Signet Classics

IVAN TURGENEV
FATHERS AND SONS

WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION BY JANE COSTLOW

IVAN TURGENEV

Fathers and Sons

Translated by George Reavey

With a New Introduction

by Jane Costlow

SIGNET CLASSICS

SIGNET CLASSICS
Published by New American Library, a division of
Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 375 Hudson Street,
New York, New York 10014, USA
Penguin Group (Canada), 90 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 700, Toronto,
Ontario M4P 2Y3, Canada (a division of Pearson Penguin Canada Inc.)
Penguin Books Ltd., 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England
Penguin Ireland, 25 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2,
Ireland (a division of Penguin Books Ltd.)
Penguin Group (Australia), 250 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124,
Australia (a division of Pearson Australia Group Pty. Ltd.)
Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd., 11 Community Centre, Panchsheel Park,
New Delhi - 110 017, India
Penguin Group (NZ), 67 Apollo Drive, Mairangi Bay,
Auckland 1311, New Zealand (a division of Pearson New Zealand Ltd.)
Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty.) Ltd., 24 Sturdee Avenue,
Rosebank, Johannesburg 2196, South Africa

Penguin Books Ltd., Registered Offices:
80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

Published by Signet Classics, an imprint of New American Library,
a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

First Signet Classics Printing, May 1961
First Signet Classics Printing (Costlow Introduction), February 2005
10 9 8 7 6 5

Ivan Turgenev's (1818–83) first successful book, *A Sportsman's Sketches* (1852), was a sympathetic picture of Russian peasants and a condemnation of serfdom; it was widely believed to have contributed to the Tsar's decision to emancipate the serfs, much as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was said to influence the emancipation of the American slaves. In the following productive decade, Turgenev published *Rudin* (1856), *A Nest of Gentlefolk* (1858), *On the Eve* (1860), *First Love* (1860), and *Fathers and Sons* (1862)—all of which drew critics' applause. His liberal views were politically suspect, however, and he chose to live the rest of his life in France. His novels *Smoke* (1867) and *Virgin Soil* (1877) show the depth of his bitterness, but in 1880, in his last visit to Russia, he enjoyed a triumphant homecoming.

Jane Costlow is Professor of Russian at Bates College, where she holds the Christian A. Johnson Chair of Interdisciplinary Studies. She is the author of *Worlds Within Worlds: The Novels of Ivan Turgenev*. She has also published on Russian women writers in the nineteenth century, and on representations of gender and nature in classic Russian literature.

Introduction

Fathers and Sons opens with a father waiting eagerly for the return home of his newly graduated son; it ends with a father and mother slumped and desolate in a country graveyard, mourning the death of a son who had seemed to promise so much. Between the novel's dusty roadside opening and the final picture of nature's eternal cycle, we enter into the world of mid-nineteenth-century Russia. Turgenev's Russia is the Russia of the provinces: gentry estates and peasant agriculture, resonant landscapes and time that seems sometimes to "fly like a bird" and at others to "crawl like a worm." Far from the capital cities of Moscow and Petersburg, Turgenev's provinces seem to possess a time-scape of their own, slightly old-fashioned and more than a little run-down. Bazarov and Arcady return to their fathers' homesteads full of energy and "modern" ideas. To a countryside sunk in age-old patterns and seasonal rhythms they bring the energy of change. What in this world needs changing? What should stay the same? Whose values will shape the future? Can men and women change the world, or are their efforts destined to suffer the universal fate of death and oblivion? With extraordinary grace and a fine sense of the complexity of human psychology, Turgenev's novel raises—and asks us to consider—these questions.

All of Turgenev's novels take contemporary Russian life as their focus and *Fathers and Sons* is no exception: Turgenev situates us quite precisely in the opening lines of the novel, marking the date as May 1859, three years before his writing. The date gives us Russia on the eve of momentous change: in early 1861 Tsar Alexander II would proclaim the liberation of Russia's vast population

of serfs—an action that would have a profound impact not just on Russia's peasants, but on the gentry landowners, like Nicholas Kirsanov, who had depended on their labor. Nicholas, as we see in the novel, is already introducing innovations of his own, in advance of the government decree. The father's struggles as a farmer, and his participation in the ongoing reforms, give us an unobtrusive but sobering reminder of the difficulties of change. For all of the novel's poetry—its delight in the gentle landscapes of central Russia—there is a stalwart realism at work in Turgenev's reminders of tumble-down threshing barns and contentious hired laborers.

