



Twilight of Love: Travels with Turgenev

Robert Dessaix

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Together with Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, Ivan Turgenev was one of the leading novelists of Russia's Golden Age and the first Russian writer to capture a Western audience. In Russia works such as his *A Hunter's Notes* and *Fathers and Sons*, were pivotal in transforming the Russian social landscape.

No less sensational than his novels was his personal life. For forty years, until the day he died, he was passionately devoted to the diva Pauline Viardot, following her and her husband around Europe and even living with them amicably at times as part of their household. What, then, did Turgenev mean by "love," the word at the core of his life and work?

Robert Dessaix has had his own forty-year relationship with Turgenev, first as a student of Russian in both Australia and Russia, then as a teacher, and now as what he calls a close friend. In *Twilight of Love*, Dessaix has come to see Turgenev's life and work as an expression of a turning point in the history of love—the moment the Romantic became rational, love unraveled into sentiment and erotic feelings, and eros became a mere commodity.

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