikolai and his brother, Pavel, were both born in southern Russia. Nikolai was meant to have followed his father into the army, but he broke his leg the same day he received his commission, resulting in a lifelong limp. Nikolai entered Petersburg University instead, preparing for a career in the civil service.

Differences across generations will continue to be a salient theme, as the comparison of Nikolai with his father suggests. Piotr Kirsanov's life was dominated by military service (in 1812, Napoleon had attempted to invade Russia), while Nikolai made a decisive break with that life, turning toward education and civilian employment. The contrast creates an expectation that generational conflict will continue to be a theme in the book.

Shortly before his parents' deaths, Nikolai fell in love with his landlord's pretty, intellectual daughter, Masha. Soon after his parents died, Nikolai married Masha and abandoned his civil service post, and they established a comfortable, quiet life in the country, where their son, Arkady, was born. Ten years later, Masha died. Nikolai, devastated, considered going abroad, but the revolutionary year 1848 occurred. Finally he settled down to the work of improving his estate.

Generational conflict continues to be a theme, as Nikolai's love for his landlord's daughter was likely controversial with his parents—explaining why the marriage was delayed until after their deaths. 1848 was a year of republican revolutions in multiple European states, explaining why Nikolai couldn't go abroad and so settled for a quiet life at home.

In 1855, Nikolai brought his son, Arkady, to Petersburg University, and he spent three winters in the city himself, befriending Arkady's friends. But this year he didn't go, so today, Nikolai, now grey and stout, waits for Arkady, who has just completed his Petersburg degree, to arrive home.

Nikolai's son, Arkady, follows in his educational footsteps, and Nikolai makes a special effort to stay close to Arkady and his generation's interests, showing he's far from closed-minded.

Nikolai sits reflecting on his boy and his late wife, watching a pecking hen and a sprawling cat outside the inn. Finally Piotr reports that someone is coming. Nikolai glimpses Arkady's face in the approaching tarantass (four-wheeled horse carriage) and runs to embrace his beloved son.

Nikolai's love of nature is often evident in the story, prompting him to reflectiveness. The chapter ends with high anticipation as Nikolai finally spots Arkady in the distance.

CHAPTER 2

Arkady shakes the dust off himself, happily greeting his father. Nikolai appears more excited than Arkady, "flurried and overcome with shyness." Arkady stops his father's bustling and introduces his "great friend," Bazarov, of whom he has often spoken in his letters. Bazarov, a tall man in a long coat, "somewhat tardily" offers his "ungloved" hand to Nikolai. When Nikolai asks his name, Bazarov says it is Yevgeny Vassilyich.

Nikolai's much-anticipated reunion with his son is immediately interrupted by the presence of Bazarov, whose slowness to greet Nikolai properly hints at a difference in outlook. Bazarov's use of his first and middle name, or patronymic (family name) is the standard Russian form of address, although Arkady calls him by his surname, suggesting that Bazarov takes an independent, non-traditional stance relative to his culture.

Bazarov has "a long thin face with a broad forehead," greenish eyes, and sandy whiskers, as well as "a tranquil smile betokening self-assurance and intelligence." Nikolai says that he hopes Bazarov won't find his visit dull. Bazarov does not reply. Arkady wants to start for home right away, so Piotr, bowing from a distance rather than kissing Arkady's hand, goes to bring around the horses. Nikolai fusses about, making arrangements for the journey, and Arkady urges his father not to stand on ceremony, since Bazarov is "not a bit pretentious." Soon Nikolai and Arkady are seated in Nikolai's barouche and Bazarov in the tarantass, and the vehicles start for home.

Bazarov is established as a rather aloof figure who doesn't fit neatly into the patterns of Nikolai's life and Arkady's upbringing. This also means that Arkady's friendship with him might have a disruptive influence on his own ties with his father. Piotr's refusal to kiss Arkady's hand is an additional sign of shifts in class structure, as past generations of servants would have been more submissive in their behavior. So on the cusp of Arkady's homecoming, multiple generational and class-based fault lines have been exposed.

CHAPTER 3

During the drive home, Nikolai and Arkady get reacquainted. Arkady, though filled with "almost childish delight," keeps trying to shift the conversation from the emotional to the commonplace, though he can't help kissing his father affectionately. He begs his father to "make a fuss" of Bazarov, whom he's only recently befriended. Bazarov, he explains, is studying natural science and hopes to take a degree in medicine.

Arkady feels conflicted, wanting to express his delight over his homecoming yet also wanting to seem more mature and restrained, perhaps because Bazarov—whom he doesn't even know that well—is there. This suggests that Bazarov's presence will be an ongoing source of tension in the household.

When they pass some of Nikolai's peasants on the road, Piotr sneers that the peasants are probably headed to the tavern in town, but the coachman, "of the old type who disapproved of the modern outlook," remains silent. Nikolai tells Arkady that the peasants are giving him trouble this year; they won't pay their tithes. He asks Arkady whether he's beginning to take an interest in farming, but Arkady evades the question.

Generational divides exist among the peasants, too, with the older generation seeming to uphold traditional folkways while the younger generation critiques them. Nikolai's reformist move to divide his land among his peasants hasn't gone smoothly, either, signaling the ongoing class divide. Arkady avoids weighing into these questions whatsoever for right now.

Arkady admires the fresh country air, and Nikolai remarks that everything about one's birthplace seems special. Arkady replies that it makes no difference where a person is born. Nikolai gives Arkady "a sidelong glance" but is silent for the next half mile. Finally he resumes talking about changes at Maryino, his estate. He no longer keeps freed serfs around the house, for instance, and his new bailiff is a paid townsman. When Nikolai doesn't want Piotr to understand him, he speaks in French.

Nikolai detects a subtle shift in Arkady's outlook—his defensiveness about a fairly harmless comment—but it's unclear what it means. Even as Nikolai highlights some of the reforms he's making on his estate, he uses French—the language often used by the Russian aristocracy—to keep his servant from understanding him, showing that class divides are still very present even as they're being reduced by reformist policy.

With embarrassment, Nikolai, still speaking in French, tells Arkady that, while a "stern moralist" might object to his frankness, he has always had his own ideas about father-son communication. Though Arkady would rightly blame him, he goes on, "that girl of whom you have probably already heard—" "Fenichka?" Arkady casually objects. Nikolai blushes and asks Arkady not to say her name aloud. He explains that he's taken Fenichka into the house. He can change this, though, for Bazarov's sake.

Nikolai has always favored openness with his son, showing again that he's not overly strict himself. And his apparent relationship with an unmarried woman shows that he isn't, in fact, a "stern moralist." But he's also uncomfortable with Arkady's casual attitude about his relationship and doesn't want his servants to disrespect him for it. There's not just tension between father and son, but tension within Nikolai's own mind, too, about his choices.

Arkady urges Nikolai not to worry about awkwardness for Bazarov's sake—Bazarov is "above all that." With surprise, Arkady says that his father, who's blushing redder and redder, shouldn't be apologetic or ashamed. Arkady's "heart was filled with [...] indulgent tenderness," as well as "a secret sense of superiority." He cannot resist "a conscious enjoyment of his own more emancipated outlook."

Arkady sees his new friend Bazarov as rising above superficial proprieties, and he wants to embody the same tolerant attitude—namely rejecting the institution of marriage. Moreover, it gives him pleasure to appear tolerant of his father, as well. Being free of societal restraints, he thinks, makes him more liberated than his father—a novel feeling, which also hints at more generational conflict to come.

Nikolai feels something "stab his heart," but he "reproached himself for it" and changes the subject as Maryino's meadows come into view. The country is "not in the least picturesque." It comprises sloping fields, occasional copses, and sparse ravines, "reminding one of the way in which the old maps showed them in the time of Catherine." There are streams, hamlets with rickety huts, peeling barns, and neglected churchyards. Seeing all this, "slowly Arkady's heart sank." "It just can't go on like this," Arkady thinks, "thus must all be transformed [...] how should we begin?"

Nikolai senses, again, the divide that has opened between himself and his son. The reference to "Catherine" with regard to Maryino's appearance refers to the 18th-century empress Catherine the Great, under whom the serf-reliant landholding system had been especially strong. The implication is that the estate has scarcely modernized in the last hundred years, to Arkady's chagrin. In Arkady's eyes, his home, the work of his father's hands, can't just be embraced; it has to be "transformed."

Even as Arkady reflects on the estate's disrepair, however, the beauty of spring is evident—shining trees, singing larks, and whitening rye. Nikolai optimistically tells his son what a good life they'll share—"we must draw close to one another now, get to know each other properly." Observing the beauty of the day, Nikolai begins to quote a line from Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, but a shout from Bazarov, requesting a match for his pipe, interrupts him. Arkady begins to smoke a cigar, and Nikolai discreetly averts his nose from the acrid smell. A quarter of an hour later, the vehicles pull up in front of Maryino, which the peasants call "The Farm-without-any-land."

Turgenev often describes the persistent beauty of the natural world, even in the midst of human shortcomings—here, beauty can't be repressed, even if the farm is in bad shape. Nature prompts Nikolai's optimism about his relationship with his son, and prompts a quote from his beloved Pushkin (a founder of the Russian literary tradition who'd flourished a generation earlier); but his words are pointedly cut short by the younger men, disrupting the tentative sense of generational harmony.

CHAPTER 4

Nikolai, Arkady, and Bazarov make their way into the house. The old servant, Prokofyich, warmly kisses Arkady and bows to Bazarov. Soon Pavel Petrovich Kirsanov, Nikolai's brother, enters. He is about 45, a man with "aristocratic elegance" who has retained a "youthful shapeliness." He greets Arkady with a "European handshake," as well as the Russian style of kissing his nephew three times. He greets Bazarov with the slightest of bows. When the young men go out, Pavel asks Nikolai if "that long-haired creature" is staying with them.

Prokofyich's effusive greeting is in keeping with the older style of class relations, in contrast to Piotr's more aloof behavior earlier. Arkady's uncle Pavel displays some Westernizing impulses, hence progressive ones for the time—but even he finds Bazarov's presence unsettling.

At dinner, there's little conversation. Nikolai talks about the farm and impending government reforms. Arkady has "a faint feeling of embarrassment" as a man newly returned to his childhood home. He avoids calling his father "papa" and drinks too much wine. After dinner, Bazarov marvels at Pavel's "foppery" in such a rural setting, calling him "an archaic survival." He also remarks that Nikolai "wastes his time reading poetry," although "his heart's in the right place." Arkady falls asleep joyful over his homecoming and wishing peace upon his recently deceased childhood nurse, but "for himself he said no prayer."

Arkady struggles to adjust to his awkward new role as an adult son in his childhood home. Bazarov, meanwhile, has terse—and rather dismissive—appraisals of each member of the household, seeing them each as out of date. Arkady pointedly declines to pray, a sign that he's rejected some of the traditions of his childhood.

The young men are soon asleep, but Nikolai broods late into the night, and Pavel sits before his fire, his thoughts wandering. In another room, meanwhile, a young woman named Fenichka alternately dozes and listens to the breathing of a sleeping infant.

The older generation is unsettled by the youthful arrivals. Nikolai's lover, Fenichka, has not yet appeared among the household, and the presence of a child—Nikolai's other son—is a surprise that Nikolai hasn't mentioned to Arkady.

CHAPTER 5

Bazarov wakes early the next morning and heads outdoors, thinking, "This isn't much of a place." The land surrounding the manor-house is barren, with poor trees and brackish water. Bazarov heads to a swamp to search for frogs, telling an inquisitive farm boy (Bazarov had "a special faculty for winning the confidence of the lower orders") that he intends to dissect the frogs. Since humans are similar to frogs except that humans are bipedal, he explains, the frog's insides will reveal a lot about humans' insides, too.

