

# The significance of relationships in ivan turgenevs fathers and sons

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In Turgenev's novel, we are introduced to all sorts of relationships, be they romantic, familial, or platonic. The hero of this book, Bazarov, is quite an interesting character; he is liked by some, loathed by others, worshipped by one particular individual, but for the most part, he commands respect from all who meet him (which is given, if a bit grudgingly). His relationship with the Petrovich family is particularly interesting, as all three of the men have differing opinions on him. In the beginning of the novel, Arkady spends the majority of his dialogue raving and proclaiming at the top of his lungs how wonderful, brilliant and gifted his good friend Bazarov is. and Nikolai are surprised to see how much Arkady has changed after befriending the young nihilist. However, these feelings of worship and awe soon fade once Bazarov starts tormenting his family.

Arkady shares that his father knows how to play the cello, and Bazarov mocks the fact that a middle-aged pater familias such as Nikolai would bother to continue on in music, which at the time, was something learned during childhood, but- unless you grew up to be a musician or entertainer- was quickly forgotten thereafter. (Bazarov went on laughing, but Arkady, despite the respect in which he held his teacher, on this occasion did not even smile.) [p.

45] You can tell that Arkady does believe as wholeheartedly in the concept of nihilism as Bazarov- the story of Pavel Petrovich's humiliation only serves as fodder for further mocking for Bazarov, and when Arkady tries to reason with him by saying that his uncle is to be pitied, not ridiculed, Bazarov shoots him down, then changes the subject. This is the first small

bump in their relationship. Most of their arguments end like this- it has been noted that Arkady often loses arguments to his close friend, because although he is considered more eloquent (compare Arkady and Bazarov's definitions of nihilism- Arkady's is flowery and easy on the ear, while Bazarov's is considerably more abrupt) but because Bazarov has a stronger personality, which explains why Arkady was so affected by him. The dynamic between Arkady and Bazarov is interesting to take apart- Arkady sees Bazarov as a mentor, an ideal, possibly what he wishes himself to be, because of Bazarov's (supposed) superior intelligence, wit, moral fibre, etc. Bazarov treats Arkady like a little kid, talking down to him, acting condescending and snobbish (although one could argue that that's how Bazarov treats everyone, but one would think that he'd be a tiny bit kinder to one of his close friends). It is noteworthy that while Arkady sings Bazarov's praises, saying how much he's learned from Bazarov and how much he means to him, Bazarov rarely-if ever says anything complimentary about Arkady.

Arkady stays by Bazarov's side despite his faults, supporting him during Bazarov's lowest point, when he is trying to figure out his feelings for Odintsova, even though he himself had feelings for her. Though they had their struggles (during a quarrel Bazarov called Pavel an idiot. they nearly fought, but were interrupted in the nick of time by Vasily Ivanovich) they part on good terms, hugging and Bazarov urging Arkady to breed as quickly as possible. There's no flowery language between them (I?

“I’ve got other words, Arkady, only I won’t say them, because it’d be romanticism”) but that’s to be expected.

Pavel Petrovich believes Bazarov to be pompous and arrogant, full of himself and a questionable influence on young Arkady ([He] loathed Bazarov with all the strength in his spirit. He considered him arrogant, brazen... felt doubts about the beneficial effect of his influence on Arkady [p. 45]). Indeed, Bazarov did not think very highly of Pavel Petrovich either; when Arkady tells Bazarov the story of Pavel’s whirlwind romance and subsequent rejection, Bazarov mocks him for having been so badly affected by one simple woman, once again showing how arrogant and cold Bazarov is, which is another reason that Pavel does not like him. There are many disagreements between the two, but the last straw is when Pavel sees Bazarov flirting with Fenichka, his brother’s wife, and then trying to kiss her.

Pavel challenges Bazarov to a duel (“You, according to my tastes... I cannot stand you, I hate you,” [p. 150]) which Bazarov accepts. During the actual duel, Bazarov shoots Pavel in the thigh, and though he has a chance to kill him, does not do so, instead deciding to play doctor and help get Pavel back to the manor.

There Pavel takes full responsibility for the duel, and when Bazarov is leaving, he “sought to make a display of his magnanimity” ([p. 159]) by shaking his hand, which Bazarov accepts. The romantic relationships (past and present) are very important to the development of this novel.

Firstly, we have Pavel, burned so badly by an old flame he resolved never to try again. He put his everything into chasing his Princess- quitting his military post to follow her to Germany, only to have her leave again- so when she rejected him he returns to Russia and attempts to recreate the glory of his old days, but ultimately fails. (??? He returned to Russia and attempted to take up his old life, but he couldn't fit in as he'd done before. [p.

33]) Hearing this story causes Bazarov to laugh at him, which contributed to their mutual animosity. However, there is a sense of retribution, in that when Bazarov is heartlessly rejected by Odintsova, he finds himself in a similar situation to Pavel back-in-the-day, and doesn't know what to do.→ However, unlike Pavel, Bazarov is eventually reunited with his unrequited lover, even if it is on his deathbed.

Once again, we see the difference between the nihilist Bazarov and proud Pavel: Pavel spends the majority of his adult life nursing the wounds left by the Princess; one could imagine what he would say if she were alive and he was given the opportunity to speak to her again. However, even as he's dying, Bazarov states that he loved Odintsova, but as he is dying, it doesn't really mean much. However, as he never received a kiss from her while staying at Nikolskoe, he asks for one (??? Blow on the dying lamp and let it go out. [p.

196]) and receives it. Shortly after, he dies. Odintsova doesn't appear terribly affected by all of this- she kept on trucking after her first husband died, was surprised to learn that both Bazarov and Arkady were in love with

her, and only six months later she marries a lawyer for practical reasons, not because they are in love. Also, Odintsova notes after wincing at Bazarov's condition while suffering from typhus, "the thought that she would not have felt such terror if she really loved him flashed for a moment through her mind". Although Bazarov felt strongly enough about her to announce his feelings and then walk around in a melancholy state after she rejects him, Odintsova either does not return or is not able to return his feelings. The relationship between the two Petrovich brothers is more of a background thing, but it is brought to light occasionally, especially when dealing with the complicated matter of Fenichka and Nikolai's relationship. Nikolai fell in love with Fenichka after hiring her mother, and after having a child together (Mitya), is somewhat embarrassed by their relationship, mostly likely because Fenichka is still (by law) his servant.

He has not yet married her, because he is afraid that Pavel would not approve- Nikolai thinks the world of his brother, believing him to be infinitely more intelligent and logical than he. Pavel seems to be against the idea of them being married as well, as Pavel is the tiniest bit classist. However, he overturns that idea after Bazarov leaves for the last time, saying that they should get married.

("Brother, meet your responsibility, the responsibility of an honest and noble man... Marry Fenichka." [p. 162]), a statement which Nikolai agrees with deeply. It is clear that all of these different relationships help enhance the plot of the novel, not just the one between father and son- most important of these is the romance between Odintsova and Bazarov, which is

a driving point of the story- after befriending Odintsova, Bazarov actually starts to develop feelings and opinions slightly outside of his nihilistic point-of-view, even falling in love, which he formerly looked down upon.

As Pavel Petrovich once said, ??? The human personality must be as strong as a rock, because everything is built on it.??? [p. 49] If Bazarov acted like an arrogant jerk throughout the entire book, with no character development whatsoever?! There weren't be much purpose in reading this, would there?