Despite her importance we have very little commentary on Odintsova in Fathers and Sons: and what we have has been uniform and repetitious. She has been routinely dismissed as a cold, calculating, pampered aristocrat, who plays with Bazarov from boredom and selfishness. Isaiah Berlin calls her a “cold, well-born society beauty”; Wellek characterizes her as the “elegant, frigid, landowning widow Mme. Odintsova”; and Pustovoit calls her a kholodnaiia epikureika (a cold epicurean). Little good-will has been expended on her, whereas every consideration has been given to Bazarov: his failings are rationalized, his faults are muted or transformed, sometimes torturously, into successes. Odintsova receives less commentary than does Pavel, although she is present in more scenes than he. The reason for this is not hard to find. Bazarov is at his best in “demolishing” Pavel and at his worse in being “demolished” by Odintsova. Critical opinion in the East and the West has had an important stake in protecting Bazarov and exalting his image.

The Soviet Union has had a stake in protecting the image of Bazarov as a fearless representative of the radical democrats, and as a clear thinking and courageous enemy of reactionary forces in Russian history. In the West the defenses have been no less spirited, although less self-serving and historical. Still, Bazarov is somehow always on the side of progress and the enemy of what is weak, selfish, and decadent in human nature. Edward Garnett’s rhapsodic characterization of Bazarov has not been significantly altered in later criticism: “Bazarov stands for Humanity awakened from century-old superstitions and the long dragging oppressive dream of tradition. Naked he stands, under a deaf, indifferent, sky, but he feels and knows that he has the strong brown earth beneath his feet.”

The image of Bazarov as the representative of revolutionary dynamism or as the best of humanity’s struggle against decadence, sloth, and recalcitrant nature can be maintained only if one ignores that substantial part of the novel in which he falls in love with Odintsova, is rejected by her, and is transformed

in character and vision. The change is not small, and goes to the very core of his being. Before his meetings and failed love for her, he is coarse, gruff, confident, virile, and in magnificent command of himself. After he meets and is rejected by her, he becomes unsure of himself and cynical about the very values he seemed to champion in the first part of the novel. He becomes debilitated in spirit, uncertain in motive, weary and cynical: in the end he commits a passive suicide. This momentous change from moral and psychological virility and health to spiritual bankruptcy has not been honestly confronted by most critics. There has been a rush to mute the change, to excuse it, and to transform it into some tragic stance before fate.

Pisarev in his defense of Bazarov saw nothing in the love affair to redound to his hero's disfavor. A woman comparable or fit for Bazarov had not yet appeared on the historical scene. Odintsova, stuck in outworn habits and concepts, was not capable of appreciating the free and passionate love that Bazarov offered her. Even the animal lunge of Bazarov was excused as an example of how virile and vital Bazarov was. Pisarev can be excused perhaps because of the polemical spirit of the time, and his chosen stance to defend Bazarov as a positive representative of his generation. But the polemics have become history and the pressure of history and politics have faded. Yet Freeborn sees Bazarov as emerging successfully from the affair because "Odintsova is almost as passive a participant in the relationship as was Insarov in On the Eve." Even if it were accurate that Odintsova was passive—which she is not—why are activity and passivity the important point in the relationship rather than the devastating consequences on Bazarov and the retrospective cloud his spiritual bankruptcy throws on the first image we have of him? Berlin tells us that "Bazarov falls because he is broken by fate, not through failure of will or intellect." Berlin has in mind apparently the accidental infection and the indifference of nature to an exceptional human being. But the will and intellect of Bazarov have fallen before the accident, and the accident is more a consequence than a cause.

Only the Soviet critic Pustovoit has had the honesty and courage to confront fully the devastating effect that Odintsova has had on Bazarov. He sees the change and he sees it clearly, and whatever ideological pressure he feels—and it is considerable—he outlines it starkly: "Up to chapter 14, in which Bazarov makes the acquaintance of Odintsova, that is, where Bazarov's basic plot is formed, Bazarov is a sober and intelligent person, who believes in him-

5. The article "Bazarov" was first published in Russkoe slovo, No. 3 (1862). Accessible in Turgenev v russkoi kritike, ed. K. I. Bonetskii (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1953).