Bazarov continues to make fairly sweeping assessments of his hosts' lifestyle. He relates more easily to "the lower orders" than to people of the upper classes—or at least likes to believe that he does. His interest in frogs reveals a lot about his overall philosophy, namely that much of what makes humans tick can be determined through scientific inquiry.

Meanwhile, Nikolai and Arkady sit on the terrace for morning tea. A little girl servant reports that Fedosya Nikolayevna is too ill to come to the table. As Nikolai serves his son tea, Arkady looks at him questioningly and finally ventures to ask if Fenichka won't come because he is there. Nikolai admits that Fenichka probably feels ashamed. Arkady says that Fenichka has no reason to feel that way, both because of Arkady's views (he "much enjoyed saying this"), and because Arkady would never dream of interfering with the ways of the household. If his father cares for Fenichka, then she must be worthy of that esteem. By the time he finishes this "lecture," Arkady feels more confident and even "magnanimous."

Arkady has another opportunity to display his broad-mindedness as he attempts again to put his father's mind at ease about Fenichka. Arkady is aware that he's taking a somewhat arrogant position toward his father, but the sense of superiority is enjoyable, too. The clash consists in the fact that, even though it's obvious to everyone that Nikolai has taken Fenichka as his lover, he feels greater reserve is appropriate; Arkady, meanwhile, thinks it's kinder to reject such superficial proprieties and talk about everything in the open.

Nikolai admits that Fenichka is no "passing fancy" for him, but that it's still awkward for her to appear. Arkady jumps up, feeling "generous" as he offers to approach Fenichka instead. Nikolai tries to stop him, but Arkady, not listening, rushes inside. Nikolai's heart pounds, and he vaguely realizes "the inevitable strangeness of his future relations" with Arkady.

Arkady takes matters into his own hands, overriding his father's protests. Arkady's seizing this kind of initiative is embarrassing for Nikolai and decisively demonstrates that things won't be the same between the two of them.

Arkady reappears in triumph, having introduced himself to Fenichka. He embraces Nikolai happily, saying that Nikolai should have told him that he had a brother. Just then Pavel, wearing an elegant English suit, joins them on the terrace, to the relief of both men.

Even though Arkady greets the revelation of his new brother with joy, it's clearly an awkward moment for both of them, which Pavel's appearance thankfully disrupts.

As Pavel begins buttering his bread, he questions Arkady about Bazarov. Arkady explains that Bazarov's family lives on an estate 60 miles away, in the same province; his father is an army doctor. Pavel asks what Bazarov does. Rather triumphantly, Arkady declares, "He is a nihilist!" "A what?" Pavel asks, his butter knife poised in the air.

Arkady's revelation of Bazarov's unusual "profession" startlingly disrupts the traditional family breakfast, in keeping with nihilism's focus on undermining traditional structures.

Nikolai observes that "nihilist" comes from the Latin *nihil*, "nothing," which means that a nihilist must "recognize nothing." Arkady interjects that, rather, a nihilist "looks at everything critically [...] does not take any principle for granted, however much that principle may be revered."

Nihilism was a cutting-edge philosophy in Russia in the early 1860s, something that only radical university students would have likely talked about—so it's not surprising that even well-read Nikolai would be caught unawares. Arkady tries to explain that nihilism doesn't literally reject everything; *it just takes no principle for granted.*

Pavel asks whether such an attitude is a good thing, and Arkady explains that it depends on the person—"it's good in some cases and very bad in others." Pavel replies that, from the perspective of the older generations, life without principles is impossible. "It used to be Hegelians," he says, "and now there are nihilists. We shall see how you manage to exist in a void, in an airless vacuum."

Pavel thinks he's seen all this before; earlier in the 18th century, Hegelianism, G. W. F. Hegel's attempt to express all reality in rational categories, had been all the rage in European universities. He sees nihilism as another intellectual fad that won't last very long—one that's uniquely untenable for life.

When Pavel summons a servant to bring his cocoa, Fenichka appears instead. She is about 23 years old, neatly dressed, and somewhat delicate- and childish-looking. She clearly feels embarrassed as she serves the cocoa and quickly leaves after greeting the three men. They eat in silence for a while.

Though Bazarov has been a disruptive presence in the family's life, the same is true of Fenichka, in a way—it's just that the men have made peace with euphemisms surrounding her presence there. Arkady's frankness, presumptuous as it was, at least helps bring their "irregular" relationship into the open.

Soon Pavel says, "Here is Monsieur Nihilist." Bazarov appears, splattered with mud and carrying a wiggling sack. To Pavel's inquiry, Bazarov explains that the sack contains frogs for experiments. After Bazarov leaves, Pavel observes sarcastically, "He has no faith in principles, only frogs." Arkady looks at his uncle pityingly.

Bazarov's surprising and rather uncouth appearance amidst the well-mannered breakfast party is symbolic of his rejection of norms. Pavel's antipathy for him is apparent, as is Arkady's condescending view of his elders.

CHAPTER 6

Bazarov returns to the terrace and begins drinking his tea. Pavel begins to question him with "studious politeness." Bazarov's indifference "exasperated his aristocratic nature." Pavel asks him how it is possible that Bazarov acknowledges no authorities. "Why should I?" Bazarov replies. "If they talk sense, I agree with them. That's all there is to it."

The combative dynamic between Bazarov and Pavel is established—Pavel is painfully polite and Bazarov is tersely indifferent. Bazarov bases his worldview on what makes "sense," not on the supposed inherent authority of an idea; that suggests he sees himself as the arbiter of what makes sense.

Given Bazarov's fondness for German scientists, Pavel observes that nowadays Germany mainly "[churns] out chemists and materialists," in contrast to former greats like Schiller and Goethe. Bazarov interrupts, "A decent chemist is twenty times more useful than any poet." When Pavel persists in questioning him on his views regarding art and science, Bazarov speaks up, "What is this, a cross-examination?"

Pavel reminisces for the days when Germany produced great poets, but Bazarov provocatively rejects Pavel's premise that poets are superior to scientists. He thinks that progress is possible on the basis of scientific principles and sees the older generation's appreciation for art as outdated and useless.

Nikolai intervenes, saying that he would value Bazarov's scientific advice on farming someday, then he encourages Pavel to join him for a visit to the estate's bailiff. As he gets up, Pavel sarcastically observes that "one fine day [one's learning] turns out to be all rubbish […] obviously the younger generation are more intelligent than we are." He and Nikolai walk away.

Nikolai, with a peacekeeping instinct, cuts the exchange short. Pavel is clearly affronted by Bazarov's insinuations about the older generation, especially given his lifelong efforts to be educated, cultured, and reform-minded himself.

Bazarov asks Arkady if his uncle Pavel always acts like that. Arkady objects that Bazarov hurt Pavel's feelings by being so curt. Bazarov retorts that he's not going to pander to aristocratic vanity—they should go and examine the rare specimen of water-beetle he's found. Arkady tells his friend that he must be fair and understand Pavel's background, which he proceeds to tell him.

Arkady is more sensitive to others' feelings than Bazarov. Bazarov tends to categorize people according to class—Pavel is offensive to him as an "aristocrat"—and, anyway, studying insect specimens is a better use of time, in his mind, than trying to understand the feelings of others. This reflects Bazarov's materialistic outlook, which sees everything as reducible to scientific examination.

CHAPTER 7

Pavel Petrovich Kirsanov had always been good-looking, confident, and appealing. An army officer and "darling of society," he indulged in various "whims" and "follies." Women fell in love with him, and men envied him. He had a brilliant career ahead of him, but in his late 20s, everything changed. He fell in love with a married woman of Petersburg society named Princess R. Princess R. was known as an eccentric, frivolous partier, but she spent her nights weeping and praying in private. She had extraordinary, enigmatic eyes. Pavel danced with her at a ball and promptly fell in love.

Arkady tells Bazarov about Pavel's story, wanting him to understand that there's more to his uncle than meets the eye. Like his brother, Pavel comes from a fairly privileged, cultured, background. He is also more inclined to romance than Bazarov's gruff, argumentative exchanges with him would suggest.

Though Pavel soon "triumphed" with Princess R., his obsession with her only increased, since her soul remained so reserved and hidden, her behavior "a maze of inconsistencies." One day Pavel had given her a ring with a sphinx engraved on it, explaining that the sphinx symbolized her. Soon, Princess R. tired of Pavel and went abroad to avoid him, but Pavel resigned his military commission to follow her around the continent. They had a brief romantic rendezvous at Baden, but then Princess R.'s passion subsided. Pavel repeatedly tried and failed to regain interest in his life, becoming a bitter bachelor.

Pavel's life has been dominated by an ill-fated love affair, at the expense of his career and happiness. By expounding his uncle's background in this way, Arkady demonstrates that people's experiences with romance defy the materialistic categories to which Bazarov prefers to assign them.

One day Pavel learned that Princess R. had died in a state of near insanity. A few weeks later, he received a package containing the ring he'd given her; Princess R. had scratched a cross over the sphinx. This occurred in 1848, just after Nikolai had been widowed. Pavel finally settled down with his brother at Maryino for good. He began reading English books and rarely ventured out, though he continued to dress and style himself impeccably.

Pavel's personality and current situation look a bit different against the backdrop of his personal heartbreak. Joining his brother's rural provincial lifestyle and adopting his "foppish" gentleman persona seem to be ways of making a break with his wasted youth.

Arkady concludes his account by telling Bazarov that he's been unfair to Pavel, who has given Nikolai all his money and always stands up for the peasants. Anyway, he's "profoundly unhappy," and it's not right to despise him. Bazarov replies that someone who's ruined his life over a failed love affair is "not a man," and he mocks Pavel's old-fashioned liberalism. When Arkady says that Pavel must be viewed in light of the times in which he grew up, Bazarov retorts, "[W]hy should I depend upon [the times]? Much better they should depend upon me." He goes on to scoff that relations between men and women are not romantic but physiological; to say otherwise is "romantic rot." They should go and inspect Bazarov's beetle specimen instead.

Pavel is a generous and liberal-minded man. Arkady is compassionate toward his uncle and wants Bazarov to show a little sensitivity as well. But Bazarov continues to classify and reject Pavel, on the grounds that romance isn't real; it's merely physical, and it shouldn't overthrow someone's life to this degree. Moreover, Bazarov's nihilism is clear in his refusal to grant any credence to "the times"; someone's historical context isn't a justification in his eyes. He returns to the beetle specimen just as if Arkady had never interjected—suggesting that Bazarov's nihilism lacks a certain humanity.

CHAPTER 8

Nikolai's estate has only recently transitioned to "the new system," "whose mechanism still creaked like an ungreased wheel." Nikolai feels discouraged because he doesn't have the money to improve conditions. Pavel likewise finds the problems of the estate depressing. He goes to visit Fenichka, asking her to send to town for some green tea. He makes small talk, admiring the décor in Fenichka's new room and asking to see her son. A few minutes later Fenichka comes in with seven-month-old Mitya, both looking radiant. Pavel admires the baby, looking rather sadly at them both.

Although Nikolai supports the transition to the emancipation of the serfs, he is struggling to come to terms with the practical realities it entails. Pavel admires Fenichka and seems to draw comfort from her presence. In fact, his sad gaze at the mother and son suggests that there's more to his feelings; he seems to be reflecting on what he's missed out on in his own life.

Nikolai comes in and greets them all happily, then Pavel leaves. Nikolai had met Fenichka as follows. While staying at a provincial inn three years ago, Nikolai had been impressed by its cleanliness and invited the widowed innkeeper, a woman of 50, to become his housekeeper. She brought her only daughter, Fenichka, who was then 17. Over the next year, Fenichka began making an impression on Nikolai, although she was very shy. After her mother died of cholera, Fenichka, who shared her mother's common sense and dependability, remained there, and "there is no need to describe what followed." Pavel, meanwhile, returns to his bedroom, staring at the ceiling with "an expression verging on despair."

