



## **Fathers and Children**

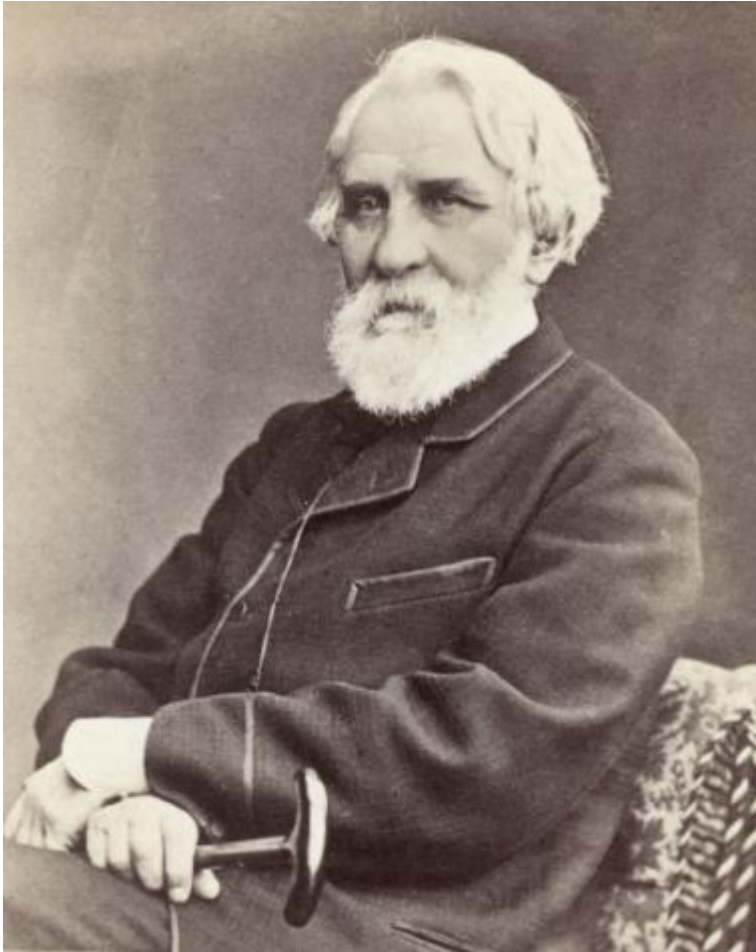
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# Fathers and Children

*The Times Literary Supplement*, 12 January 1973, 40b–c



*Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev*

TO THE EDITOR, *THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT*

8 December 1973

Wolfson College, Oxford

Sir, – Absence abroad has prevented me from replying earlier to the review of my lecture on *Fathers and Children* (22 December 1972). Your reviewer speaks of my ‘unacknowledged omissions and

misrepresentations of the original', of my 'rearrangement' of Turgenev's text 'to suit [my] 'thesis', and of 'factual errors concerning the models for Bazarov and the state of present scholarship on the novel', besides unspecified 'minor faults' – all of which, in his view, 'impair the grounds of the argument'.

An attack on my views, whatever its nature, I should leave unanswered; but I cannot allow to pass unchallenged criticisms which amount to imputations of dishonesty and culpable ignorance.

First, 'omissions and misrepresentations'. The only examples adduced by your reviewer occur in the quotation from Belinsky which forms the epigraph (not, as he says, 'the opening paragraph') of my lecture. The paragraph from Belinsky's celebrated letter to Gogol, from which my quotation comes, is some three hundred words long and I chose from it the sentences which made my (and Belinsky's) point, indicating all omissions save one by the normal conventional signs. The only omission not so indicated goes as follows: 'The title of poet, the calling of a man of letters, has amongst us long overshadowed the tinsel of epaulettes and uniforms of many colours'; this adds nothing material to the words that I quoted. The other (clearly indicated) omissions consist of Belinsky's assertion that the reputations of Pushkin and Gogol declined in popular estimation after they had, in Belinsky's view, gone over to the establishment: this, likewise, merely serves to underline the indictment and the moral and social presuppositions on which it was based. (The Russian edition that I have used is V. G. Belinsky, *Articles and Reviews*, edited by F. M. Golovenchenko, Ogiz, Moscow, 1948, which, in the relevant paragraph, differs from the full USSR Academy edition by two words: *mrak* – 'the darkness of' – is substituted for 'Russian' before the words 'autocracy, Orthodoxy' etc.)<sup>1</sup> So much for the charge of misrepresentation.

Secondly, my alleged 'rearrangement' of the text of *Fathers and Children*. I have no idea what your reviewer means by this: my references to, and occasional quotations from, Turgenev's novel are intended (like my quotations from, and references to, other texts) to illustrate my view of Turgenev's predicament, or throw light upon his outlook and personality. Your reviewer must have known that

<sup>1</sup> [Strictly speaking, IB used V. G. Belinsky, *Collected Works in Three Volumes*, vol. 3, *Articles and Reviews 1843–1848*; and 'two words' would more naturally be 'one word?']

this lecture was not intended to provide – indeed, no lecture could provide – a continuous exposition of the novel or a page by page, episode by episode, commentary upon it.

Thirdly, ‘factual errors concerning the models for Bazarov’. There is, of course, a considerable literature about this. Turgenev himself speaks of a Dr D, who died before 1860 ‘and other similar people’. N. A. Ostrovskaya reports a conversation with Turgenev in 1873 in which he spoke of a young man exiled to Siberia whom he met in the train (identified by Polovtsev with a Dr Dmitriev). On the basis of Ostrovskaya’s account, M. Granjard, followed by Yarmolinsky (in the revised version of his biography), speaks of two models for Bazarov, both doctors, one of whom, according to him, Turgenev met in the Isle of Wight. Chernov speaks of one doctor only, whom he calls Yakushkin; and Pustovoit and others, including Professor Freeborn in his standard work, support the ‘single model’ theory. Still others have pressed the claims of Belinsky, Dobrolyubov and, strangely enough, Tolstoy for this role. When I delivered the lecture I was convinced by the Granjard–Yarmolinsky thesis. I am now inclined to think that Turgenev’s own words should outweigh Ostrovskaya’s report, and it seems to me that Herzen settled the issue when he said that there had been something of Bazarov in himself, in Belinsky, in Bakunin, and in other pro-Western radicals of the time. Such identifications are rarely certain, nor has the precise identity of the model or models for Bazarov any bearing on the points I sought to make; and, in any case, it seems strange indeed to speak of ‘factual errors’ in connection with this welter of conjectures and hypotheses. Nor do I know (as yet) of anything in ‘the state of present scholarship on the novel’ (to familiarity with which, in all its languages, I lay no claim) to ‘impair the grounds of the argument’ or to invalidate my conclusions.

I cannot deal with the ‘minor faults’ imputed to me by your reviewer, since he does not specify them. But I should like to take this opportunity of expressing my regret for a number of misprints, mispunctuations and the like, none of which, however, could conceivably mislead the reader, save for one egregious blunder (not mentioned by your reviewer) in the appendix on Dostoevsky, where (page 62, line 34) ‘Am I not right about this?’ should read ‘I might write about this’. But even this genuine error (the cause of which is plain enough) does not in any way affect my argument. I hope that my other ‘minor faults’ are no more serious than those I have

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mentioned above, and that any innuendoes your reviewer may seek to base upon them are equally lacking in substance.

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