The changes at the novel's heart go far beyond agrarian reform, however. Bazarov is the most radical spokesman for change in the novel—advocating a shift in both values and social relationships that shocks Arcady's uncle Paul Petrovich. Bazarov's "nihilism" is an amalgam of style and philosophy that aims to undermine—indeed to destroy—the world of the fathers. Just what is this "nihilism"? Arcady gives us the name, Paul identifies its Latin root, and then Bazarov articulates its principles when Paul draws him into an ideological sparring match over dinner. The philosophy is one of negation, and what is negated is most of what Nicholas and Paul love and believe in: not just "aristocracy, liberalism, progress, principles"—but poetry, nature, religion, and love. While the first of these objects of attack is laid out in debate, the others are made evident in the action of the novel—when Bazarov insists that Pushkin should be rejected for Buchner, or that playing the cello in the twilight is absurd, or that his heart is insusceptible to affection. To the extent that Bazarov has principles, they are those of experimental science and natural history: his gathering of frogs and dispassionate observation of Odintzov's body at the provincial ball are all of a piece. He insists he is a "man of science"—a man of reason, unplagued by lyric doubt or allegiance to principle, unhampered by outdated morals and the superstitions of religious belief. He will have the times depend on *him*—not the other way round. There is more than a little hubris in Bazarov, and Turgenev

will have him learn—bitterly—that he too is a creature not only of the head but of the heart.

Turgenev draws into his novel the ideological currents and conflicts that animated Russian society at midcentury. A new generation of intellectuals, whose social origins were not in the gentry (like those of Nicholas and Paul) but rather in the poorer classes and the clergy, had brought into ideological life a new animosity toward the conventions and compromises of polite society. They brought an impatience, and a radicalism, that was to change forever the nature of Russian politics. Among other things, they ushered in a movement for women's liberation, strident advocacy of science, and an insistence that poetry was "useless" and art justified only to the extent that it advocated the betterment of society's most disenfranchised. Their ascendancy in Russia's intellectual life (on the editorial boards of journals, as writers and scientists and educators) represented a sea change in the tone of public discourse, one that was greeted by many with outright hostility and dismay. Dostoevsky—Turgenev's contemporary—was to devote much of his career as a writer to parodic deflation of the ambitions and motives of this generation of social radicals. Turgenev's position was more complex. We may find things that dismay us about Bazarov—his ideological extremism; his arrogance; his cruel unconcern for his parents; his crude initial statements about Odintzov. But Turgenev has not created, in this nihilist, a character with whom we have no sympathy—or a one-dimensional radical who is easily shot down by Paul Kirsanov. The situation in *Fathers and Sons* is much less straightforward: Turgenev is more than capable of biting satire—his depiction of the "emancipated woman" Kukshina gives us a fine if discomforting example of this. And Sitnikov is a pathetic hanger-on who goes wherever the wind blows him. Bazarov, however, is a man of tragic dimensions. He does not stay the same throughout the novel, but changes and grows more complicated in our eyes, as we see him interact not just with a series of provincial characters, but with himself. The great radical, the man of science, the man who dismisses emotion and

poetry, is humbled—and perhaps defeated—in a strange and unnerving encounter with a woman. The dynamic and meaning of that encounter is one of the novel's most fascinating and elusive aspects.

Who is Anna Odintzov? Wealthy, beautiful, intelligent, widowed—and with a vague air of ill repute that seems to dog her. She is perfectly controlling and perfectly controlled, and lives in her elegant estate according to a schedule that is both rigid and freeing. Odintzov is the wealthiest of the novel's characters, her estate the grandest and most imposing. Among other things, Turgenev has given us in the novel a geography of relative social stature: Odintzov represents an almost Imperial grandeur, and Bazarov's parents are barely wealthier than peasants, while the Kirsanov estate, Maryino, represents a kind of "middle ground"—neither terribly rich nor terribly poor.

