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Brian Friel's Stage Adaptation of Ivan Turgenev's Novel *Fathers and Sons*

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Abstract. The purpose of this article is to describe the specifics of Irish playwright Brian Friel's adaptation of I.S. Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Sons* for the theater and the reasons behind Friel's transformations. The novelty of this study stems from the fact that the reception of Russian classical literature in Ireland in the 20th century has largely escaped the attention of both Russian and international scholars, despite the rich and extensive literature. A comparison of the novel and play reveals similar themes: the preservation of national identity and distinctiveness, the confrontation between representatives of different political groups, and social inequality. The theme of the past is touched upon in the context of the fate of an entire country. The playwright draws parallels between historical events in 19th-century Russia and the historical experience of Northern Ireland in the 20th century. Friel preserves the novel's plot virtually unchanged, subjecting only the characters to significant transformations. The image of Bazarov the revolutionary crumbles before the viewer's eyes: in reality, he lacks the courage to live up to the ideals of nihilism and revolution. Conversely, Pavel Petrovich, initially portrayed comically, turns out to be true to his principles. Friel chooses Arkady, Fenechka, and Nikolai Petrovich as his ideals – characters distinguished by kindness and humanity. A significant feature of the play *Fathers and Sons* is its interweaving of tragedy, farce, and comedy, which links it to the Chekhovian tradition.

Keywords: Irish drama, play, adaptation, novel, nihilism, national identity

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Роман И.С. Тургенева «Отцы и дети» в драматургической адаптации Брайана Фрила

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Аннотация. Цель – описать особенности адаптации для театра романа И.С. Тургенева «Отцы и дети» ирландским драматургом Брайаном Фрилом и причины произведенных автором трансформаций. Новизна исследования обусловлена тем, что рецепция русской классической литературы в Ирландии XX в. до сих пор практически не попадала в поле зрения как российских, так и зарубежных ученых. В результате сопоставления романа и пьесы выявлена схожая проблематика: сохранение национальной идентичности и самобытности народа, противостояние представителей разных политических групп, социальное неравенство; затрагивается тема прошлого в контексте судьбы целой страны. Драматург проводит параллели между историческими событиями в России XIX в. и историческим опытом Северной Ирландии в XX в. Фрил сохраняет сюжет романа практически без изменений, подвергая значительным трансформациям только персонажей. Образ Базарова-революционера рассыпается на глазах у зрителя: на деле ему не хватает смелости соответствовать идеалам нигилизма и революции. В то время как Павел Петрович, вначале поданный в комическом ключе, напротив, оказывается верен своим принципам. В качестве своего идеала Фрил выбирает Аркадия, Фенечку и Николая Петровича – персонажей, отличающихся добротой и человечностью. Значимой чертой пьесы *Fathers and Sons* становится переплетение трагизма, фарса и комизма, что роднит ее с чеховской традицией.

Ключевые слова: ирландская драматургия, пьеса, адаптация, роман, нигилизм, национальная идентичность

Вклад авторов. Разработка идеи, сбор и анализ исследовательских данных, написание и редактирование статьи – М.В. Цветкова, А.А. Алентьева. Все авторы прочли и одобрили окончательную версию рукописи.

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Brian Friel as a Retransmitter of Chekhov–Turgenev Traditions in the English-Speaking World

The purpose of this article is to identify and describe the characteristics of Brian Friel's adaptation of one of the most famous Russian classics, Ivan Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Sons*, for Irish theater, and to outline the reasons for Friel's changes. The novelty of the material presented in this article stems from the surprising fact that, despite scholars actively addressing issues of intercultural reception, the reception of Russian classical literature in Ireland in the 20th century, although extremely extensive, remains virtually unexplored by both Russian and foreign literary scholars. Meanwhile, Russian-Irish relations are a branch of comparative studies that harbors many fascinating research topics, which determines the relevance of this article, which explores one such topic.

