

## A HISTORY OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE "AFTERWORD TO *THE KREUTZER SONATA*"

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The Afterword to *The Kreutzer Sonata* was begun at the end of October 1889 at the time the eighth and next to last manuscript of *The Kreutzer Sonata* was being completed. V.G. Chertkov had advised Tolstoy to write an Afterword so that his readers would understand the meaning of his tale more clearly. Tolstoy assented to do this claiming that he agreed that an Afterword would be a good idea. The date on the manuscript of the first redaction is December 6, 1889. It therefore took Tolstoy about a month to finish this first redaction. By 7 November, while in the process of writing the Afterword, he wrote in his diary that he was receiving letters with opinions about *The Kreutzer Sonata*. The Afterword, therefore, was partially an attempt to address the issues raised by those letters. Chertkov had sent him extracts from readers with questions concerning the tale.<sup>1</sup>

In the first redaction, following Chertkov's advice, Tolstoy sets chastity as an ideal, not a strict rule to be observed between the sexes, even within marriage. He then set the redaction aside as a rough copy. On 25 December Chertkov again wrote asking him to write an Afterword. On 15 January Tolstoy wrote that he had tried with great effort but was unable to write an Afterword. Chertkov then wrote asking him to make corrections to the redaction he had already written, but Tolstoy was dissatisfied with it and rewrote the entire thing. This rewriting composed the second redaction. It was also unfinished and is not used at all in the final redaction. This redaction was probably begun soon after the copy of the first rough draft was corrected but not earlier than 17 January.

Many diary entries and letters to Chertkov attest to Tolstoy's difficulty in writing the second redaction. But in it he forthrightly voices his commitment to total continence, even within marriage. He notes in his diary that the Gospel did not support the institution of marriage, that marriage was not mentioned in it. "Nothing except the absurd miracle at Cana, which establishes marriage as much as the visitation of Zacchaeus establishes the profession of tax collecting."<sup>2</sup>

Tolstoy was sick a great deal during February and composition of the second redaction lost momentum. It is extremely interesting though that when he begins work again he mentions in his diary being happily obsessed with "Koni's tale", which was to serve as the basis of his last great novel, *Resurrection*.<sup>3</sup> In this same entry he writes a thought which contains imagery and phrasing that is later incorporated in the final redaction of the afterword. "Reason is a lamp, hung near the heart of every person. A person cannot walk-- cannot live other than in the light of this lamp. The lamp always

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<sup>1</sup>In *Postlude to The Kreutzer Sonata: Tolstoj and the Debate on Sexual Morality in Russian Literature in the 1890s*, Peter Ulf Møller provides a bibliography of the considerable reaction of contemporary Russian press to Tolstoy's tale. E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1988, pp. 314-328.

<sup>2</sup>*Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii* 51:17. Diary entry, 5 February 1890.

<sup>3</sup>This theme had been gestating in Tolstoy mind at least since 18 April 1888, according to the *Khronicheskaja kanva* compiled by K.S. Shokhor, *PSS* 27: 232.

shines the way before that person-- the path along which that person walks."<sup>4</sup>

By 24 February he resumed work on the redaction again, after his illness and having become distracted by other affairs. On 4 March he received a letter from Chertkov again urging him to finish the earlier abandoned and partially corrected version of the Afterword. Then Tolstoy received a letter dated 6 March from a certain V.P. Prokhorov. The letter was addressed both to Moscow and Yasnaya Polyana since Prokhorov did not know where Tolstoy was living. Prokhorov wrote earnestly asking Tolstoy to explain the meaning of the story, assuring him that his answer would have a great bearing on his whole life. On 11 March Tolstoy makes a diary entry, "Thought about the Afterword in the form of a letter to Prokh."<sup>5</sup>