Odintzov's terrain, however, is a kind of alien world into which Bazarov enters, to face a "test" that is no longer ideological but emotional. He and Arcady get invited to Anna Odintzov's while they're at the governor's ball—their attendance at which is itself a kind of compromise of their nihilism. The governor, the narrator tells us, is "both progressive and despotic." Perhaps the words fit Odintzov as well. She flirts with Bazarov (and also with Arcady); motivated more by boredom than by genuine intellectual interest, she draws him into conversation on chemistry—and then shifts their talk to the nature of human emotion, on what's "happening" inside Bazarov himself. The scientist seems quite undone by this—and by the physical presence of Odintzov. Thrashing through the woods at night in a vain attempt to calm his ardor, Bazarov winds up responding physically to the woman's overtures. She rebuffs him, and suggests he misunderstood her. He is chagrined, confused, embarrassed—and undone. We are left wondering what her motives were and how well these bold, intent characters understand themselves.

Fathers and Sons is without doubt a novel of ideas; but it is also a novel of gesture and manners, a novel that suggests in often elusive and ambiguous ways the inner lives of men and women. The central moment in the

novel comes not when Bazarov and Paul are sparring—or when they later take up arms in a duel—but when Bazarov and Odintzov meet alone at night; when the window casing goes crashing up; when he leaves her to her night thoughts; when he rushes to embrace her and is then rejected. What follows this pivotal scene is an unraveling of Bazarov's self-confidence and stature as a hero. He leaves Odintzov's estate abruptly (shadowed by the ridiculous Sitnikov, who seems a pathetic version of the grand nihilist); he flirts with the virtuous Fenichka and abuses her friendship when he kisses her in the arbor; he is drawn into the "farce" of a duel with Paul. Beset by a sense of human worthlessness, he expounds on the insignificance of man in the cosmos—and then displays an attitude of aggressive petulance as he picks a fight with Arcady, his former best friend. Bazarov's philosophizing tone suggests a near-religious despair that may surprise us (and which Turgenev drew in part from the great seventeenth-century French scientist and religious philosopher Pascal). The hero of rebellious change has sunk into hopelessness and petty hostilities. His death—which many readers have viewed as a form of suicide—returns him a measure of his dignity, as he struggles against the impending darkness with stoic restraint.

Turgenev's hero has, arguably, become vastly more sympathetic to us in this shift of fate. Bazarov is still arrogant and astringent at the end, but we see in him the man he wanted to deny being: a creature deeply susceptible to feeling, incapable of the absolute control and mastery over the world he once presumed was his. The shift in Bazarov's fortunes also allows us to see more clearly the worth and values of the novel's other characters, who initially come under such fierce attack from the nihilist. Bazarov dies at the novel's end, but the world goes on: two couples marry, children are born, and "blossoming flowers" look tranquilly at us with innocent eyes. What are we left with at the end of this novel of change? The continuity of new beginnings, artistic conventions (double weddings are the staple of Shakespearean comedy—with their intimations of conflict and confusion resolved), and the force of nature.

Bazarov gives the novel its ideological focus and energy; he is without doubt its central and most controversial character. But there are numerous ways in which the central questions of the novel—regarding change, human will, reason, and the heart—are woven into and around the narrative, embodied not only in the figure of Bazarov. The conflict over science and poetry that Bazarov initiates is made substantial and specific in the novel's wonderful lyrical passages—Nicholas' meditative mood as he watches the sunset in chapter XI moves us emotionally into his world, in which poetry, music, and the quiet contemplation of the evening light and landscape are part of what makes life worth living. There are numerous such passages of nature description in the novel—beginning with Arcady's perceptions on the cart ride home in chapter III. These are, however, more than mere scene setting: they suggest that being able to see nature in this way—not merely as something to be used, or fixed, but as something of profound beauty, capable of nourishing us spiritually—is central to the novel's (and the novelist's) values. Similarly, Turgenev gives us thumbnail sketches of domestic interiors that represent health, love, and patient, compassionate labor: Fenichka's room with its jam jars and egg-adorned icon of St. Nicholas (known in Russia as the "wonder worker") is one example; Bazarov's parents' house is another. Odintzov's grand estate and Paul's intensely masculine study seem sterile by comparison. Like the novel's lyrical passages on nature, these descriptions of the domestic are not just setting the stage: they suggest ways of living that are deeply humane and loving. They are part of what Turgenev holds out as the "values" worth keeping in a society in need of change. But with Bazarov dead, who—or what—will be the engine of transformation?