Nikolai is another example of romance's defiance of categories, in contrast to Bazarov's flat denial of its reality. Though Fenichka's somewhat ambiguous status in the household—something between an employee and a ward of Nikolai, as she's young enough to be his daughter—makes their romance sound a bit ambiguous, here it's taken for granted that such an attraction is natural under the circumstances. Pavel, meanwhile, continues to feel tormented by what he lacks.

CHAPTER 9

That day, Bazarov meets Fenichka while strolling in the garden with Arkady. He introduces himself to Fenichka and admires Mitya. Fenichka is impressed by Mitya's calm with Bazarov, since he rarely lets other people hold him. As Bazarov and Arkady walk on, Bazarov is surprised when Arkady remarks that his father and Fenichka should marry; he didn't think Arkady would "still attach importance to marriage."

Bazarov and Fenichka befriend one another. Bazarov's forwardness in introducing himself would seem quite bold at the time, but the baby's ease with him does much to win over Fenichka. Arkady still holds onto some traditional structures like marriage, showing he's slower to reject all authorities and isn't completely in step with his mentor Bazarov.

As they continue their walk, Bazarov criticizes Nikolai's property, observing that his peasants are taking advantage of him. When Arkady says that Bazarov has a low opinion of Russians, Bazarov says that the only good thing about Russians is their poor opinion of themselves—"what is important is that two and two make four, and the rest is just trivial." Arkady, admiring the surrounding fields in the setting sun, asks if **nature** is "trivial," too. Bazarov says yes, that "nature is not a temple, but a workshop, and man's the workman in it."

Bazarov doesn't have an inherent respect for Russian cultural identity; the only thing that matters is mechanical principles. Arkady is having a hard time with this. Witnessing beauty, he's inclined to believe that there must be something meaningful about it. However, Bazarov rejects this—nature, in his view, is there for human beings to manipulate at will. It's not there to be revered. This is a clear statement of his materialist viewpoint.

Then they hear the sounds of Schubert being played on a cello. When Arkady tells Bazarov that Nikolai is playing, Bazarov "[roars] with laughter" at the thought of a 44-year-old man playing the cello in a remote province. "Much as he revered his mentor […] Arkady did not even smile."

This exchange shows another crack in Arkady's and Bazarov's relationship. Bazarov trivializes and mocks what he sees as Nikolai's pretensions, but Arkady ultimately loves his father more than he reveres Bazarov, and the mockery hurts him. Arkady is not a thoroughgoing nihilist.

CHAPTER 10

About two weeks pass, with Arkady enjoying his leisure and Bazarov working on his scientific experiments. Everyone gets accustomed to Bazarov, especially Fenichka, after Bazarov heals Mitya one night when the baby gets sick. At the same time, Pavel despises Bazarov as an "impudent fellow, a cynic and a vulgarian." The servants feel that Bazarov is one of them, except for Prokofyich, who dislikes him.

Bazarov continues to curry favor with the servants, who find him relatable, except for those of the old school, like Prokofyich, who prefer a clearer class distinction. Meanwhile, the hostility between Pavel and Bazarov continues to simmer.

Bazarov gets up early in the mornings to collect grass and insect specimens, and Arkady sometimes goes with him. They often argue, and Bazarov always wins the arguments, though Arkady is the more eloquent of the two. One day Nikolai goes out to meet the young men in the garden and hears them arguing. Bazarov says that Nikolai is old fashioned and has "had his day." Nikolai goes back inside. Bazarov argues that Arkady ought to persuade his father to stop reading romantic "rubbish" like Pushkin and give him something "sensible" to read instead—Büchner's *Stoff und Kraft*, for instance.

Arkady is more attentive to the beauty of language, whereas Bazarov is more forceful in argument. Arkady is willing to push back against Bazarov's ideas and not accept all of them wholesale. However, Bazarov is influencing Arkady to think that materialism—like that promoted in Büchner's materialist treatise—is better than romantic literature because it is "useful." Attaching importance to poetry and literature is outdated and a waste of time to Bazarov.

That day Nikolai sits with Pavel at dinner. He feels hurt, having hoped that he and Arkady could now grow closer. Instead, Arkady has "forged ahead," and they can no longer understand one another. Pavel dismisses Bazarov as a conceited "quack." Nikolai disagrees, but he can't figure out where he went wrong. He's always sought to be progressive, even "radical," and has tried to keep up with the age—but to no avail. He tells Pavel that, earlier, while he sat reading Pushkin's *The Gypsies*, Arkady came up and, with "an affectionate look of pity," replaced Pushkin with *Stoff und Kraft*.

Nikolai's hopes for a renewed relationship with Arkady have been disappointed, as Arkady has far outpaced him despite Nikolai's best efforts to stay abreast of progress. Pavel's dismissal of Bazarov doesn't help. Arkady's rather condescending rejection of the literature Nikolai prizes, like Pushkin, feels like a personal rejection to him, not just a recommendation of something different.

Pavel examines the ninth edition of *Stoff und Kraft* and asks Nikolai what he makes of the book. Nikolai replies that either he is stupid or it is all rubbish; he supposes the former. Then he changes the subject, telling Pavel that Kolyazin, a bigwig privy councilor who is a relative of theirs, is visiting the province and wishes to see them. Pavel dismisses this, pointing out that he and Nikolai are "back numbers" anyway—although he's sure he has "a skirmish with that doctor fellow" in front of him before all is said and done.

In light of Arkady's behavior since returning home, Nikolai, despite being only in his 40s, feels that society has advanced beyond his ability to understand. Again, the differences between them evoke a personal sense of loss; it's not primarily about abstract principles for Nikolai.

Later that day, at tea-time, Pavel comes to the table irritable and looking for a fight. He waits impatiently for Bazarov to give him a pretext, and finally Bazarov obliges, calling a neighboring landowner "a complete rotter, a third-rate aristocrat." Pavel inquires whether Bazarov considers *all* aristocrats to be "rotters," and then Pavel gives the English aristocracy as an example of "genuine" aristocrats who are worthy of a liberal person's respect. (As he does so, he takes on an ever more aristocratic accent, a relic from the days of Alexander I.) Pavel argues that aristocratic self-respect and good character—like his own habit of dressing finely even in the depths of the country—are the backbone of the social fabric.

Here it's quite obvious how personally Pavel takes Bazarov's rejection of aristocracy. When Bazarov rejects aristocrats, Pavel unconsciously takes on the applicable accent. And he argues that his own "aristocratic" choices have a justification that is beneficial to broader society. Thus Bazarov's sneering rejection of all things aristocratic is an affront to Pavel's existence.

Pavel then argues that "aristocratism" is merely a principle, and "only immoral or silly people" can do without principles; the logic of history demands them. Bazarov retorts that humanity doesn't have time for such abstractions; no one needs "logic" to put a piece of bread in their mouth when they're hungry. The only thing upon which conduct should be based is what is "useful"; all else should be repudiated. Arkady "[glows] with satisfaction" during this exchange.

Pavel goes on to argue that history is built on principles, but Bazarov objects that we should only be concerned about what enables people to feed themselves. Anything that's not useful for survival should be rejected. This underscores the fundamentally utilitarian basis of nihilism. Arkady enjoys seeing his uncle bested by his new mentor.

Pavel argues that one cannot just destroy; one must also construct, but Bazarov maintains that "that is not our affair … the ground must be cleared first." Arkady adds "pompously" that "the present condition of the people requires" this. Pavel vehemently rejects that this really represents Russian needs and aspirations. The Russian people, he says, hold tradition sacred and can't live without faith. The young men continue to insist that this fact proves nothing.

Bazarov's and Arkady's view is that the older liberal emphasis on reforming institutions is misguided. They're only concerned with tearing down what's proven itself not to be useful. Thus, the generations have entirely different views on what "progress" is. Pavel argues that this is completely disconnected from a realistic understanding of the Russian people.

Nikolai tries to disrupt the exchange. Pavel calms his brother and addresses Bazarov once more, arguing that such "materialism" has been tried before and has always proven itself to be bankrupt. Bazarov is beginning to get angry. Endless debating of social issues, he says, is a waste of time; "so-called progressives and reformers" never accomplish anything. That is why nihilists have decided to "confine ourselves to abuse" rather than trying to do anything "serious."

Pavel sees the young men's perspective as just another example of naïve, youthful idealism. Moreover, there's nothing new under the sun; they think they're being radical, but such efforts have failed before. Bazarov sees Pavel as fundamentally missing the point—agitating for reform has never actually achieved anything, so nihilists are trying a different tack altogether.

When Arkady agrees with Bazarov, Pavel groans that such a force as nihilism is fundamentally uncivilized. Anyway, nihilists are too few to make any difference among the Russian masses. When Bazarov says that nihilists are more numerous than Pavel thinks, Pavel calls this an "almost Satanic pride" and mocks the presumption of youths who reject everything as "rubbish." Bazarov continues to argue that there is no public or private institution that should not be ruthlessly repudiated, including the peasant commune and the family. He and Arkady excuse themselves to go and dissect frogs, leaving Pavel and Nikolai speechless.

Pavel sees the young nihilists as fundamentally undercutting society and their project as inherent arrogant. For Bazarov especially, this just reinforces his commitment to nihilism. His and Arkady's abrupt departure to dissect frogs fittingly concludes the argument; for them, scientific experiments yield far more useful knowledge than fruitless debates.

CHAPTER 11

Later Nikolai goes out to his garden, "filled with melancholy thoughts." He foresees a widening gap between himself and Arkady and feels that his efforts to stay up to date have been in vain. Nevertheless, he feels that the young men have some advantage over his generation—perhaps their distance from "the serf-owning mentality." Yet the nihilist rejection of **nature** confounds him. Looking across his fields, Nikolai thinks "O Lord, how beautiful it is!" and almost recites some favorite lines of poetry, but he remembers *Stoff und Kraft* and falls silent.

Nikolai is a generous man who seeks to do justice to the young men's perspective. It's still heartbreaking for him to see an unbridgeable gap between himself and Arkady. Though both Bazarov and Nikolai are ardent observers of nature, their attitudes about nature couldn't be more different: Nikolai is moved to a poetic outburst, while Bazarov wants to dissect it, in accordance with materialist tomes.

As he continues his melancholy reflections, Nikolai thinks of his Masha and is sorry when Fenichka suddenly calls for him in the garden, reminding him of his age. His memories fade, but he remains there, pacing and shedding tears as night falls, all the while thinking how Bazarov and Arkady would laugh at his sentimentality. He briefly crosses paths with Pavel; Pavel, too, is pacing, but unlike his romantic brother, his soul "was not capable of reverie."

Nikolai reflects tenderly on his first wife; Fenichka's youth only seems to remind him of his loss. Both he and Pavel harbor their share of memories, but Nikolai is given to sentimentality, whereas Pavel stews in bitterness. For both, romance has been a palpably transforming experience, in contrast to the nihilist contention of its unreality.

That night Bazarov suggests to Arkady that they should go and visit the bigwig relative who's extended an invitation. Arkady is delighted with the suggestion but conceals his excitement behind languor; "he was not a nihilist for nothing!" The two of them set off the following day. The older men "breathed a sigh of relief."

As much as Arkady looks up to Bazarov and genuinely wants to embrace his principles, there's an element of youthful pretense in it, as well—of trying to embody a worldview that maybe doesn't fit him as well as he thinks. The departure of the two deflates the generational tension that has prevailed at Maryino.