In his introductory essay to *A Month in the Country*, Brian Friel emphasizes Turgenev's innovation as a playwright, who, in his view, long before Chekhov developed a dramatic form later called "new drama". Friel defines the type of theater founded by Turgenev as "theatre of moods", where the combination of psychological and poetic elements generates a new type of dramatic situation and dramatic characters (1992, p. 10). However, Turgenev's innovations were only appreciated later – after the arrival of Chekhov, whose plays became considered the model of "new drama". In this regard, Friel classifies Turgenev's play as "Chekhovian" in his essay, although from the point of view of the chronology of the development of drama, this is not entirely accurate.

In the English theater, Turgenev and Chekhov became famous as playwrights almost simultaneously – following the success of Theodore Komissarzhevsky's British production of *Uncle Vanya* in 1921, the Royalty Theatre premiered *A Month in the Country* in 1926. Michael Sherbuk directed the production. Throughout the 20th century, theater directors repeatedly turned to Turgenev's play, and the Russian author's works were repeatedly translated into English. Friel himself adapted two Turgenev texts for the stage: the play *A Month in the Country* and the novel *Fathers and Sons*.

When Brian Friel, who did not speak Russian, worked on his own theatrical versions of Chekhov and Turgenev's works, he consulted several translations of English and American authors¹. Thus, before beginning to write his adaptation of *Three Sisters*², the playwright thoroughly analyzed six translations of the text, comparing them line by line. This immersion in the material helped him more accurately capture the tone of the narrative and the emphases that Chekhov placed in the play (Kosok, 2004, p. 44). When writing *A Month in the Country* (1992), Friel worked with Christopher Heaney's translation, which the playwright mentions in

¹ Leavy, A. (2016, October 2). *Brian Friel one year on: A critical overview*. The Irish Times. <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/brian-friel-one-year-on-a-critical-overview-1.2813558>

² B. Friel is the author of adaptations of four works by A.P. Chekhov: *Three Sisters* (1981), *Uncle Vanya* (1998), *The Lady with the Dog* (The Yalta Game, 2001), and *The Bear* (2002).

the preface to the printed edition of the play. Friel also familiarized himself with other existing translations and theatrical productions of this Turgenev play: the version by Emlyn Williams and the translations by Ariadna Nikolaeff and Constance Garnett (Fusco, 1998, p. 231). It was not possible to find any information about how exactly the work with the text of the novel *Fathers and Sons* took place, but it is logical to assume that the methodology was similar.

Friel and Turgenev: “Counter Movement”

Russian literature has had a strong influence on Brian Friel's work as a whole. When asked why he devoted so much time to adapting the works of Chekhov and Turgenev, Friel cites the similarities between the heroes of Russian classics and his compatriots. He deeply sympathizes with characters who invest all their energy in love, expecting nothing in return, and feels compassion for those who try to preserve the old way of life during a period of social upheaval³. The theme of the past becomes one of the central themes of Friel's own work. It can serve as a backdrop for the action, act as a retrospective, or act as a recollection of the characters, further revealing their character (Zinenko, 2010, p. 23). For the playwright, the past is synonymous with tradition, which often conflicts with modernity in his plays.

In Turgenev's novel, this conflict is reflected in the clash between the *raznochintsy* and the intelligentsia, Slavophiles and Westernizers, from whom the Russian writer tries to distance himself, as he himself was not a supporter of any ideology, believing that there is no single correct opinion on this matter. After the failure of the French Revolution of 1848, he became more pessimistic about the “democratic values” of the West and once again became convinced that Russia must follow its own path while preserving its distinctiveness (Fusco, 1998, p. 160). The idea of preserving national consciousness and identity is also close to Friel. Turning to the novel *Fathers and Sons* the Irish author draws parallels between the socio-political situation in Russia in the mid-19th century, and the historical events in Ireland in the 1960s, when a struggle erupted within the country between supporters of the Irish Republican Army, who advocated the unification of Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland, and unionists, who wanted to keep Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. The conflict was both religious and ethnic in nature: both the Catholic Irish population living in Northern Ireland and the English Protestants living in the Republic of Ireland were discriminated against.

