

From the Editor

At the risk of appearing to subscribe to an overly pervasive pluralism, I might change the title of this special issue to "Tolstoy and Sexualities," since what has emerged in the essays collected here is the earnest intensity with which Tolstoy scrutinized various theories of sexuality, and diverse prescriptions (social and medical) for sexual practice. Here is not an author whose issues with sex need to be teased out of textual repressions and discursive obsessions: if anything, Tolstoy was one of the most frank and outspoken critics of the sexual practices and mores of his generation, as well as an uncannily empathic psychologist of both male and female sexuality. This is not to argue that his naked descriptions of passion, childbirth, and marital strife were not exceeded by the murkier eroticisms of modernist and symbolist art. Nor is Tolstoy unique in coupling issues of sexuality to morality, ultimately to Christian *askesis*. We pay attention to Tolstoy, however, because his great novels so exhaustively retrace these same issues of corporeality, flesh, and passion, that he easily assumes the title, "seer of the flesh."

Furthermore, Tolstoy's personal and political involvements with the "sexual question" made it all too easy for critics to translate his literary treatments of the topics into a form of dramatized autobiography; his texts, from *Anna Karenina* to *Kreutzer Sonata*, "The Devil," and "Father Sergius" have all fallen prey to a common critical interpretation, verging on a kind of hermeneutic voyeurism, that casts Tolstoy in the role of all his anguished male protagonists. So, recently, I was treated to an off-Broadway musical performance of *Anna Karenina* that earnestly satirized Tolstoy in the figure of Levin, turning the game of chalk ciphers in the proposal scene--a transcendent, lyrical passage in the novel--into broadly played farce, which, for those in the know, was easily recognizable as the playwright's adaptation of the diary and correspondence accounts of Tolstoy's courtship of his wife. In preparing for the even more notorious production of "Plunging My Knife Swiftly into her Corset," (an off-off Broadway avant-garde theatricalization based on *Kreutzer Sonata*) the cast was forced to read Sophia Andreevna's diaries, thus reiterating Ted Hughes' poetic indictment of the author ("Kreutzer Sonata", 1967):

Now you have stabbed her good
A flower of unknown colour appallingly
Blackened by your surplus of bile
Blooms wetly on her dress.

‘Your mystery! Your mystery! . . .’
All facts, with all absence of facts,
Exhale as the wound there
Drinks its roots and breathes them to nothing.

Vile copulation! Vile! --etcetera.
 But now your dagger has outdone everybody's.
 Say goodbye for your wife's sweet flesh goes off,
 Booty of the envious spirit's assault.

A sacrifice, not a murder.
 One hundred and forty pounds
 Of excellent devil, for God.
 She tormented Ah demented you.

With that fat lizard Trukachevsky,
 That fiddling, leering penis.
 Yet why should you castrate yourself
 To be rid of them both?

Now you have stabbed her good
 Trukachevsky is cut off
 From any further operation on you,
 And she can find nobody else.

Rest in peace, Tolstoy!
 It must have taken supernatural greed
 To need to corner all the meat in the world,
 Even from your own hunger.

Tolstoy's biography, correspondence, and belle-lettres document his life-long preoccupation and struggle with "sexual questions" and thus challenge the serious scholar to mine this fertile and complex field of investigation in order to move responsibly beyond the types of facile author/protagonist conflation sketched above. Indeed, the topic of this issue was selected with this goal in mind, as a direct result of my own frustration with existing discussions of Tolstoy and sexuality (Peter Ulf Møller's excellent study of the *Kreutzer Sonata* being a notable exception). And, thankfully, the contributors to this volume were united in their motivation to probe the topic without simply exposing and exploiting the vicissitudes of Tolstoy's personal crises. The contributors were furthermore generous and energetic in providing documentation and translations of supplementary materials that are collected and published together here in an anthology, thus combining critical views with Tolstoy's own words for the first time since Chertkov's compilation on this topic.

Interestingly, the work which most of these articles return to is not the *Kreutzer Sonata*, but the early novel that belabors the mind-body problem as it is couched in the Rousseauian categories of nature vs. civilization, female vs. male, etc. Both Anenome's "Gender, Genre, and the Discourse of Imperialism in Tolstoy's *Cossacks*" and LeBlanc's

"Unpalatable Pleasures: Tolstoy, Food, and Sex" explore these topics in *Cossacks*, as well as in other works. The debate is taken up again in the Roundtable Discussion of Donna Tussin Orwin's book, *Tolstoy's Art and Thought 1847-1880*, the heart of which is arguably, her definitive treatment of Rousseau's *oeuvre* within Tolstoy's philosophy. That Tolstoy's concerns with sexuality need to be understood in the larger context of his philosophical thought and his concerns with the body is made clear in LeBlanc's synoptic essay which reminds us of the links between sexual consumation, and the urge to *consommer* that become operative in Tolstoy's post-conversion struggles (both actual and textual) with the appetites of the flesh.

Rancour-Laferriere's "Anna's Adultery: Distal Sociobiology vs. Proximate Psychoanalysis" and Kujundžić's "Pardoning Woman in *Anna Karenina*" explore the functions of the adultery theme in *Anna Karenina*, in two divergent, but ultimately connected approaches. Rancour-Laferriere considers the ultimately reproductive results of sexual drives and the resultant gender differences in socio-sexual mores; Kujundžić explicates the scriptural sub-texts of *Anna Karenina* to illuminate the theme of pardoning and forgiveness as a phenomenological dimension of the novel.

The final two articles in this collection provide a happily complete literary history of Tolstoy's correspondence with American movements in "sexuality" at the time of his work on the *Kreutzer Sonata*. Edward's "Tolstoy and Alice B. Stockham: The Influence of "Tokology" on *The Kreutzer Sonata*" succinctly outlines the features of Stockham's work and summarizes her contact with Tolstoy. The significance of her *Tokology* for the *Kreutzer Sonata* is documented in Tolstoy's correspondence of the time, his preface to the *Tokology*, and his various "Afterwords" to the *Kreutzer Sonata*, all of which are presented here in translation. Similarly, Nickell's article is the first comprehensive history of Tolstoy's curious involvement with the "Diana" movement created by Parkhurst and Burnz. Tolstoy's cautious approbation of the "Diana" pamphlet was published in his "On the Relations between the Sexes", also translated here.

Tolstoy's own quest for a moral sexuality he could endorse, painfully charted in his "Afterword to the *Kreutzer Sonata*," resulted in his notorious advocacy of chastity, even within marriage. Such an extreme view --"there is no such thing as a Christian sexually consummated marriage"-- forced him to create a striking document: a definition of Christian idealism that infused *praxis* with *theoria*, and rendered the flawed human progress towards a perfect *imitatio Christi* as sacred as its ultimate goal. When reading Tolstoy, and reflecting on the all too apparent tear wounds of the struggle between flesh and spirit, we might do well to return to Tolstoy's own account of the battle, one that ultimately redeems the world and the flesh as the place where spirit is made manifest.

This issue is the last I will edit for the *Tolstoy Studies Journal*. I have been honored to be at the helm of this publication for the last three years, and have benefited tremendously from sitting at the vantage point for reading the ongoing scholarship on Tolstoy and his work. I have been sustained and assisted by the generosity and tireless efforts of the Editorial Board, outside expert readers too numerous to mention by name, research and editorial assistants, George Ouwendijk's competent labor as managing editor, support from the Graduate Program in Comparative Literature of the City University of

New York Graduate Center and the Slavic Department of Columbia University, and the contributions of all those who have written for the journal while I was editor.

The journal now passes to the capable hands of Charles Isenberg and all submissions should be directed to him in future at the following address:

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