CHAPTER 12

The two friends set off for a town which is under the jurisdiction of a young governor, "both progressive and despotic." This governor has caused such feuds that the Petersburg authorities have sent down Kolyazin to investigate. Kolyazin is about forty, a rising statesman, and a progressive. He is vain but good-natured, often taken advantage of but sly in his personal dealings. He welcomes Arkady warmly and encourages him to attend the ball the governor is giving in his honor. He promises to introduce Arkady to some local ladies.

Turgenev briefly worked in the civil service himself and seems to pay special attention to the personalities he observed there. Members of the gentry often made many of their personal connections through such links to governmental figures.

With some effort, Arkady persuades Bazarov to attend the ball. On their way back from introducing themselves to the governor, they're intercepted by a young man, Sitnikov, who's dressed in a Slavophil style. Sitnikov introduces himself to Arkady as Bazarov's "disciple," although Bazarov seems less keen. Sitnikov is elegant and pleasant but has a shrill, uneasy laugh. He tells Bazarov that he must get to know a local woman, Madame Kukshin, who is "advanced" and separated from her husband. Bazarov is reluctant, but when Sitnikov promises there will be champagne, the three set off together.

Slavophilia was the belief that traditional Russian styles and practices were best for Russia, not Westernizing ones. Such a belief makes a somewhat awkward fit with Sitnikov's claim to be a nihilist disciple. Madame Kukshin's separation from her husband does fit with a nihilist view of marriage.

CHAPTER 13

At Madame Kukshin's, the friends are met by a woman who's neither servant nor companion, a sign of the lady's "progressive tendencies." They find Madame Kukshin in a study that's cluttered with papers and cigarette butts. Madame Kukshin is young, plain, and somewhat disheveled, and, like Sitnikov, she seems "perpetually on edge." Everything she does seems affected rather than spontaneous. She orders lunch and champagne for the guests and begins talking with Bazarov about chemistry; she's invented a material to make unbreakable dolls' heads.

Madame Kukshin is a rather awkward figure; she seems comfortable neither within traditional societal structures nor, for that matter, in her own skin. Her invention shows her eccentricity and also hints that Turgenev doesn't view such dilettantes as being very useful to society.

The conversation drifts to women's education. Bazarov takes little interest in the discussion until Madame Kukshin mentions a woman named Madame Odintsov, a clever, rich widow, albeit not "sufficiently advanced," according to Sitnikov. The group goes through four bottles of champagne and debates marriage, equality, and individuality. Bazarov and Arkady unceremoniously leave after their hostess starts drunkenly singing ballads. Sitnikov skips after them, asking what they think of Madame Kukshin, whom he thinks "in her own way, a highly moral phenomenon."

This scene further suggests that Turgenev doesn't see some of the "radical" figures of his day as being all that interesting or useful. Such people often spend much of their time indulging themselves and talking with like-minded friends. Bazarov has little patience for Sitnikov's or Madame Kukshin's pretenses, either.

CHAPTER 14

At the governor's ball, Bazarov shows up in a shabby dress-coat and does not dance. He, Arkady, and Sitnikov linger in a corner until Madame Odintsov arrives. Arkady sees a tall, dignified woman with a "tranquil and intelligent expression." He asks Sitnikov to introduce him. Madame Odintsov brightens when she hears Arkady's name and says that she is acquainted with his father. She promises to dance a mazurka with Arkady later, giving him a sisterly look. She is 29, not that much older than Arkady, but he feels like a "schoolboy" in her presence. He can't take his eyes off her.

Bazarov shows his contempt for such society affairs. Arkady, though, is immediately smitten with the striking Madame Odintsov.

During the mazurka, Arkady is shy at first, but he opens up in response to Madame Odintsov's calm courtesy. They talk for an hour, and, curious about Bazarov, she invites the two of them to visit her soon. When Arkady returns to his friend, he's jarred by Bazarov's cynical comments. Bazarov says that he thinks "free-thinking women are monstrosities."

As before, Arkady tends to have more interest in individuals and is more warm and open than Bazarov. Bazarov has a jarringly misogynist attitude which he doesn't bother to explain or defend.

CHAPTER 15

The next day, the two drop by Madame Odintsov's hotel. There has been gossip about Madame Odintsov's former marriage to a rich old man, but Bazarov says that "for our sort of people," "'not quite right' means 'quite all right.'" When Madame Odintsov comes in, Arkady is amazed to see that Bazarov seems nervous around her. Bazarov starts chattering with exaggerated ease.

In Bazarov's view, Madame Odintsov's questionable past—the mere fact that she's not entirely conventional—makes her more appealing. For all his dismissal of romance and his distaste for women, Bazarov appears to be strongly affected by the noblewoman's presence, too.

Anna Sergeyevna Odintsov is the daughter of a nobleman who ruined himself by gambling, leaving a tiny income to Anna and her younger sister, Katya. Anna's education hadn't prepared her for the management of an estate, and she had no one to help her except for a spiteful, scolding old aunt. Then she married an eccentric hypochondriac of 46, Odintsov. After his death, Anna and Katya remained on his estate of Nikolskoye, Anna becoming a slight recluse in light of persistent rumors about her unusual marriage.

In spite of her wealth, Anna Odintsov hasn't had an easy life and has been forced to develop her independence after being widowed at an early age, dealing with the whispered disapproval of society. She doesn't fit easily into society's categories, but, unlike the awkward Madame Kukshin, she is much more self-assured.

Bazarov is trying to impress Anna with conversation about medicine and botany, to Arkady's surprise, and she appears flattered by this. Anna is well-read and holds her own in the conversation. She continues to regard Arkady like a younger brother. After a long conversation, Anna invites the two men to visit her at Nikolskoye. Bazarov blushes. As they leave, Bazarov suggests that they go the day after tomorrow. Three days later they're on their way.

Instead of being withdrawn and dismissive, as at Madame Kukshin's, Bazarov is now trying to engage his hostess on subjects that matter to him. He even shows uncharacteristic embarrassment. He doesn't wait long to take Anna up on her offer.

CHAPTER 16

Arriving at Anna's imposing country house, Arkady and Bazarov are met by two footmen in livery and a butler in a black tail-coat; right away they're led to well-appointed guest quarters. Both feel "a certain constraint" in the grand atmosphere. Soon Anna appears and welcomes them rather formally, but once she and Arkady begin talking, Arkady feels more comfortable; it happens that Anna's mother had been a friend and confidant of Arkady's mother. Soon Anna's 18-year-old sister, Katya, joins them with her dog, a large white borzoi named Fifi. Katya is innocent-looking and somewhat shy.

The traditional atmosphere at Anna's estate is more aristocratic than that found at Arkady's estate; the young men, with their rejection of traditional class structures, are ill at ease here. Despite her status, Anna is good at welcoming guests and making them feel at home.

Anna suggests to Bazarov that they should begin an argument about something, and Bazarov responds gamely. They begin discussing art, a subject for which Bazarov sees no purpose. Anna thinks that art helps one understand people. Bazarov replies that one needs only life experience for that; but, more to the point, studying separate individuals is not worthwhile, because all people are basically similar, in both body and soul. Even moral variations are very slight. One needs to study only a single human specimen, therefore, in order to understand the whole of humanity.

Bazarov's conversation with Anna clearly displays his nihilistic, materialistic views. He applies the principles of scientific investigation to human beings, basically arguing that individual differences are insignificant; there's no need to study human distinctions any more than one needs to account for separate trees, beetles, etc. Bazarov's stance appears rather inhumane to say the least.

Anna presses Bazarov regarding the difference between good people and bad. Bazarov maintains that, much as we understand what causes physical ailments, we can see that "moral diseases" are caused by improper education, or by "the disordered state of society." If society is reformed, therefore, the diseases will disappear. In any case, if a society is "properly organized," "stupid" or "bad" people will be easily managed. Arkady agrees.

Bazarov believes that the proper structuring of society will take care of societal ills. If people are just taught properly, moral problems will fade away of their own accord. This view fits with Bazarov's reduction of human characteristics to mechanistic processes. Arkady, as usual, doesn't add much of his own thoughts to the conversation, just hastens to agree with his mentor.

Anna's shriveled, glaring aunt comes in for tea, and the discussion ceases. After tea, Bazarov and Anna play cards with a neighbor who's dropped by, and Anna encourages Katya to play the piano for Arkady. Feeling dismissed and already experiencing "the foretaste of love" for Anna, Arkady joins Katya at the piano and listens indifferently as she plays a Mozart sonata. Afterward, he tries to chat with Katya about Mozart, but she replies in monosyllables. She soon busies herself with a flower arrangement while Arkady pets Fifi.

Arkady feels superfluous to the conversation, as Anna clearly views him as too young to be of interest. Meanwhile, Katya doesn't seem to be interested in him, either. He is more attracted to Anna than ever but is left trying to appear occupied while Anna and Bazarov enjoy themselves.

That night, in private, the friends both rave about Anna Sergeyevna. But Bazarov says that Katya is really the more "wonderful" of the two—"one could make something of her."

Both men admit to their feelings for Anna, setting up the potential for conflict. Bazarov appears to be trying to redirect Arkady to the younger sister, on the grounds that she's more pliable.

Anna, meanwhile, thinks about Bazarov. She likes his lack of affectation and is curious about him. Anna herself is "rather a strange person" who has no clear goal in life and thus is never satisfied. Her life is easy, and she seldom dreams of anything beyond her conventional routine. She has never "succeeded in falling in love" and thus "[hankers] after something without knowing what it was."

On the surface, Anna is a more conventional character than the others, but she appears to resort to convention out of a lack of ambition.

The next day Anna and Bazarov set off on a botany expedition. Arkady enjoys spending an hour with Katya, but feels a pang when Anna returns and he sees the tender expression on Bazarov's face.

Though Katya is a suitable friend for Arkady, he continues to pine for the unattainable Anna and is pained by her growing bond with Bazarov. This suggests that Arkady has a habit of failing to recognize what's good for him.

CHAPTER 17

Bazarov and Arkady spend two weeks at Anna Odintsov's. She governs her household according to a punctual daily routine, whose "somewhat ostentatious formality" Bazarov resents. He tells Anna this, but she simply replies that in the country "one must lead an orderly life" or else die of *ennui*. Meanwhile, Bazarov has begun to show "quite unprecedented signs of emotional disturbance," acting restless and irritable. Arkady, thinking himself in love with Anna, "[abandons] himself to a gentle melancholy." He spends his time with Katya, not noticing how much they enjoy the same things, such as **nature**. Bazarov talks to Arkady less than before.

Bazarov and Arkady start to be folded into the daily routine at Nikolskoye. Anna is able to hold her own with Bazarov's cranky objections. Bazarov, though, seems to be falling for Anna, and the fact disturbs him, given his materialist rejection of romance. A wedge is starting to be driven between the two friends. Arkady's pining renders him oblivious to Katya's apparent suitedness to him. Nevertheless, he's able to be himself around her, much more than he permits himself to be around Bazarov.

Bazarov is maddened by his feelings for Madame Odintsov. He thinks romance is foolishness, but he can't seem to turn away from her. Each time he recognizes romance stirring in him, he stomps around the forest or tries to sleep it off, but he can't control his feelings. Anna, too, is growing more interested in Bazarov.

Irrepressible romantic feelings are unsettling to Bazarov; they threaten his self-image as rising above such foolishness. He thinks romance is something merely physiological that he can just shake off like an illness, but it's proving maddeningly persistent.

One day, Bazarov's father's old bailiff, Timofeich, stops at Nikolskoye and hints that Bazarov should visit his parents soon. That evening, Anna sits in her private sitting-room with Bazarov, asking him why he must leave. Anna tells him she will miss him, but Bazarov sees no point in missing people. She tries to get him to talk about himself, to little avail. She grows more agitated as the evening wears on, telling Bazarov she is unhappy. She has no longing for life and feels unsatisfied. She wonders if she is incapable of love.