The reasons for the centuries-old enmity between the two countries are deeply rooted in history. In the 12th century, Ireland became the first English colony and from then on was under constant British oppression. England did everything in its power to weaken the Irish state, usurping lands⁴, waging constant wars, and imposing

³ Leavy, A. (2016, October 2). *Brian Friel one year on: A critical overview*. The Irish Times. <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/brian-friel-one-year-on-a-critical-overview-1.2813558>

⁴ In the 16th century, Henry VIII proclaimed himself King of Ireland and carried out a reform according to which the lands of Irish feudal lords were transferred to England.

Protestantism on the local population. Any expressions of Irish discontent were brutally suppressed⁵. In 1919, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) was formed. This acronym would later be associated by many with the rise of Irish nationalism and terrorism against Great Britain, and its radical followers would become the prototypes of Irish revolutionaries in literature. One of the most tragic periods in modern Irish history, known as The Troubles, lasted from 1960 to 1998. The most high-profile events of those years were the clashes in Derry (August 12–14, 1969), the McGurk bar bombing (December 4, 1971), and Bloody Sunday (January 30, 1972).

Friel rarely gave interviews and even more rarely shared his opinions on the situation in the country. However, his individual statements suggest that, in his view, the years of British rule left a heavy mark on Irish history. “Even when the British have gone, the residue of their presence will still be with us” (Hayes, 1997, p. 26), he remarked in a conversation with the writer and critic William O’Connor. In his plays, he reflects on the influence of the English language and English culture on Irish society⁶, just as Turgenev once reflected on the impact of a foreign language and Western values on Russian culture.

Friel’s plays clearly express a protest against the oppression of the Irish people and the political line imposed on them, which has done more harm than good to Ireland. In this sense, he resonates with the work of Turgenev, which after 1848 was defined by themes of patriotism, social utility, the relationship between egoism and altruism, idealistic contemplation, and revolutionary action. The Russian writer evaluates his heroes based on their usefulness to society. In Turgenev’s view, his own class, the intelligentsia, consisted of “superfluous” people and “Hamlets” who were unable to adapt to new realities and therefore remained inactive, while the era demanded the emergence of an active, pragmatic, and goal-oriented individual.

Novel and Adaptation: Transformations in the System of Images

Turgenev portrayed Evgeny Bazarov, the protagonist of the novel *Fathers and Sons*, as a new man born of the times. The past, continuity, and tradition are worthless in the eyes of the young nihilist. In Friel’s adaptation, Bazarov’s figure undergoes significant changes. The playwright draws parallels between Turgenev’s 19th-century nihilist and the radical nationalists of Northern Ireland in the second half of the 20th century. In Turgenev’s text, Bazarov is never called a revolutionary, although his philosophical views and way of thinking certainly appear radical to those around him, as Turgenev himself admitted in a letter to Konstantin Sluchevsky dated April 14/26, 1862: “... and if he is called a nihilist, one must read him as a revolutionary” (Pustovoit, 1991, pp. 31–32). In the theatrical adaptation, the playwright directly describes Bazarov as a revolutionary: “... he is [...] editor of the

⁵ Smitin, M.M. (Ed.). (1958). *World History* (Vol. 4, pp. 338–341). Moscow: Social and Economic Literature Publ. (In Russ.)

⁶ Leavy, A. (2016, October 2). *Brian Friel one year on: A critical overview*. The Irish Times. <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/brian-friel-one-year-on-a-critical-overview-1.2813558>.

magazine. It's an astonishing radical publication – the college authorities banned both issues this year! ... 'Revolutionaries! Damned revolutionaries!'" (Friel, 1987, p. 10). Bazarov's rejection of authority echoes sentiments in Irish society in the 1960s: citizens of Northern Ireland had long lived in conditions of political instability and social disunity, leading to a loss of trust in the ruling structures. Sectarian and political conflicts led to numerous problems within society, including the oppression of the Catholic portion of the population, whose standard of living was much lower than that of Protestants (Vozmitel, 2024, p. 217).

