

A. S. J. TESSIMOND
SAVING GRACE

Fish do not smile, nor birds: their faces are not
Equipped for it. A smiling dog's the illusion
And wish-fulfilment of its owner. Cats wear
Permanent smiles inspired by mere politeness
But human animals at times forget their
Godlike responsibilities; the tension
Slackens, the weasel-sharp intentness falters;
Muscles relax; the eyes refrain from peering
Aside, before and after; and the burden
Of detail drops from forehead; cheekline gently
Creases; the mouth wide-flowers; the stiff mask softens;
And Man bestows his simple, unambitious,
Unservile, unselfseeking, undeceptive,
Uncorrupt gift, the grace-note of a smile.

PAUL DEHN

'THE SWEET WAR MAN IS DEAD'

Their stricken bones lie all about the world,
Who were my friends in England; and the law
Permits me to have loved them, who lack flesh.
Eyes winked, once, in the skull. Ribs that are curled
Under the sand, under the sea, under the hairy paw
Of Death who sent the flies, who sent the fish,
Had once a heart. Pluck me that heart, now,
From bird's beak, eel-gut and the maggot's mouth;
Put back those eyes, where the eternal tide
Sings in the sockets; on the crackpot brow
Pencil the leaf-light shadow-lines of youth;
For these bare bones were children, when they died.
So must I mourn among the glutted gulls,
Cry to a shark, weep with the fat, white worm
Who turns and nods to me across the stones.
They feasted and are full. Only these skulls
Ring emptily and need no requiem,
Being at peace. Lie easy, now, poor bones.

NOEL ANNAN

NOVELIST-PHILOSOPHERS

III—TURGENEV

IN majesty and mystery, enthroned on Mount Olympus, the god-like masters of the art of fiction hold their high Court: great Tolstoy, lit by the radiance of his profound and varied experience, foretells man's destiny; with him sit Dostoievsky, who penetrates deeper than any into the human soul, the strange, poetic genius, Emily Brontë, exuberant Dickens, labyrinthine Proust. There also reign Flaubert and Jane Austen, receiving the supplications of the votaries of Form and Art. Beneath their gaze the critics flit for ever interceding for some author dead or living that he may be granted a place among the foothills of the heavenly mountain. Turgenev once was a god—or so they say; but now his time is past; his day is done; his charm, his art are relegated to the second rank. The discerning today judge *The Torrents of Spring* to be his finest work which the immortals, however, consign relentlessly to the Apochrypha; for though both lovely and moving, it cannot claim to be a Book of Revelation whose limitless profundities and mysteries eternally feed the soul of man. Few call upon Turgenev's name. At the altars of Henry James and George Eliot a circumscribed but select band of worshippers gather to burn incense: no longer at his. Lacking the prodigious power and range of his erratic contemporaries or the analytical, experimental genius of the great novelists of this century, he has not been cast from his throne so much as politely removed and set in an inferior though distinguished niche.

If we were to judge Turgenev by his collected works, it might be difficult to reverse this verdict. Yet *Fathers and Children* is perhaps the most perfect example of the novel as a form of art, the book one would press into the hand of someone who had never in his life read a novel. But it is a delicate transparent vessel. *Fathers and Children* is dwarfed if placed beside *War and Peace* or *La Comédie Humaine*. It is short, introduces a bare ten characters and covers but nine months in time. Moreover though like Flaubert and Jane Austen, his range is confined