Bazarov seizes on the excuse to visit his parents to get away from Nikolskoye and his disturbing romantic feelings. Anna is trying to get Bazarov to open up to her more, but he's refusing to take the bait.

After Anna's failed attempts to detain him, Bazarov eventually says goodnight, but not before squeezing her hand fiercely. Anna sits in her room, brooding silently, for a long time. Bazarov doesn't return to his bedroom for another two hours, looking disheveled when he arrives. Arkady is still up, writing. When Bazarov speaks sarcastically to him about his and Katya's late-night piano-playing, Arkady's eyes well with tears.

Bazarov can't resist communicating something of his emotions to Anna, although even this gesture appears to unsettle him even more. He takes it out on Arkady, who is much more attuned to his emotions—which he still imagines to be fixed on Anna— and feels hurt by his friend's cutting sarcasm.

CHAPTER 18

The next morning Anna invites Bazarov to her sitting-room. She asks him about the title of a chemistry textbook he'd recommended. Bazarov rattles off some titles and authors, but Anna quickly interjects. She really wants to resume their conversation from last night, when Bazarov left so suddenly. She recalls that they'd been discussing happiness. Why, she wonders, does she never feel that she can *possess* happiness—only fleeting hints of an abstract happiness? Bazarov says that such thoughts never enter his head. Anna presses him, "[W]hat is the goal you are aiming for [...] In short, who are you?"

Anna gets straight to the point with Bazarov; she has no patience for pretense or talking around the subject—she wants to understand him and senses that there's more under the surface than his dismissive remarks suggest. She's pushing back directly on his nihilism.

Bazarov says that he is simply a student of natural science, a country doctor in the making. Anna impatiently dismisses this; Bazarov must have more ambition, but he is putting her off because he lacks confidence in her. Bazarov argues that there is too much of a gulf between the two of them, and, anyway, it's pointless to speculate about the future. Anna keeps questioning him, sure that they're meant to become good friends and that Bazarov will overcome his "reserve" sooner or later.

Bazarov continues to make excuses, not allowing Anna to break through the barriers he's put up and get closer to him.

His back to Anna, Bazarov finally admits that he loves her "madly, idiotically." He presses his face against the window, trembling with an unhappy struggle. Anna feels both afraid and sorry for him and finally says, "Yevgeny Vassilyich," with tenderness in her voice. He turns, throws "a devouring look" at her, and draws her to himself. But a moment later, Anna frees herself in alarm, telling Bazarov, "You have misunderstood me." Bazarov leaves the room.

Anna finally succeeds in pressing Bazarov to admit his feelings for her, but then she's frightened by the intensity of his desire and isn't sure she wants what's finally been stirred to the surface in Bazarov.

A half hour later, Bazarov sends a note, asking whether he should leave at once or stay until tomorrow. Anna replies that there's no reason for him to leave; they have simply misunderstood one another. But she thinks, "I did not understand myself either." She spends the rest of the day pacing in her room, struggling with her feelings, until finally she decides, "A quiet life is better than anything else in the world." She still feels sad and guilty, however, and in her life she sees "only chaos without shape."

Bazarov makes a polite inquiry, understanding that he may have offended Anna. Anna chalks up their uncomfortable exchange to a "misunderstanding," but struggles with her own feelings before deciding she doesn't want to give up her comfortable, independent life. However, she's aware of a kind of chaotic nihilism in her own life; she doesn't know what she really wants.

CHAPTER 19

At dinner, Bazarov looks forbidding and withdrawn. After the meal, he approaches Anna to apologize, saying that she must be very angry with him. Anna denies this, though she is grieved. Bazarov tells her that he must leave tomorrow; he could only stay if there were some hope of her loving him. Anna doesn't answer; "I am afraid of this man," she thinks. Bazarov says goodbye and withdraws to his room for the rest of the day.

Bazarov and Anna are at an impasse; Bazarov's rejected advance has only brought to the surface the underlying confusion both of them feel, refusing to admit the reality of their love and thus unable to classify what they feel.

Later that day, Sitnikov unexpectedly arrives. "The young apostle of progress" had decided "with characteristic impudence" to visit Anna, even though he barely knows her and has not been invited. He is flustered and awkward. However, his presence helps moderate the emotions in the house, and things feel more normal.

Sitnikov's uninvited, unannounced arrival is quite a social faux pas; again, he wants to be a convention-rejecting radical, but he can't quite pull it off. But he provides a convenient interruption, breaking the tension in the household.

That night in their room, Arkady asks Bazarov why he is so melancholy. Bazarov tells Arkady he's leaving for his father's house tomorrow. After a few moments, Arkady decides he will leave tomorrow as well, for his own home. He feels heartache, though, not wanting to break from their accustomed routine and unsure why either of them is leaving. He sheds a tear, thinking of Anna and knowing he'll miss Katya, too.

Arkady again shows himself to be the more sensitive of the two. Despite his vocal agreement with Bazarov, he is responsive to his environment and has become rooted in life at Nikolskoye. Even though he still believes himself to be in love with Anna, he's also warmed to Katya.

When Arkady expresses regret at Sitnikov's unwelcome arrival, Bazarov says Arkady is a fool. "Louts" like Sitnikov, he says, are essential; "it is not for the gods to have to bake bricks!" At those words, Arkady realizes "the fathomless depths of Bazarov's conceit."

The gulf between the two men has widened during their stay at Anna's. That distance allows Arkady to recognize how arrogant Bazarov actually is, as Bazarov mocks the lowly types, like Sitnikov, who, he implies, do the heavy lifting that radical thinkers like himself don't have time for.

The next morning after breakfast, the two friends and Sitnikov all take their leave of Madame Odintsov. Sitnikov begs Arkady to ride in his barouche, but at the last moment, Arkady tells Bazarov he wants to come along with him to his parents'. Sitnikov looks on in shock and later tells his friends in town what "nasty, stuck-up" fellows the two of them are. Meanwhile, Arkady warmly presses Bazarov's hand; Bazarov looks gaunt and underslept. Bazarov says he'll be fine; they've both behaved like fools, but now they're throwing off "trifling" feminine society and will recover.

Despite their argument, Arkady still expresses kindness to Bazarov, though Bazarov arguably doesn't deserve such warmth. Bazarov is still tormented by his feelings for Anna but he persists in believing that he can just shake off something so "trivial." Ironically, despite the physical evidence of his own weary condition, he continues to believe that romantic feelings are a trick of the mind.

They journey 16 miles to Bazarov's family home. There's a little village and a small house with a thatched roof. Two peasants, swearing at each other, stand outside a cottage. Bazarov sees his father standing in front of the house.

The environment at Bazarov's family home—a humble village complete with cursing peasants—contrasts sharply with the gentility of Nikolskoye and suggests that the friends' commitments, to their beliefs and to one another, will be further tested in this new atmosphere.

CHAPTER 20

Bazarov's father, Vassily Ivanych, is casually smoking his pipe, but he's trembling with joy as he embraces Bazarov. Then his mother, Arina Vlassyevna, appears, calling for "my little Yevgeny"; he catches her as she stumbles toward him, sobbing. Vassily makes excuses to Arkady for his wife's emotion, but he's clearly overcome, too. Bazarov leads his parents into the house and introduces Arkady. Vassily has a glass of water brought for his weeping wife—they haven't seen Bazarov for three years—and he invites the two young men into his study.

In this moving scene, the emotions of Vassily and Arina contrast markedly with their son's apparent nonchalance. Bazarov's lack of outward emotion—to say nothing of the fact that he hasn't visited his parents' home for years—shows that family ties are among those traditional institutions he rejects.

The small house consists of six rooms, and Vassily's study contains littered papers, displayed weapons, maps, and various medical paraphernalia. Vassily runs off to see that Arkady's guest room is ready and returns with a small boy who will serve as Arkady's valet. When Vassily makes apologies for their humble home, Bazarov tells him to stop with the "poor-man stuff." Vassily acknowledges that despite their rural life, he does his best to keep up with the times, and that "for a thinking man there is no such thing as a wilderness."

Vassily is eagerly hospitable, and, like Arkady's father, he evidently tries to stay current with emerging ideas, despite his advancing age and remote location. He classifies himself as "a thinking man." It remains to be seen what Bazarov will think and how this father-son pair will compare to Nikolai and Arkady.

Vassily tells Arkady about the advances they're knowledgeable of in these parts, such as phrenology, Schönlein, and Rademacher. Bazarov is surprised that people still believe in Rademacher around here. Vassily says that the young men "are here to take our places," and of course they know better. Bazarov consoles his father that "nowadays we laugh at medicine in general, and worship no one."

Vassily names some medical scientists whose work was thought ground-breaking in the earlier part of the 19th century. For example, phrenology was a "science" that predicted a person's traits based on examination of bumps on the skull. Even by the mid-19th century, phrenology was already being discredited, signaling to the reader that Vassily isn't as advanced as he thinks. But Vassily seems to take his outdatedness in stride and even to be proud of his son's more advanced views.

Vassily tells Arkady that he's a retired army doctor, having served in Arkady's grandfather's brigade, and has now taken up farming. As there is no doctor here, he tends to the peasants once or twice a week when they ask for advice. For the next hour, he tells the young men anecdotes about the peasants, but he is the only one who laughs; Bazarov just puffs at his pipe.

Bazarov and Arkady fit uneasily in Vassily's rural world, and Vassily's effusive, humorous personality contrasts with Bazarov's aloofness.

They have a sumptuous dinner. Arina sits sighing and gazing at her son, while Vassily paces up and down, happily holding forth on politics. As they say goodnight, Arina stealthily makes the sign of the cross behind her son's back, and Vassily hopes to stay up chatting with him, but Bazarov sends him away, lying awake until morning. Bazarov isn't inclined towards nostalgia for his childhood, and he's still fixed on thoughts of Madame Odintsov.

Arina and Vassily are still overjoyed by Bazarov's long-awaited presence and aren't troubled by his reserve, though both seem to be aware that their way of life doesn't suit him. Bazarov's mood is mostly due to his distraction over Anna, though—romance still maintains an unwelcome grip on his outlook.

Arina Vlassyevna stays up giddily talking to her housemaid about her Yevgeny. Arina "was a true Russian gentlewoman of the old school." She is devout, superstitious, devoted to her husband, and an expert housewife, although she seldom moves from her chair. She believes firmly in the division between gentry and "the common people whose duty it was to serve." She loves and fears her son "to an inexpressible degree." Such women are rare in today's Russia.

Arina is the archetypal Russian housewife, symbol of a way of life that's passing away in Turgenev's day. While she's not without her faults, Arina's complexities and inconsistencies show her to be a rounder character than the comparatively flat Bazarov. Using Arina as a symbol, Turgenev suggests that "old Russia," though backward in many respects, had a richness that the radicals of his day lack.

CHAPTER 21

The next morning Arkady sees Vassily digging in his garden in his dressing-gown, having just come from doctoring some peasants. Arkady joins him for some tea in the fresh air. Vassily questions Arkady about his friendship with Bazarov, asking for Arkady's honest opinion of his son. Arkady tells him that Bazarov is one of the most remarkable men he has ever met, and that he is sure Bazarov will have a great future. He tells the rapturous Vassily the story of how they met. Vassily tearfully admits that he "worships" his son.

Vassily transparently adores Bazarov and presses his guest for details about his son. The generational contrast is somewhat different in the Bazarov family; Vassily has dedicated himself to his son's success and advancement, taking for granted that Bazarov will surpass him. By contrast, Arkady's father Nikolai has envisioned Arkady following in his footsteps and is hurt when that doesn't happen.