On stage, the theme of inequality is explored not against a religious backdrop, but through class prejudices. Evgeny identifies with the common people, as his grandfather was a peasant: "My grandfather was a serf, Pavel Petrovich. I believe I have some knowledge of the Russian people" (Friel, 1987, p. 12)⁷. Like Turgenev's Bazarov, Friel's Bazarov contrasts the common people with the aristocrats, who, in his opinion, know nothing about the common man and his destiny. He ridicules Pavel Petrovich's lifestyle and manners, openly telling Arkady that he considers his uncle an idiot:

Arkady: What did you call Uncle Pavel?

Bazarov: An idiot. The Tailor's Dummy is an idiot (Friel, 1987, p. 45).

Like his prototype in the novel, Bazarov in the play comes into conflict with Pavel Petrovich. Their confrontation can be compared to the clash between two political groups involved in the Northern Irish conflict – nationalists and unionists. As in the novel, in the play, Bazarov wins over the common people (Fenechka, Dunyasha, and even the eccentric servant Pyotr, who shows no respect for anyone, are drawn to him). He becomes a kind of link between them and the upper class. The aristocrat Pavel Petrovich, leading a sedate lifestyle, what he calls 'killing time', gravitates toward European fashion: he visits an English tailor and a French hairdresser, drinks cocoa, and reads the Gothic novel *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* by the English writer Ann Radcliffe. While Turgenev's novel presents Pavel Petrovich as a Westerner, Friel emphasizes his passion for English fashion and literature, which takes on a new meaning in the Irish context. Moreover, Pavel Petrovich's Anglomania is taken to the point of comic grotesqueness.

The author contrasts the opinions of Pavel Petrovich and Bazarov, and although both speak of Russia, the Irish viewer cannot help but hear echoes of the heated

⁷ The play contains a number of episodes in which Friel, while preferring not to make direct references to the Irish political context, hiding behind a historical plot unfolding in Russia, nevertheless introduces allusions to the situation in contemporary Ireland. Thus, in the mouth of Arkady, who expounds the principles that he, following Bazarov, follows, Friel puts words absent from the novel that could not fail to resonate with the hearts of his audience: "We know there is starvation and poverty; we know our politicians take bribes; we know the legal system is corrupt" (Friel, 1987, p. 11). And Bazarov, parting with Arkady and explaining to him the difference between them, says: "We are now into the era of hostilities – of scratching, hurting, biting, mauling, cutting, bruising, spitting. You are not equipped for those indecencies" (Friel, 1987, p. 67).

political debates of that era in their dispute. Bazarov, just like Irish nationalists, reproaches Pavel Petrovich for his adherence to borrowed foreign ideals: “Words that come so easily to lips like yours – liberalism, progress, principles, civilization – they have no meaning in Russia. They are imported words. Russia doesn’t need them” (Friel, 1987, p. 12). Pavel Petrovich calls Bazarov and similar radical young people windbags: “First our saviors will demolish the country and then they will remake the country. But suppose some simple people were to suggest that our saviors were just bletherskites – gold-medal bletherskites?” (Friel, 1987, p. 12).