Apparently Tolstoy soon grew disenchanted with this version of the Afterword soon abandoned it. With the help of the Danish translator, Peter Emanuel Hansen, from 1-6 April Tolstoy worked intensively on what was to prove the final redaction. He notes in his diary for 7 April: "Yesterday on the 6th of April in the morning finished writing and corrected the Afterword. Have just gotten immersed in it and completely made it clear to myself."<sup>6</sup> Hansen then took what he believed to be the final corrected version to St. Petersburg in order to make lithograph and hectogram editions from it. Tolstoy, however, from 7 to 24 April went on correcting the manuscript and sent Hansen a large supplement with new corrections. During this time Chertkov sent a long letter to Tolstoy pleading with him to say something in the Afterword which would recognize "...the lawfulness of a moral marriage for those hundreds of millions of modern people, who still haven't been raised to the level of of a possibly more celibate marriage. If you don't do this, and the Afterword appears without this addition, then millions of *modern* people, still living in the flesh, will be repulsed from the life of Christ, and not attracted to it."<sup>7</sup> Tolstoy sent a copy of the new redaction to Chertkov on April 25 with a letter begging his pardon but saying that he "could not rehabilitate honorable marriage." "Net takogo braka." "There is no such marriage," he asserted bluntly.

Tolstoy continued to make corrections on the manuscript as late as 23 November 1890. None of these corrections were substantial enough for Gudzy to state that there was a new redaction. The final redaction was first published in Berlin by Walter Zimmerman

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<sup>4</sup>Diary entry, 16 February 1890 "рассудок- фонарь, привешенный к груди каждого человека. Человек не может идти--жить иначе как при света этого фонаря. Фонарь всегда освещает ему вперед его дорогу-- путь-- по[которому] он идет.

<sup>5</sup>PSS 51:26

<sup>6</sup>Вчера 6 Фреля утром дописывал, поправлял послесловие. Только что расписался и вполне уяснил себе. Tolstoy's wording in this diary entry is a bit ambiguous. Does расписался here mean that Tolstoy had put his signature to a final version of the redaction since Hansen had left for Petersburg with what both men apparently thought was the final version for the lithograph version? Or is the word used in its less common sense, meaning that Tolstoy had gotten deeply into the problem, and at last made it clear to himself? I believe that given Tolstoy's long struggle with the composition of the Afterword, and that at last after an intense effort having come up with what he considered to be a successful draft, that the word was used in the latter sense.

<sup>7</sup>PSS 27: 631.

and in a second edition by M.K. Elpidina in Geneva in 1890. The Afterword appeared with *The Kreutzer Sonata* in the 13th volume of the Collected Works of Tolstoy in Moscow in 1891. Many errors occurred in the manuscript copied by Sofia Andreevna. In several places she changed the language for the censor. The government censor himself laid a heavy hand on the text. For the 12th edition in 1911, Sofia Andreevna corrected scarcely more than half of the errors she made in her 1891 copy, but all the censor's changes remain. P.I. Biryukov used this 12th edition text for the Complete Collected works that he edited in 1912.

In 1901 the work appeared with some corrections in *Svobodnoe Slovo* in Christchurch, England under the pamphlet entitled "O Polovom voprose. Mysli L.N. Tolstogo, sobrannye Vladimirom Chertkovym." (*On the Sexual Question: L.N. Tolstoy's Thoughts*, Collected by Vladimir Chertkov). Here the censor's emendations are removed but the errors of the previous edition "were not systematically deleted."<sup>8</sup> In 1906 this same pamphlet appeared in the February issue of the St. Petersburg journal *Vsemirnyi vestnik*.

In the Soviet era the work appeared in 1928 in a collection of artistic works published by Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, and in a supplement to *Ogonek*. Here the text is a combination of the 1891 and the 12th volume of the 1911 edition. The censor's restrictions were not omitted in these editions. Thus, until Gudzy and Gusev's edition which appeared in 1933 in volume 27 of the *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, only Chertkov's 1906 edition was free from the censor's restrictions. The authoritative 1936 version was made by comparing the 23rd manuscript (which the earlier foreign editions of the Afterword were based on) with the 25th, the one Sofia Andreevna copied over for the 1891 edition (the 24th manuscript was only one sheet long), and restoring all the omissions made by the censor.

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<sup>8</sup>Gudzy, *PSS* 27: 634. My own observations are indebted to N.K. Gudzy's exhaustive analysis in *Kommentarii "Poslesolovie k "Kreitzerovoi sonate"*. *PSS* 27: 625-646.

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