Later, at midday, Bazarov and Arkady are resting in the shade of a haystack. Arkady asks Bazarov, who's still heartbroken and brooding over Anna, about his childhood. After some time, Bazarov muses that his parents lead such a happy life, while he cannot help thinking about the insignificance and futility of his life and feels nothing but "depression and rancor." At the same time, he finds his parents' way of life deadening. Arkady reflects that one's life ought to be arranged so that every moment is important; but Bazarov finds the "petty troubles" of daily life unendurable.

Bazarov opens up to Arkady more than he's done previously. He's troubled by the contrast between his parents' contentment and his own feelings of futility; even though he finds their traditional lifestyle trifling, his self-importance is deflated in the face of their happiness amidst "petty troubles." Bazarov's nihilist worldview can't make sense of this conflict.

Bazarov keeps talking in a depressed tone, remarking that not only are principles empty, but everything comes down to feelings—which are the result of the way one's brain is made. This even extends to such things as integrity. When he says this, Arkady sorrowfully says, "Oh, Yevgeny!" Bazarov says that when one goes down a philosophical path, one must go "the whole hog." He and Arkady have a petty argument about Pushkin and then, "in the grip of [...] hostility," Bazarov accuses Arkady of following in his "idiot" uncle Pavel's footsteps. When Arkady objects, Bazarov criticizes him for his "family feeling." He tells Arkady they should "quarrel properly for once," and Arkady is startled by the "sinister" look on his friend's face.

Despite his troubled feelings, Bazarov continues to maintain that everything is reducible to brain chemistry. When he extends this view even to integrity, it's a bridge too far for Arkady, who, although he still admires Bazarov, struggles more and more to adhere fully to his outlook. Their meaningless tiff over Pushkin confirms the growing divide between the two. Bazarov just interprets Arkady's pushback as an unthinking family loyalty.

Just then Vassily comes upon them and cheerfully likens them to "Castor and Pollux in person." Bazarov begs his father not to be sentimental. Vassily warns Bazarov that Father Alexei, the village priest, is going to dine with them, having just conducted a thanksgiving service celebrating Bazarov's visit, at Arina's request. (Vassily does not admit that he desired the service as much as his wife did.)

Castor and Pollux were twin half-brothers in Greek mythology. Given the argument the friends have just had, Vassily's comment is ironic. He's aware enough, however, to forewarn them about the parish priest, knowing that Bazarov's radical principles put him at odds with his own traditional religion.

At dinner, Father Alexei proves to be a "stout and imposing" and witty man. He refrains from openly blessing the two young men. He drinks wine and plays cards with them and even accepts a cigar from Arkady. Arina continues to gaze with devotion and awe at her son, and once Bazarov asks her to give him her hand "for luck."

Father Alexei proves to be an agreeable guest who takes care not to offend the young men, suggesting that, in Turgenev's view, traditional faith isn't tone-deaf to societal changes. Bazarov appears to soften somewhat toward his mother.

The next day, Bazarov tells Arkady that he's going to leave tomorrow; he's bored, and his father is never far away. He will return to Arkady's house, where he's left all his scientific apparatus. Arkady observes that Bazarov's parents will be very upset; they've been planning on a two-week visit at least. He also tells Bazarov that Bazarov doesn't understand his mother; Arina is a very clever conversationalist. Bazarov dismisses these remarks, but nevertheless it takes him all day to tell his father they intend to leave the following day. Vassily is "thunderstruck." Haltingly, he tells his son, "three days ... after three years ... it's rather little; rather little, Yevgeny." He hurries from the room and can't bear to tell his wife the news.

Bazarov finds the atmosphere at his parents' house unendurable for very long. For him, the worldview conflict is unsustainable. Arkady, characteristically, has warmed to the elder Bazarovs, and he argues with his friend again, accusing him of not appreciating his parents enough. The rift between the two is widening. For his part, even Bazarov isn't immune to his parents' feelings, as he finds it difficult to tell them he's leaving.

The next day, the Bazarov house is "filled with depression." Vassily makes a "brave show" while Arina weeps. Bazarov tears himself away after promising to return within a month. After the tarantass disappears from sight, the old couple console one another in their grief.

Bazarov's departure suggests that a nihilist outlook like his can't long survive within traditional society, and, as much as his parents love him, their affection can't maintain a lasting hold on a son who rejects the enduring importance of family ties.

CHAPTER 22

The friends journey in silence, Bazarov not entirely pleased with himself and Arkady displeased with him. When they stop to change horses, Arkady suggests that they go back to Nikolskoye, even though they both feel it's foolish.

Arkady is less and less inclined to automatically defer to Bazarov's view of things. Conscious of the rift, Arkady falls back on Nikolskoye as a comforting alternative, though he doesn't seem fully aware of what's drawing him back there.

When they arrive at Madame Odintsov's, they're obviously not expected. When Anna finally joins them, she seems surprised and half-hearted at their arrival. They hastily assure her that they will be on their way within four hours. When Katya doesn't emerge from her room, Arkady realizes that he had been just as eager to see her as to see Anna. They spend the time in "desultory conversation" and then make haste for Maryino.

The friends receive a cold welcome at Nikolskoye—unsurprising, given the terms on which Bazarov parted with his would-be lover. It begins to dawn on Arkady that Katya is special to him. However, they take the hint and leave quickly.

At the Kirsanovs', everyone is overjoyed at the men's return. The household feasts late into the night. But while they'd been gone, Nikolai's life on the farm had been filled with "dreary, futile difficulties." His hired laborers are troublesome, and the work is poorly done. The bailiff is growing fat and lazy, and the peasants keep quarreling. Nikolai is beginning to despair that, absent the threat of punishment, the peasants cannot be managed.

In contrast to the heartrending departure from the Bazarovs, the Kirsanovs celebrate the friends' homecoming. But Nikolai feels unequal to the demands of managing the newly emancipated serfs. Even though Nikolai is sincerely reformist in outlook, the realities of progress seem to demand more than good intentions—a small concession to Bazarov's rejection of old-fashioned liberals like Nikolai.

Bazarov immerses himself once again in his dissections and chemical experiments. Arkady, meanwhile, tries to take in interest in his father's concerns. The prospect of a farming life is not distasteful to him, but he is mostly preoccupied with thoughts of Nikolskoye. He had never thought he would feel bored under the same roof as Bazarov. One day Nikolai mentions some letters that had been sent to his wife by Madame Odintsov's mother, and Arkady won't rest until his father rummages through 20 different boxes to find them. Restless but shy, Arkady holds off for about 10 days after their arrival at Maryino, but then gallops off toward Nikolskoye, on the pretext of studying Sunday schools.

Arkady's openness to farming suggests that, after some time away and exposure to several different lifestyles, he's warmed somewhat to his father's way of life. He's also growing weary of Bazarov's formerly stimulating presence. Arkady gives a flimsy excuse (studying Sunday schools, presumably a reforming effort among freed serfs) to get away from Bazarov and back to the women at Nikolskoye.

As soon as his horses reach Nikolskoye, Arkady spots Katya and jumps out to greet her. She blushes with surprise and delight at the sight of him. Arkady "was so delighted to see her that she might have been someone close to his heart." When they find Anna Sergeyevna, he tells her that he's brought her a surprise (the letters), and she tells him that bringing himself is better than anything else.

Arkady is surprised how excited he is to see Katya, since he's still in denial that she's the object of his heart, not Anna. Now that he's out from under Bazarov's shadow, he will have room to become better acquainted with his own feelings.

CHAPTER 23

Bazarov, meanwhile, works feverishly in solitude. Nikolai drops by his study daily and engages him in scientific discussions, but perceives that Pavel continues to despise Bazarov. This is confirmed when Pavel falls briefly ill with cholera and refuses to ask Bazarov for help, arguing that Bazarov "has no faith in medicine." Meanwhile, Bazarov begins to befriend Fenichka.

Bazarov buries himself in his scientific work. Nikolai continues to show his readiness to keep pace with current advances, but resentment continues to simmer between Pavel and Bazarov.

Fenichka feels at ease around Bazarov, who lacks an aristocratic air, and she goes to him for advice about Mitya. She finds him simply "an excellent doctor and an ordinary man." Bazarov likes her, too, and she draws a kindliness out of him. However, Fenichka notices Pavel prowling sourly in the background whenever she talks with Bazarov in the garden.

The growing bond between Fenichka and Bazarov—which Fenichka clearly interprets as friendship and nothing more—will become the flashpoint between Bazarov and Pavel.

One day Bazarov comes upon Fenichka in the lilac arbor, gathering flowers for the breakfast table, and they start a lighthearted conversation. Fenichka doesn't know how to thank Bazarov for the drops he's prescribed to help Mitya sleep. Bazarov says she must thank him by giving him one of the roses she's gathered, which she laughingly does, though she keeps thinking she hears Pavel in the garden. She feels uncomfortable around Pavel, with his meaningful glances.

Bazarov seems to have a more flirtatious intent in his interactions with Fenichka than she's necessarily picking up on.

When Fenichka bends forward to smell one of the roses in her bouquet, Bazarov also bends down and kisses Fenichka's parted lips. Fenichka feebly pushes against his chest, but Bazarov just kisses her more fervently. At that very moment, Pavel emerges from the bushes, tells Bazarov with "malicious melancholy," "It is you, then!" and leaves the arbor. Fenichka, too, runs away, whispering, "How could you!" reproachfully as she goes.

Much as he did in Madame Odintsov's sitting room, Bazarov expresses his affection in a much more forward and fervent way than is welcome. His rejection of the concept of romance seems to make him more inclined to offend in this area, not less, since there are fewer conventional guardrails.

Bazarov feels shame as he remembers another such scene that took place recently. But he just congratulates himself on becoming a "gay Lothario" and retreats to his study.

For all his rejection of convention, Bazarov does feel he's transgressed boundaries in some way—suggesting he's not totally unmindful of convention—but he apparently represses his conscience. He accepts the fact that he's someone who's irresponsible and unscrupulous in his attitudes toward women.

CHAPTER 24

Two hours later, Pavel knocks on Bazarov's door. He says he has just one question for Bazarov. Politely he inquires into Bazarov's views on "single combat or dueling in general." "Theoretically," Bazarov replies, dueling is absurd, but practically, it's another matter. This makes Pavel's decision easier; he has made up in his mind to fight Bazarov. Shocked, Bazarov asks why. Pavel explains that Bazarov isn't wanted there; "I cannot endure you; I despise you."

Dueling was a contentious matter in imperial Russia. Technically forbidden, gentlemen still sometimes resorted to it as a way to settle their differences—as seen in popular Russian literature, like Pushkin's Eugene Onegin. *Pavel's challenge has been sparked by the kiss he witnessed in the garden, but the kiss is also just an excuse—he's been wanting to fight Bazarov practically since their first meeting.*

Bazarov coolly agrees to accept Pavel's challenge "like a gentleman." They then discuss the conditions for the duel, deciding to dispense with any flimsy pretext beyond their mutual dislike, and agree to meet the next morning behind the copse. They will each fire two shots at ten paces, and Piotr will serve as witness. Pavel even offers the use of one of his own pistols, promising that he hasn't shot them in about five years. Bazarov concedes that this is "very comforting news." They bid one another goodbye, with surreal courtesy.

The discussion between the two men, with its almost overdone courtesy, contrasts with the violence they've agreed to engage in, pointing to the empty pretense surrounding aspects of conventional, polite society. The stilted politeness also injects a comic note into an otherwise grim occasion.