The playwright intersperses the heated debate between the two opponents with inappropriate remarks from Nikolai Petrovich, who attempts to defuse the tense situation. Thus, in response to Bazarov’s metaphorical remark that to feed the people, one must first plow the land and plow it deeply, Nikolai Petrovich interjects: “He’s right, you know: ploughing is a very important part of the farming cycle” (Friel, 1987, p. 12). Or, in response to Arkady’s assertion that only a few truly dedicated people are needed to destroy the old world, since Moscow burned down from a penny candle, he begins to fervently confirm that the story of the candle and the burning of Moscow is a historical fact. Such quid pro quo dialogues create a farcical atmosphere, defusing the political tension. The conflict between the two characters reaches its climax after the kiss between Bazarov and Fenechka. As in the novel, Pavel Petrovich challenges Bazarov to a duel. However, Bazarov’s reaction to the challenge in the play is radically different from that described by Turgenev, where Evgeny accepts the challenge with icy composure: “... I accept your challenge, also like a gentleman”⁸. Friel’s hero, who throughout the action tries to hurt his opponent, cannot believe in the seriousness of the elder Kirsanov’s intentions to the last and tries to avoid a duel: “You’re not serious!”, “But that’s no reason to fight, Pavel Petrovich!”, “I’m not taking part in this, Pavel” (Friel, 1987, pp. 58–59). Thus, Bazarov, who previously seemed to the audience to be a straightforward, decisive and uncompromising person, retreats in the face of real danger, while Pavel Petrovich, who gave the impression of an effeminate aristocrat, turns out to be a man true to his principles and ideals, capable of real action.

The fate of the theatrical Bazarov echoes the events of Turgenev’s hero: after the duel, Evgeny returns to his parents’ home, where he soon dies of typhus, as we learn in the third scene of the second act. Friel, like the Russian classic, sees no possibility of a happy ending for his hero. A radical who calls only for the destruction of the old without creating anything in its place cannot have a future. His actions only bring trouble to those around him (the wounding of Pavel Petrovich, the mental anguish of Anna Sergeyevna) and harm himself.

In Turgenev’s novel, as L.M. Lotman suggests, “the irony of the hero’s fate lies in the fact that he dies ‘in the wrong place’. Despite all his respect for science and his interest in it, Bazarov is called not to be a scholar, but a political fighter,

⁸ Turgenev, I. (2024). *Fathers and Sons. Home of the Gentry. The Hunter’s Sketches: Novels, Stories* (p. 136). Saint Petersburg: Azbooka, Azbooka-Atticus Publ. (In Russ.)

a revolutionary” (1982, p. 151). Friel’s interpretation of Bazarov introduces a comic element absent from the novel, further undermining the authority of this revolutionary-minded character: in the second scene of the first act, he behaves like a guilty child, haltingly apologizing to Anna when the heroine, unable to bear his repeated ridicule, decides to end the conversation; his fussing before leaving the Kirsanovs’ house is comical:

Arkady (off): All set?

Bazarov (off): I left a book somewhere.

Arkady (off): It’s in your hand. Fool.

Bazarov (off): Thank you again (Friel, 1987, p. 72).

Therefore, Bazarov’s speeches, as well as the criticism of his political views, delivered by Pavel Petrovich (whose portrayal also contains a comic element⁹), cannot be taken seriously by the audience. Turgenev also treats all his characters with a touch of mockery, debunking each of their stances on life. However, unlike Friel’s play, where the comedy often takes on a farcical, even buffoonish, nature, the novel is characterized by irony. An example is the episode in which Turgenev describes how Bazarov, having settled in his father’s village, developed the habit of asking a peasant about his views on life: “Well”, he said to him, “explain your views on life to me, brother: after all, they say, the whole strength and future of Russia lies in you; from you a new era in history will begin – you will give us both a real language and laws”¹⁰. To which the peasant “either said nothing, or uttered words like the following: ‘And we can... too, because, that means... what is our limit’”. And when other peasants asked whether the master was asking about arrears, he replied: “...just chatting about something; I wanted to wag my tongue. It’s known, master; does he understand anything?”¹¹.

Scenes of high emotional tension in the novel, as in the play, are interspersed with comical interludes. For example, when Bazarov wounds Pavel Petrovich in a duel and the latter faints, Turgenev defuses the tension with Peter’s comical reaction: “‘Killed, sir?’ whispered Peter’s trembling voice behind him. Bazarov looked back. ‘Go get some water quickly, brother, he’ll outlive us’. But the improved servant seemed unable to understand his words and remained motionless. Pavel Petrovich slowly opened his eyes. ‘It’s ending!’ whispered Peter, and began to cross himself”¹².

