

Title: Art as Life in the Nihilist Generation: Rereading Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*
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Published in the second issue of *The Russian Messenger* of 1862, *Fathers and Sons* started a heated debate in society and created a final split between generations: the sons (*the new people*) and their fathers (*people of the 1840s*). Turgenev's version of the new type, the nihilist Bazarov, was ubiquitously disliked by the target audience, the younger (Nihilist) generation, as libel, and despised as a caricature of one of the idols, Dobroliubov. The apogee of this (seeming) unfairness, M.A. Antonovich's "The Asmodeus of Our Time," was only partially undone by Pisarev's sympathetic "Bazarov."

Scholars have performed numerous critical and logical summersaults in order to leap over the problem of *Fathers and Sons* and the abyss between the novel's literary value and the history of its reception, and explain how and why this novel became the source and prototype of both "democratic" (Chernyshevsky, Sleptsov, Pomialovsky, Sheller, etc.) and "reactionary" (Pisemsky, Leskov, Dostoevsky, Markevich, etc.) strains in literature.

This paper will start with the premise that Turgenev's novel cannot be viewed as a work of literary art alone or, contrarily, be reduced to a realm of tendentious literature. After examining previous studies of the topic (Annenkov, Skabichevsky, Boborykin, I.I. Ivanov, Volynsky, Mikhailovsky, Pumpiansky, Pustovoit, Bialyi, Batiuto, etc.) and sorting through journal publications (*The Contemporary*, *The Whistle*, *The Russian Messenger*, *The Russian Word*) and epistolary and memoir sources (Turgenev, Chernyshevsky, Vodovozova, Shtakenshnaider, the Shelgunovs, Katkov, etc.), this study will propose a solution to the problem of *Fathers and Sons*. I would argue that the missing link, one that would bridge the existing abyss between literature and society (and explain the influence of the novel on "democratic" and "reactionary" literature), comes from a different understanding of the Nihilist generation, the generation that blurred the boundaries between art and life. By living their lives as art, these people fought real battles and destroyed lives on the pages of books that were not even written by them, and, simultaneously, they changed the course of literary history itself.