Bazarov tries to resume his studies, but his composure is lost. He wonders what prompted the duel—would Pavel really act this way on his brother's behalf? Was the kiss so offensive? He realizes that Pavel must be in love with Fenichka himself. He is distracted for the rest of the day, and his sleep is filled with confused dreams.

Despite his objection to all things romantic, Bazarov is now forced to face, in the most direct way possible, the effects of thwarted love. Of course, while Pavel apparently has true feelings for Fenichka, those are also tied up with his love for the unattainable Princess R., as well as his longstanding hatred of Bazarov.

The next morning is "glorious," shining with dew and filled with lark song. Bazarov explains the impending duel to a terrified Piotr. He makes his way to the copse, thinking what "idiocy" it all is, but not feeling afraid. Soon Pavel appears, and he loads the pistols while Bazarov measures out the paces. Bazarov notes the "absurdity" of what they're doing, which Pavel grants, but he assures Bazarov that he means to fight him "in grim earnest."

As elsewhere in the novel, the irrepressible beauties of nature stand out despite human folly and obliviousness. While the larks carry on with their song, the two men prepare for their deadly showdown.

Bazarov and Pavel get ready and begin walking toward each other. Suddenly Bazarov hears a bullet whizz past his ear. He quickly fires toward Pavel without aiming. Pavel grabs his thigh; there's blood trickling down his white pants. Bazarov immediately drops his pistol and asks Pavel if he is wounded. Pavel says that each of them has the right to another shot, but Bazarov replies that he is "no longer the duelist but a doctor." Pavel pales and soon faints.

It's possible that Bazarov's failure to aim, wounding Pavel nonetheless, is a reference to a similar scene in Pushkin's Eugene Onegin. Notably, Bazarov immediately steps forward to help Pavel—suggesting that he's not without humanity and that he doesn't harbor real hostility toward his opponent.

Bazarov examines the wound and determines it isn't serious. Soon Pavel comes around. Pavel sends the shaken Piotr for a droshky and bandages Pavel's wound; then the two sit together in awkward silence, each aware "that the other had taken his measure."

At the very least, Bazarov's willingness to go through with the duel seems to have raised his status a bit in Pavel's eyes. However, failing to obtain the goal of one or both of them killing the other, they're still in the awkward position of having to deal with one another's presence for the time being. The whole scene suggests that dueling is a useless historical relic that does no good for society; and Pavel's and Bazarov's generational conflict hasn't been decisively resolved.

They agree that Nikolai mustn't know exactly what happened. Instead they'll claim that they had a falling-out over politics. Suddenly Nikolai is galloping toward them in great alarm, demanding to know what's happened. Pavel pretends that Bazarov had insulted Sir Robert Peel, leading to an altercation, and that it's all Pavel's fault. Nikolai asks Bazarov to tend to his brother until they're able to find another doctor.

Sir Robert Peel was a British statesman of the previous generation, a figure whom Pavel, with his fondness for English aristocracy, presumably held in esteem. It's a transparently flimsy pretext, though, and Nikolai seems to sense that there's more to the story.

An hour later, Pavel is resting in bed, joking with everyone, while the rest of the house descends into chaos. Nikolai watches over his brother that night; Pavel is feverish. Toward morning, Pavel suddenly remarks that Fenichka resembles "Nellie" (Princess R.). Pavel says that he loves "that worthless creature" and will not let "an insolent upstart" lay a finger on her. Nikolai has no idea who he's talking about.

In his delirium, Pavel admits to his feelings for Fenichka (linked to his love for Princess R.), but Nikolai remains innocent of his meaning; he never knows that Pavel loved Fenichka or that Bazarov had kissed her.

The next morning Bazarov comes to say goodbye to everyone. Nikolai stumbles over his words, promising he doesn't hold anything against Bazarov. Bazarov impatiently leaves, not saying goodbye to Fenichka. As he rides off, he thinks, "These damned little gentry!"

Bazarov's disdain for the gentry has only been heightened by his experiences at Maryino. He's been pulled into a foolish dispute and acted beneath his principles as a result. Without Arkady present, he doesn't have a mediating figure between himself and what he disdains and realizes all the more forcefully how much he hates it.

Pavel has to stay in bed for a week. Fenichka is agitated and withdrawn. One day Pavel detains her, asking her why she has been behaving so strangely. She promises him that she loves Nikolai and no one else. She also tells him that she is not to blame in any way for what Pavel saw in the arbor; she would rather die than be suspected of going behind Nikolai's back. Pavel, tearful himself, begs Fenichka to always love his brother and never forsake him; Pavel's "whole wasted life stirred within him."

Pavel hears the truth about what he witnessed in the garden and, mindful of all he's suffered in his unrequired yearnings for Princess R., he makes Fenichka promise to be loyal to his brother. If he will never have love, he wants an assurance that Nikolai will not be similarly deprived. Romance is an inevitable force that must be reckoned with, in Turgenev's view—not something that can be dodged and reasoned with, as Bazarov tries to do.

Nikolai comes in with baby Mitya; Fenichka embraces them and quickly leaves. Pavel gravely asks his brother to carry out one request: to marry Fenichka. Nikolai, amazed, says that he has only refrained from doing so out of respect for Pavel. Pavel admits that he can be a snob, but that now it's time for them to put aside worldly vanity. Nikolai embraces him. After he leaves, Pavel determines to go abroad once he's recovered and to remain there until he dies.

Pavel's urge to his brother to marry both shows his desire to free himself from temptation, as well as his genuine love for Nikolai and desire for his happiness. Pavel also acknowledges that love can't always be subject to the prejudices of conventional society. Unlike Bazarov's conflation of love with foolish convention, he's able to draw a distinction between true love and convention; to uphold a place for marriage, even if that marriage won't meet with societal approval.

CHAPTER 25

Arkady, Katya, and Fifi the borzoi sit in the Nikolskoye garden. There is a "trustful intimacy" between the two friends. Katya makes a remark about Arkady's formerly "satirical turn of mind" and argues that she and Anna will soon transform Arkady, now that he's no longer under Bazarov's influence. She and Arkady, she goes on, are "domestic animals," while Bazarov is a "wild beast." Arkady calls this "a hurtful thing to say" but does not pursue it further.

Meanwhile, just as his father's romance is finding a resolution back at Maryino, Arkady is beginning to realize his love for Katya. Katya evidently knows him well—though Arkady denies it, Katya can see that Arkady is different from Bazarov.

The friends continue to talk about Anna and Katya's life together; Katya has always been a little afraid of her imposing sister. But Arkady observes that Katya, in her own way—such as in her refusal to marry a wealthy man on whom she'd be dependent—is as proud and independent as her sister, only more reserved. Katya wants to change the subject, not liking to be compared to her sister, but Arkady suddenly says that he would never exchange Katya for Anna, or for anyone else in the world. He abruptly gets up and leaves.

The friends' conversation is further proof that they see one another clearly. Arkady is able to see through Katya's reserve and recognize her strength and independence from the sister in whose shadow she's always lived. He also expresses his love for Katya aloud for the first time, showing he's let go of his former conviction that he loved Anna.

Back at the house, the butler informs Arkady that Bazarov has arrived and is waiting in his room. Apprehensive, Arkady runs to greet him, and Bazarov quickly relates what happened at Maryino between himself and Pavel. Though reassured that Pavel's wound isn't serious, Arkady feels upset by the whole thing. Bazarov says, "You see what comes of living with these feudal barons; you become a feudal personage yourself." He's on his way to his parents', he goes on, and thought he would take a last look at what he's parted ways with.

Arkady and Bazarov have an awkward exchange. Bazarov tries to make a joke of the duel and to avoid blame—living in such an aristocratic atmosphere made him behave violently, in essence—but Arkady is understandably upset, seeing Bazarov's action as an attack on his family.

Arkady says he hopes Bazarov doesn't intend to part ways with *him*, and Bazarov says that seems to be happening already; "you look so spruce and smart," he remarks. He asks Arkady how his "affair" with Anna Sergeyevna is going, and Arkady assures Bazarov that he's mistaken on this point. Bazarov lets this pass and goes on to say that they had better say goodbye; they seem to have simply tired of one another.

Bazarov's compliment of Arkady's appearance is actually meant to be an insult—Arkady's growing love for Katya is manifesting in his tidier, more conventional appearance. His appearance, in turn, is a further sign of the distance that's opened up between the two friends.

Before he leaves, Bazarov says goodbye to Anna Sergeyevna, assuring her that he's repented of his foolishness and hopes she doesn't hold it against him. Anna assures him that they will remain friends, agreeing with him that love "is a purely imaginary feeling." Both of them seem convinced that they mean this. She also tells him that she has become fond of Arkady but doesn't see him much, as he's Katya's friend, not hers. Bazarov doesn't believe her—"women can't help dissembling," he thinks—and responds icily. Their conversation ends soon, as Anna feels ill at ease. Later, when she sends for Arkady, he is found in the garden, deep in thought.

Bazarov and Anna still refuse to credit their love for one another as genuine, unable to make room for the possibility that love is more than imaginary. Bazarov, his disdain for women showing through again, figures that Anna must be lying about Arkady. Meanwhile, Arkady is coming to terms with his own attitude toward love.

CHAPTER 26

The next day Arkady asks Katya to join him in her favorite spot in the portico. Katya had been hesitant, as Anna had warned her to avoid solitary talks with Arkady, and she is preoccupied as Arkady bashfully begins to speak. Arkady tells Katya that he owes to her the transformation he's undergone since coming to Nikolskoye. He is no longer a "conceited boy," he tells her; although he still wishes to live "a useful life," he has begun to look for truth "closer to hand." His eyes have been opened, thanks to "a certain emotion." He stammers for a while, and Katya seems unsure where he is going.

Arkady awkwardly proposes to Katya. In doing so, he acknowledges that his former nihilism has given way to a fresh interpretation of what it means to live "usefully," in pursuit of truth. His love for her has grown in tandem with his rejection of nihilism (and Bazarov), in other words. This scene contrasts with Bazarov's and Anna's rejection of that same "certain emotion" (love).

Suddenly, they hear Anna and Bazarov talking on the other side of the shrubbery. They are talking frankly about their feelings for one another. Anna says that they had simply made a mistake—their curiosity was roused, and then Bazarov's interest "petered out." Anna says that is not why they fell out with each other, but it doesn't matter. She also admits that she has begun to take an interest in Arkady's "fresh youthful sentiments." Bazarov calls this a "fascination." Soon their voices drift away, and they disappear from view.

By paralleling Arkady's proposal to Katya with Anna's and Bazarov's discussion about their "mistaken" love, Turgenev shows the parting between two different ways of life—the younger couple toward a more traditional, yet life-giving path, and the older couple's movement toward separation and loneliness. Though the older pair is ostensibly less naïve, the younger pair is genuinely happy.

Arkady turns back to Katya; her head is bent low. He tells her, "I love you for ever, irrevocably, and I love only you." He assures her that "everything else has long ago melted into thin air." Katya regards him gravely for a while and finally says, faintly, "Yes." Arkady jumps up and presses her hands to his heart, finally believing that she shares his feelings. Katya weeps for joy.

Arkady and Katya both know that Arkady had feelings for Anna before; he reassures her that these feelings—bound up with his nihilist phase and similarly dispersed "into thin air"—are no more. The couple becomes formally engaged, with great joy.

The next morning, Bazarov can't help feeling "a malicious pleasure" when Anna shows him Arkady's letter requesting Katya's hand. Anna laughs at her failure to notice what was unfolding between the two. She prevails upon Bazarov to stay a while, but Bazarov says that, like a flying-fish that spends too much time in the air, he must "flop back into my natural element." Anna says she is sure they are not saying goodbye for the last time. "Anything can happen in this world," Bazarov replies as he leaves.