⁹ The servants call him ‘the tailor’s dummy’ for his penchant for exquisite attire and aristocratic bearing. And the old princess, Madame Odintsova’s aunt, mistakes him for an accordionist because his shoulders are pulled back too far and warns him that he will certainly be beaten for it, etc.

¹⁰ Turgenev, I. (2024). *Fathers and Sons. Home of the Gentry. The Hunter’s Sketches: Novels, Stories* (p. 166). Transl. by the authors of the article.

¹¹ Turgenev, I. (2024). *Fathers and Sons. Home of the Gentry. The Hunter’s Sketches: Novels, Stories* (p. 166).

¹² Turgenev, I. (2024). *Fathers and Sons. Home of the Gentry. The Hunter’s Sketches: Novels, Stories* (p. 141).

All the characters in the play are depicted very ambiguously by the playwright, and it's not always easy for the audience to figure out whose side they're on, or even whether they're taking anyone's side at all. One of the key dividing lines in Friel's play between characters with whom the author sympathizes more and those with whom he sympathizes less, as in Turgenev's novel, can be considered the possibility or impossibility of their achieving personal happiness. Friel links this issue to freedom from ideological "blinkers", when a person builds their life based on their own convictions rather than on ideologically dictated postulates. Cassandra Fusco, in a study of Friel's plays (1998, p. 164), draws attention to the fact that in Turgenev's work, the main characters, obsessed with lofty ideals, rarely achieve their goals or find personal happiness, while secondary characters do. Thus, Arkady and Katya, who simply live, do not overthink, and follow the calling of their hearts, find family happiness and stability. The fates of Nikolai Petrovich and Fenechka unfold similarly. The author rewards them with a happy marriage for their kindness and compassion for others. According to Friel, it is precisely such people who can create a better society, one free of cruelty. The Irish playwright agrees with Turgenev in his belief that a revolutionary approach is incapable of leading a country to prosperity, as it brings destruction to the old, time-tested foundations on which the life and happiness of the common man are built.

In one of Friel's historical plays, *The Citizens* (1973), whose characters are peaceful ordinary people caught in the midst of a catastrophic historical event – Bloody Sunday¹³ – the protagonists, with whom the author clearly sympathizes, are completely different in character, united by their indifference to the struggle between the ruling groups. However, they are all characterized by sincerity and humanity. It is precisely these citizens, for whom universal human values and the well-being of their neighbors are more precious than the achievement of abstract political goals, that Friel calls "honorable" (Zinenko, 2010, p. 28).

Among the heroes of the novel *Fathers and Sons*, Friel considers Nikolai Petrovich, Fenechka, and Arkady to be such. Nikolai Petrovich and Fenechka are both good-natured, open, and bear no grudge. When Bazarov leaves Maryino, Nikolai Petrovich, who has worked so hard to maintain the harmony in the house disrupted by the arrival of this stranger in his worldview, sincerely invites him back for another visit; Fenechka packs him sandwiches for the journey.

The playwright is drawn to Arkady by his youthful impulsiveness, naivety, and empathy. In Turgenev's book, the young Kirsanov, who, following his idol Bazarov, declared himself a nihilist, is depicted as a romantic in his inner makeup. He is sensitive to the beauty of nature, inclined to philosophical reflection, and has a knack for elegant expression. These traits distinguish him from the pragmatic and taciturn Bazarov, who criticizes his comrade's tendency to "talk beautifully" and

¹³ This is the name given in Irish history to the event of January 30, 1972, when British troops opened fire on a local demonstration against internment. Thirteen people were killed in the clash, and, according to various estimates, a similar number were wounded.

generally believes that Arkady has no place among the nihilists because he is a “tender soul”.