The Russian title of Turgenev's novel is *Fathers and Children*—not *Fathers and Sons*. The traditional English translation emphasizes the conflict of male generations, but obscures the ways in which the novel describes a larger community in transition. While Turgenev ridicules the contemporary women's movement in a character like

Kukshina—she's scatterbrained and slovenly—he takes seriously the ways in which mothers and daughters shape this world, and suggests more subtle, hopeful forms of transformation. Anna Odintzov and Bazarov's mother, Arina, are each set in their (very different) ways. Anna is in some sense addicted to luxury, unable to respond to the calls of her own heart. Arina, a woman of the "old school"—and Old Russia—is superstitious and sentimental, mistress of the kitchen, and eager to hold on to her son. But what of Fenichka and Katya, the two "daughters" of the novel—young women who enter the Kirsanov household at the end, embarking on their lives as mothers and mistresses of the gentry estate?

Nicholas' relationship with Fenichka is in some ways the most radical one of the novel: she is of the peasant class (her mother ran an inn); she is shy and faunlike. She is much younger than Nicholas, a mere girl when he brings her into his household. Rather than caring for her as the orphaned daughter of his former housekeeper, he takes her as his lover, and she bears his son. Nicholas is presented to us as a kind and gentle man, but this is an action that smacks of the Old Regime and the ways in which landowners sexually exploited peasant women. On the other hand, it also seems to challenge the bonds of marriage, which Bazarov and Arcady claim they want to do. So, we might ask, is this a radical assault on marriage, an act of exploitation, or genuine love? And where in all of this are Fenichka's hopes and desires? What is best for her?

Katya too is a gentle presence throughout the novel, very much in the shadow of her elegant and imposing sister. We barely get a sense of her, until at the end she and Arcady have their heart-to-heart talks, and she begins to sense her power over him. But she's not comfortable playing the grande dame, and as soon as she thinks, "I'll have him at my feet," she's embarrassed at herself. She and Arcady are "domestic animals," she says—not wild beasts, like her sister and Bazarov.

In the context of Russian history, the allusion to "wild beasts" bears considering—and we might use it to think once more about the way in which the novel offers alterna-

tive visions of change. Bazarov's method is undiscriminating and crude, calling for the destruction of the present order without thinking about what to put in its place. He depends on a kind of raw energy that is appealing in this country of seeming inertia, inefficiency, and vast, isolating space. But Turgenev intimates other forms of change as well, in the less dramatic, "domestic" characters of Arcady, Katya, and Fenichka. When father and son set off on new marital paths at the novel's end, it isn't just a perpetuation of the status quo. Fenichka's entry into the manor makes it different; these Russians are entering a new world, in which serfdom has ended, but in which—Turgenev hopes—the best values of the old world may be kept.

Arcady's name is a telling one: it suggests to us arcadia—the classical ideal of a rural life, a world in which there is a gentle harmony between the elements of nature and human culture. Turgenev himself has always been identified with Russia's "Westernizers"—that part of the cultured elite who felt that Russia must look to Western models of political and cultural life, in order to ensure human dignity and political liberty. That did not mean, however, that Turgenev did not treasure his homeland, its distinctive landscape and people. He worried, however, that the impulse to violent, rapid change would all too readily engulf Russia in chaos. In his debate with Bazarov, Paul Petrovich rebukes Arcady for advocating "force": "The wild Kalmuk and the Mongolian have force—but what do we need it for? We value civilization." These may not be exactly Turgenev's words—though Paul (like Turgenev himself after the publication of *Fathers and Sons*) leaves Russia at the novel's end, for a lonely life abroad. In the Kirsanov estate, however, we find an imperfect but hopeful civilized middle ground, in which men will labor for a world more equitable than the one into which they were born; in which their children will bear the heritage not just of the gentry, but of the peasants; and in which the eternal vitality and beauty of nature will remain a comfort and an inspiration to all.