Bazarov's bitterness contrasts with the uninhibited joy of the previous scene between Arkady and Katya; as long as he refuses to admit the reality of love, there is only so much happiness Bazarov is able to find. Bazarov's closing words to Anna foreshadow their final meeting, which isn't as far distant as they assume.

Arkady and Bazarov talk while Bazarov packs his trunk. Arkady tells Bazarov that he needn't be a "humbug," praising Arkady's marriage while holding the institution in disdain. Bazarov says that Arkady wasn't made for a "bitter, harsh, lonely existence"; he is of the gentry, "a good little liberal gentleman," who will never venture beyond "well-bred indignation." Arkady is tearful as he embraces "his former mentor and friend" and says goodbye, while Bazarov is matter-of-fact.

Arkady tells Bazarov to be honest with him—he shouldn't congratulate Arkady while privately scorning marriage. But Bazarov argues that Arkady is suited for marriage and isn't cut out for the nihilist way of life; he's of the same liberal mold as his father and uncle. Even now, Arkady's soft-heartedness comes through as the two men part.

By that evening, Arkady has indeed forgotten about Bazarov; he is "surrendering to [Katya's] influence." Even Anna is won over by their love for one another. She concludes from this that her feelings for Bazarov stemmed from mere curiosity, and this sets her mind at rest. She asks the young couple if love is indeed "an imaginary feeling." But they don't even understand what she means.

Now that he's rejected Bazarov's mentorship, Arkady quickly gives himself over to love, which has a far more natural, transforming influence on him than Bazarov's nihilism ever did. Anna tries to reassure herself that what she felt for Bazarov wasn't in the same category as what the young people are experiencing and that she hasn't just passed up an opportunity for similar happiness.

CHAPTER 27

Bazarov's parents are overjoyed at his unexpected return. Fearful of annoying him, they try to keep their distance. Bazarov behaves uncharacteristically, however—showing a "vague restlessness" and a "strange weariness." He stops shutting himself up in the study with his science experiments. He even seeks out his father's company. Vassily worries—Bazarov seems sad and is losing weight.

Though Bazarov claimed he was seeking out his "natural element," he clearly hasn't found it at home. He can't settle down to his work and seeks out things he once scorned. Again, regardless of his attempts to outrun it or reason it away, Bazarov feels the effects of love and the discontentment that comes of denying one's feelings.

Bazarov tries to distract himself by engaging with local peasants, since, in their hands, "a new epoch in history is about to begin." He's disappointed by their halting and superstitious language, however, and ultimately turns away in contempt. As Bazarov walks away, one peasant says to another, "'E was just natterin' away about something. […] 'Course 'e's gentry: they ain't got much understandin'." Bazarov does not suspect that in the peasants' eyes, he's a "sort of buffoon."

In a humorous contrast to Bazarov's earlier disdainful words about peasants (their lack of morals and inability to make use of their new freedoms), the peasants' point of view is now heard—it turns out that they look at Bazarov as foolish, too, and even class him among the "gentry." This suggests how arbitrary people's classifications of others often are—Bazarov has taken pains to differentiate himself from the gentry throughout, but those fine distinctions are meaningless to the peasants.

One day Bazarov helps his father bind a peasant's injured leg, and at last he finds an occupation, beginning to help regularly with the peasants' medical complaints. He continues to gibe at various remedies, but Vassily just laughs, relieved that Bazarov is less depressed and filled with pride to have him as an assistant.

Though he continues to mock what he sees as unscientific folkways, Bazarov emerges from his slump somewhat when called upon to help others, suggesting that he's at his best when his attention to others is uppermost instead of his nihilism.

One day a typhus patient is brought to Vassily; the man soon dies. Three days later, Bazarov enters his father's study and asks for some silver nitrate. When Vassily asks why, Bazarov says he wants to cauterize a cut. He explains that the district doctor wished to conduct an autopsy of the typhus patient, and Bazarov had volunteered; but he is out of practice, and he cut himself. Vassily turns "white to the lips" and cauterizes the cut more, though Bazarov points out that if he's been infected with typhus, it's already too late.

Ironically, given that medicine is Bazarov's natural element, he contracts a lethal infection in the process of conducting scientific investigation. This turn of events could suggest that Bazarov has lost his way, even as he pursues the activities that once meant the most to him. Now that his absolute nihilism seems to have been deflated, he's lost the clear sense of self he had at the beginning of the story.

The whole next day, Vassily repeatedly goes into his son's room on various pretexts, looking at him with great anxiety. By the third day, Bazarov has lost his appetite and admits to having a headache and fever, but he tells his parents he's just caught a chill. He goes to bed and is unable to get up the next day; a gloom descends on the house. Bazarov just lies with his face to the wall. Vassily goes about the house in bewilderment and only laughs hysterically when Arina demands to know what's wrong with their son. He sends for the doctor.

Bazarov has contracted typhus from the injury during the autopsy. Usually so forthright when it comes to scientific certainties, even Bazarov can't admit the truth to his parents, showing the greater humanity that's emerged recently. Nonetheless, his father knows the almost certain outcome of the disease, even if he's unable to admit it aloud to his wife.

Bazarov speaks to his father in a slow, deliberate, husky voice, matter-of-factly admitting that, within a few days, they'll have to bury him. Shocked, Vassily denies this, but Bazarov tells him a doctor mustn't speak that way—the symptoms all point to a deadly typhus infection, including the red patches emerging on his skin. Vassily says they'll heal him all the same. Bazarov just says "Fiddlesticks!" to this. He and his mother will have to "fall back on your strong religious faith," he tells them. While he's still in his right mind, he requests that a message be sent to Anna Sergeyevna. Vassily goes to his wife's bedroom, and together they collapse before their icons.

As Bazarov's condition worsens, he stops denying his inevitable death before his parents and won't hear of their loving attempts to avoid the truth. He speaks of their religious faith as a sort of crutch his parents can use to support themselves through the coming crisis, showing he still has a basically utilitarian view of things like religion. Surprisingly, he also summons Anna to his side, fulfilling his earlier statement that they will see one another again.

Though the doctor has some hope of recovery, Bazarov doesn't believe it. He hangs onto consciousness, refusing to fall into delirium even as his condition worsens. In anguish, Vassily begs his beloved Yevgeny "to do [his] duty as a Christian" and be mindful of eternity. Bazarov doesn't object, but says he will wait awhile, since even the unconscious can receive the last anointing.

Bazarov, rationalistic to the last, hangs onto lucidity as best he can, although he isn't overtly hostile to his parents' religious sentiments—perhaps a concession to his love for them.

A rumble of a carriage is heard, and Anna Sergeyevna arrives with her doctor in tow. Vassily calls her an "angel of mercy" and Arina kisses her "like a mad woman." After a consultation with the German doctor—who determines there is no hope for his recovery—Bazarov gets his wish to see Anna alone. She is taken aback by his deathly appearance, and it occurs to her that she wouldn't feel this way if she didn't love him.

Though her haste in responding to the summons suggests the strength of her feelings, Anna fails to accurately interpret her feelings for Bazarov until she's faced with the extremity of his condition.

Bazarov tells Anna that they must speak honestly with each other. It makes no sense now to tell her that he loves her: "Love is a form, and my particular form is already disintegrating. Better let me say—how lovely you are!" He calls Anna "noble-hearted" and encourages her to live long. He thought he would live for a long time, because there were problems to solve, and he was a giant. "And now the only problem for this giant is how to die decently."

Even on the verge of death, Bazarov refuses to speak of outright love for Anna, although his declaration "how lovely you are!" could be read as a concession of the same. Also, he has been humbled by his condition—his arrogance about his role in the world has vanished with his strength. Morality forces Bazarov to question the utility of his nihilism in the long run.

Bazarov asks Anna to be kind to his mother, since the "great world" doesn't have anyone like his parents. His father keeps saying that Russia needs Bazarov, but this is clearly untrue, Bazarov says: "The cobbler's needed, the tailor's needed, the butcher…" Finally, he says farewell, summoning his last lucid moments to ask Anna to "Breathe on the dying flame and let it go out." She kisses his forehead, and he never wakes again. That night the last rites are performed, and Bazarov dies the next day.

Bazarov finally expresses appreciation for his parents. In light of his mortality, he also grants that his parents' view of Bazarov's importance is misplaced. Everyday tradespeople, he now admits, are more vital to Russia's flourishing than he is. Bazarov's death confirms Turgenev's view that nihilism doesn't have lasting utility for Russia and that more traditional ways of life will outlast nihilism.

CHAPTER 28

Six months later, Maryino is in the depths of winter. Prokofyich is ceremoniously setting the table for seven. The week before, two quiet weddings had taken place in the parish church: Arkady's and Katya's and Nikolai's and Fenichka's. Today Nikolai is giving a farewell dinner for Pavel, who is setting out for Moscow on business.

The solemnity of Bazarov's death contrasts with the joy of weddings, again suggesting that the surviving characters—especially Arkady—are Russia's future, not Bazarov, and that love conquers nihilism.

Everyone around the table looks "handsomer and more virile." Everyone is smiling, yet apologetic—feeling "a little awkward, a little sad, and, at bottom, very happy." After the toasts, Katya quietly proposes a toast "to Bazarov's memory" in Arkady's ear. He squeezes her hand.

Even with lingering sadness over Bazarov's death and Pavel's departure, the Kirsanov household is full of life, in contrast to the dead end of Bazarov's life.

Nowadays, Anna Sergeyevna has gotten remarried, because it seemed "the reasonable thing to do," to a promising young lawyer with a kind heart; they live together in harmony, and perhaps will even love each other one day.

Anna's resistance to love, and the aimlessness of her life, show some hope of resolving happily in the future; perhaps her striving with Bazarov helped prepare her for a more purposeful life open to love.

The Kirsanovs, Nikolai and Arkady, have settled down together at Maryino. Arkady has become "passionately engrossed" in estate management, and the farm is thriving. Nikolai has poured his energies into the land reforms and drives around making persuasive speeches to the peasants, yet his efforts fail to entirely please either the gentry or the peasants. Katya has had a baby son named Nikolai, and Mitya continues to thrive. Katya and Fenichka have become great friends.

Consonant with Nikolai's hopes, Arkady at last follows in his footsteps and takes up an interest in the estate, arresting its decline. Nikolai continues to promote a reformist mindset, albeit with limited success, suggesting that the younger generation really is better attuned to progress. Either way, age and youth, tradition and progress, have come together in the Kirsanov family, and these principles promise to live on in the new generation.

Meanwhile, in Dresden, a gray but still handsome and elegant man of about fifty can often be seen within Russian and English society. Pavel still does good works and attends the Russian church, but "life weighs heavily on him." Madame Kukshin has gone to Heidelberg to study architecture, and Sitnikov continues to "gad about" Petersburg.

Other characters carry on much as they did before, although Pavel carries his grief elsewhere, suggesting that he no longer fits in to the thriving, forward-looking life at Maryino; he's destined to always look backward, longing for what he couldn't have.

In a small, melancholy graveyard in a remote part of Russia, there is a carefully tended grave where Yevgeny Bazarov lies buried. Often, a frail elderly couple can be seen weeping there. "However passionate, sinful and rebellious the heart hidden in the tomb," the flowers growing atop the grave speak "of the vast repose of 'indifferent' nature: they tell us, too, of everlasting reconciliation and of life which has no end."

Though the novel ends with a sorrowful scene of bereavement and loss, it also ends with hope. In contrast to Bazarov's convictions, nature isn't "indifferent"; it speaks of a life that defies mere scientific materialism, decidedly the opposite of nihilism. By allowing "nature" to have the final word, Turgenev condemns nihilism, but refrains from condemning Bazarov himself.

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