In his adaptation, Friel retains many of the traits of Turgenev’s Arkady. From the young couple’s first appearance on stage, he demonstrates that, no matter how hard Arkady tries to emulate Yevgeny, the ideals and values instilled in him since childhood constantly clash with his comrade’s nihilist tenets. Arkady values family ties, is capable of love and care for his neighbors, and reacts painfully to his friend’s barbed remarks about Pavel Petrovich, whom he sees as a model of decent behavior. He is embarrassed and indignant at Bazarov’s cynical remarks about women (“A perverse bastard – that’s what you are” (Friel, 1987, p. 19)), but remains faithful to his friendship.

Friel introduces an episode into the play that was not in the novel: after Yevgeny’s death, Arkady arrives at the Bazarov estate. He is shocked by what has happened and passionately blames himself for not having come to his friend earlier. In a conversation with Vasily Ivanovich, the hero promises to preserve the memory of his talented son and continue his work: “I’m going to carry on his work, Vassily Ivanovich! I’m going to dedicate myself to his memory and to the work he was so involved in!” (Friel, 1987, p. 78). In the final scene, he formulates this idea even more clearly: “I will always remember. And in the coming years I’m going to devote my life to his beliefs and his philosophy – to our philosophy – to carrying out his revolution. That’s what I’m going to do for the rest of my life. And nothing in the world – absolutely nothing – is going to stop me!” (Friel, 1987, p. 91).

These words are spoken with feeling and sincerity, yet the audience barely believes them. Following Arkady’s pathetic speech, the playwright introduces a farcical scene featuring a completely drunken Pyotr, which makes it difficult to take Arkady’s sworn assurances seriously. Friel doesn’t idealize the younger Kirsanov, yet at the same time shows that human weaknesses don’t prevent him from remaining a worthy person – kind, sincere, and compassionate. It is precisely such people, according to the Irish author, who can bring greater benefit to society than uncompromising radicals.

Friel portrays Bazarov’s parents (Vasily Ivanovich and Arina Vlashevna) with great sympathy. In the play, they are warm-hearted and extremely pious people. They invite a priest to hold a thanksgiving service for their son’s return home; when Arkady comes to them after Yevgeny’s death, they immerse themselves in the prayers without hearing his words of condolence. Moreover, they recite these prayers in Latin – a clear “domestication” of Turgenev’s characters, situating them in Irish realities. The drama of fate and their simultaneous resignation to it evoke an involuntary sympathy for Vasily and Arina (as they are called in the play) and empathy for the fact that God gave such a son to these quiet and peaceful people.

However, Bazarov’s image in the play also undergoes changes. At the beginning, he behaves much more harshly than in the novel, but then becomes much softer and more emotional. In the scene of his explanation to Odintsova, he is portrayed entirely as a romantic hero: “I can’t eat. I can’t sleep. I can’t study. I’m obsessed

with you. I'm besotted by you. Let me kiss you, Anna. Please, let me kiss you" (Friel, 1987, p. 54). Turgenev's Bazarov's confession is quite different. The hero "treats his own sincere feelings with the same cold contempt as he does the ideas and society among which he lives" (Batuto, 1981, p. 419): "So know that I love you, stupidly, madly... That's what you've achieved. [...] Bazarov pressed his forehead against the window glass. He was out of breath; his whole body was visibly trembling. But it was not the trembling of youthful timidity, nor the sweet horror of his first confession that took possession of him: it was passion that beat within him, strong and heavy – a passion similar to malice and, perhaps, akin to it... Odintsova felt both afraid and sorry for him"¹⁴.

Nabokov discerned in Turgenev's character, "behind the impetuosity and willpower, behind the hero's fierce composure", a natural youthful ardor, "which Bazarov considers incompatible with the severity of the future nihilist" (2010, p. 128). Friel develops this youthful ardor to its extreme. Before his departure, his Bazarov bids farewell to each inhabitant of Maryino several times, expressing emotional thanks for their hospitality several times, promising to write to Arkady, and so on. For comparison, in the novel, with Pavel Petrovich, who before leaving wanted to shake his hand, Bazarov "was cold as ice", he did not manage to say goodbye to Fenechka, Pyotr, who "was so touched that he cried on his shoulder", was cooled by the question: "Are his eyes not on a wet spot?", Nikolai Petrovich did not listen to the end of his farewell words at all "and when on the fourth verst, at the turn of the road, the Kirsanov estate with its new manor house laid out in one line appeared before his eyes for the last time, he only spat and, muttering: 'Damned noblemen', wrapped himself more tightly in his overcoat"¹⁵.