—Jane Costlow

I

"Well, Peter, any sign of them yet?" This was the question addressed on the 20th of May, 1859, to his servant—a young and lusty fellow with whitish down on his chin and with small dim eyes—by a gentleman of just over forty years of age, in a dusty overcoat and check trousers, as he emerged hatless on the low steps of a posting-station on the X highway.

Everything about the valet—his single turquoise earring, his pomaded hair of various shades and his studied gestures—proclaimed him a representative of a modern and more perfect age; and, as he stared superciliously down the road, he vouchsafed a reply, "No-o, there's no sign of them."

"No sign of them?" his master queried.

"Not a sign," the valet repeated.

His master gave vent to a sigh and sat down on a bench. While he is sitting there, with his legs tucked under him and gazing pensively around, let us introduce him to our readers.

His name was Nicholas Petrovich Kirsanov. Within ten miles of the posting-station he owned a fair estate—a "farm" as he now called it, having divided his land and rented it out to his former serfs. His father, who had seen service as a general in the War of 1812, had been a half-literate, coarse, but not bad sort of Russian; as a commander, first of a brigade and then of a division, he had led a strenuous life, but had spent most of his time in the provinces where, by virtue of his rank, he had wielded quite an appreciable influence. Nicholas Petrovich, like his brother Paul (of

whom we shall speak later), was born in the south of Russia and brought up at home until the age of fourteen in an environment of inexpensive tutors, garrulous and obsequious adjutants, and other such regimental and staff personages. His mother, who came of the Kolyazin family and in her youth had been called *Agathe* and later, when she married a general, Agafokleia Kuzminishna Kirsanov, belonged to the species of "commanding matrons"; she wore brightly coloured caps and gaudy silk dresses, was invariably the first to put her lips to the cross at mass, and was in the habit of holding forth loudly and at length upon having her children kiss her hand in the morning and bestowing a blessing on them at bedtime—in short, she ruled the roost. Although not distinguished for courage—he had even been dubbed "poltroon"—Nicholas Petrovich was under an obligation, as was his brother Paul, to join the army; but having broken a leg on the very day that he heard the news of his success in obtaining a commission, he spent a couple of months in bed and retained a slight limp for the remainder of his life. Giving him up as a bad job, his father let him take up a civilian occupation. As soon as Nicholas had reached the age of eighteen, he took him to Petersburg and registered him at the University. By that time, his brother Paul had got his commission in a Guards regiment. The two young men started their life together, in the same apartment, under the distant tutelage of Ilya Kolyazin, an official of standing who was a cousin on their mother's side. Their father rejoined his division and also his wife; every now and then, he dispatched to his sons a few large sheets of greyish paper scribbled over in an ornate clerkly handwriting. At the bottom, these sheets were decoratively inscribed with the words, "Peter Kirsanov, Major-General," painstakingly ringed by an ornamental scrawl. In 1835 Nicholas Petrovich took his degree. In the same year, General Kirsanov, who had been retired from the service as a result of an incident at a military parade he had commanded, ar-

rived in Petersburg with his wife, intending to settle there. But he suddenly died of an apoplectic stroke when he was on the point of renting a house in the vicinity of the Tavrichesky Gardens and had put his name down for the English Club. His wife soon followed him: she could not get accustomed to a dull life in the capital; the boredom of living in retirement had proved too much for her.