In the play's finale, Bazarov is completely rehabilitated. Pavel Petrovich and Odintsova recall him with bitterness at a party at the Kirsanovs' house. Pavel Petrovich regrets not getting to know Bazarov better while he was staying with them: "I got to know him slightly just before he left here. I hadn't understood him at all before that. In my stupidity. He was a fine man" (Friel, 1987, p. 87). Odintsova tearfully admits that Bazarov proposed marriage to her, and that her rejection of the proposal was a huge mistake: "It would have been a difficult marriage, but I should have married him. It's very hard to bear when you know you've made such an enormous mistake..." (Friel, 1987, p. 87).

Fathers and Sons and the Chekhovian Tradition

The play is written in Chekhov's style. The author hasn't specified its genre. However, it's clear that, despite the seriousness and even painfulness of the issues it raises (the play was published in 1987, during the Time of Troubles), *Fathers and*

¹⁴ Turgenev, I. (2024). *Fathers and Sons. Home of the Gentry. The Hunter's Sketches: Novels, Stories* (p. 95).

¹⁵ Turgenev, I. (2024). *Fathers and Sons. Home of the Gentry. The Hunter's Sketches: Novels, Stories* (p. 145).

Sons leans toward comedy. This makes it akin to *The Cherry Orchard*. In addition to the aforementioned comedic elements in the description of the main characters' behavior, the structure of the scenes and dialogue, the comic element permeates the play through the servants and supporting characters. Dunyasha, who talks only about finding a husband and who instantly "sets her sights" on Bazarov the moment he shows up at the Kirsanovs'; Peter, with his turquoise earring and multicolored hair¹⁶; and Odintsova's eccentric aunt, who yells at everyone while sitting under a parasol, constantly chewing imaginary food and shaking imaginary crumbs from her clothes.

Conclusion

A comparative analysis of the two works – Turgenev's novel and its stage adaptation – identified common themes: the preservation of national identity and the distinctiveness of the people, the confrontation between different political and social groups, and social inequality, the theme of the past, set against the backdrop of the fate of the entire country. It was also established that Friel's countercurrent was the consonance between historical events in 19th-century Russia and 20th-century Northern Ireland.

While retaining Turgenev's plot without significant changes, Friel significantly transformed the characters. Each, to varying degrees, demonstrates a "domestication" of Turgenev's heroes, integrating them into Irish realities.

The character of Bazarov undergoes particularly significant transformations. While Turgenev's Bazarov fails the test of love and dies because the author doesn't believe in the viability of the ideals he espouses, in the play the protagonist is presented as a lover of outrageous behavior who, in reality, lacks the courage to fully adhere to the principles of the nihilism he proclaims. Meanwhile, Pavel Petrovich, portrayed at the beginning of the play in a grotesquely comic vein as an effete aristocrat, turns out to be a man faithful to his principles to the end.

The author also portrays Arkady, Fenechka, and Nikolai Petrovich as Bazarov's antithesis – characters distinguished by kindness and humanity, who are presented as idealized. In the play's finale, they earn what Friel considers the most important reward – simple human happiness.

The most important feature of *Fathers and Sons* is its interweaving of tragedy, farce, and comedy, which brings a distinctly Chekhovian accent to Turgenev's story.

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¹⁶ Friel's description almost exactly mirrors Turgenev's, which refers to 'multicolored' hair. However, in the 19th century, this could only refer to partially bleached hair, while the word 'multicoloured', used by Friel in the late 20th century, conjures up a punkish image of a young man with hair in a variety of unexpected shades.

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