In the meantime, to his parents' great annoyance while they were still alive, Nicholas Petrovich had fallen in love with the daughter of an official by the name of Prepolovensky, his former landlord. She was a pretty and, as they say, "cultured" girl, who was addicted to reading serious articles in the Science section of the *Gazettes.* He married her as soon as the period of mourning was over and, having resigned from the Ministry of Pensions in which his father's influence had procured him a post, lived very happily with his Masha, first in a cottage near the Lesnoy Institute, then in a small but attractive apartment in town, with a clean staircase and a chilly drawing-room. Finally he withdrew to the country, where he settled for good and where his son, Arcady, was born. The young married couple lived very happily and tranquilly: they were almost inseparable, they read to one another, played piano duets and sang together; she planted flowers and kept a poultry-yard, while he sometimes went out hunting and busied himself with the management of the estate. In the meantime, Arcady grew and grew—also very happily and tranquilly. Ten years passed like a dream. In 1847 Kirsanov's wife died. He hardly survived the shock and went grey within a few weeks; then he decided to go abroad for a change . . . but it was 1848, the year of revolutions. Reluctantly he returned to the country and, after a prolonged period of inactivity, set about "reforming" his estate. In 1855 he took his son to the University: he spent three years with him in Petersburg, avoiding social engagements and trying his hardest to strike up an acquaintance with his son's young friends. He had been

unable to spend the last winter in Petersburg—and so we meet him, in the month of May, 1859, a grizzled, slightly bent, stoutish, elderly gentleman, waiting for the arrival of his son who, as he himself had once done, had just taken his degree.

Out of a feeling of respect or, perhaps, because he wished to escape his master's scrutiny, the valet strolled under the gateway and lit his pipe. Nicholas Petrovich let drop his head and began to examine the rickety steps of the porch: with an air of dignity, a plump, gaudy chicken was strutting on them, stamping firmly about on his sturdy yellow legs; a filthy cat was eyeing him with hostility as it sprawled posturing on the banisters. The sun was blazing: a smell of freshly baked rye bread was wafted from a shadowy passage in the posting-house. Nicholas Petrovich had surrendered himself to his reverie. "His son . . . a graduate . . . his Arcady . . ." Such were the thoughts ceaselessly spinning in his head; he made an effort to divert his mind to other things, but the very same thoughts came flooding back. He remembered his late wife . . . "She did not live to see this day," he whispered mournfully. . . . A bulky blue pigeon settled on the roadway and waddled off hastily to quench its thirst in a pool next to the well. Nicholas Petrovich directed his attention to it just as a rumble of approaching wheels began to impinge upon his ears. . . .

"Looks as if they're coming," the valet reported, darting out of the gateway.

Nicholas Petrovich jumped up and fixed his gaze on the highway. A tarantass came into view, drawn by three stage-horses; in the tarantass the band of a student's cap gleamed for an instant, and then he caught sight of a dear and familiar face. . . .

"Arcady! Arcady!" Kirsanov shouted, waving his hands and running forward. . . . A few seconds later, he was already pressing his lips on the young bachelor's beardless, dusty and sun-tanned cheeks.

II

"Let me dust myself, daddy!" Arcady exclaimed in a ringing, youthful voice, which the journey had made slightly husky, as he cheerfully returned his father's embraces. "I shall only soil you."

"No matter, no matter," Nicholas Petrovich kept repeating with an affectionate smile as, first of all, he slapped his son's coat a couple of times, and then his own. "Let me look at you, let me see you," he added, standing back. Then he hurried off towards the posting-station, reiterating as he went: "Quick there, quick, bring out the horses."

Nicholas Petrovich appeared more excited than his son; he looked a little flurried and overcome with shyness. Arcady stopped him.

"Daddy," he cried, "allow me to introduce my great friend Bazarov, about whom I have written so often. Very kindly he has consented to stay with us."

Nicholas Petrovich spun quickly round and, going up to a tall man in a longish, loose-fitting country overcoat with tassels, who had just climbed out of the tarantass, he warmly gripped the red, ungloved hand, which his son's friend had been in no hurry to extend to him.

"I am heartily glad," he began, "and grateful, too, for your good intention in wishing to visit us; I hope . . . May I ask your name and patronymic?"

"Eugene Vassilich," Bazarov replied in a drawling but virile voice and, throwing back the collar of his coat, showed his full face to Nicholas Petrovich. The face was long and gaunt, with a broad forehead, a nose