

question and to the need to ground morality in philosophic or religious principles, could not take the English practical approach to morality. He saw that the family without religion was on shaky ground. Tolstoy associates the English with pragmatism and materialism, and he opposes Russian Christian tradition to these.

Tolstoy also provides another justification for family life in *Anna Karenina*. At the center of female existence and family life as portrayed in the novel is childbirth, the ordinary experience which, like death, is "equally beyond the usual conditions of life: they [death and childbirth] were like openings in that usual life through which something higher became visible" (Pt. 7, Ch.14). Childbirth provides the most purely sublime moments in *Anna Karenina*, in which Anna (also on her deathbed) temporarily regains her good, moral self, and in which Lyovin has an intimation of Nirvana. After witnessing the birth of his son, Lyovin defines the woman's world as sublime in ' precisely this sense: it was "so high in his estimation that his imagination could not grasp it" (xvi, 329). As souls slip into and out of the world, that window on the unseen of which Mandelker speaks opens a crack.

WORKS CITED

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Professor Mandelker's Reply...

It is a great honor to have the opportunity to respond in the pages of *Tolstoy Studies Journal* to such insightful and stimulating reviews of my book on *Anna Karenina*, by colleagues whom I esteem and whose own work on Tolstoy and Russian literature has been so seminal to my own. I am deeply grateful to have my work read so closely and summarized so gracefully as has been done by Professors Emerson, Isenberg, and Orwin. In particular, I can only respond with gratitude to Professor Emerson's generous appraisal of my work. Curiously, the one argument of my book she finds to be "not so surprising," the proposition that Tolstoy's location as archrealist is problematic, turns out to be the very aspect of my thesis that has generated the most debate, both from Professors Isenberg and Orwin here, and in the reviews that have appeared elsewhere since my book's publication. In what follows, therefore, I will focus my response on the questions raised by Professors Isenberg and Orwin concerning my comparison of *Anna Karenina* to the Victorian novel, as these center on two related issues: realism and Victorianism, (which might be conceived of as real/ estate).

It is not altogether far-fetched to observe that, semantically speaking, "realism" is distantly connected with "real estate." That quasi-legal connection is tangibly supported by the bonds of interest that tie so many novelists to the realistic tradition: by Balzac's sense of property, Dicken's inventories and Tolstoy's estates, Henry James' preoccupation with "things."
 Harry Levin, "What is Realism?"

Lucy: I know what you mean about Christmas getting you down. I never get what I really want. All I get are some dumb clothes or toys or something. Charlie Brown: What is it you really want? Lucy: Real estate.
Charles Schultz, "Charlie Brown's Christmas"

In response to Professor Orwin's probing remarks on this topic, I must begin by emphasizing that my discussion of the Victorian ethos as it relates to the novel, *Anna Karenina*, refers to Victorianism as it is inscribed within the Victorian novel and received by Russian readers. My main concerns were, therefore, with literary conventions and the problems inherent in reading and representation. However, as this theme is connected in my book to the woman question, it necessarily attaches to the family question and issues surrounding the social and literary treatments of motherhood, female superfluity, and so forth.

Professor Orwin suggests that, in discussing Tolstoy's adaptation of Victorian fiction, I underrate the importance and attraction of these family ideals for him and for his novel. In fact, the opposite is true: my point is that the family ideal as represented (romanticized) in Victorian fiction is all too attractive and desirable, and therefore, dangerous, even fatal.

I am in absolute agreement with Orwin's assessment of Tolstoy's position vis-a-vis Victorian mores, especially with regards to the woman question. Indeed, his writings are filled with comments that valorize women's work as wives, housewives, and mothers above the trivial, ego-elevating paper-pushing of the masculine official. My contention is that Tolstoy differs from the Victorians in his depiction of figures like Dolly, where he emphasizes the real cost of such a commitment and the prejudicial double standard of European bourgeois society. It is unfair and unrealistic to expect women to remain gloriously erotic sylphs after they have given birth 5, 6, or 7 times, nursed every child, and lost babies to miscarriage or infant illness. Anna's avoidance of childbirth in order to remain sexually attractive makes this clear. The common palliative administered by Anna to Dolly, that permitted husbands to risk their families' health while indulging their sexual appetites in the brothels, all the while "idolizing" their wives and keeping them "in a separate category" from the women of the street, is directly attacked in *Anna Karenina* in Stiva and Levin's debates on this very topic. The Victorian novel, by closing on the romance of wedding vows, ringing church bells and a few clever sound bytes about happy futures, conceals the rugged realities of married life, except when they are briefly idealized, or held up to ridicule, as, for example, with Trollope's Mrs. Proudie, or to failure, as with Dickens' account of the Murdocks' destruction of David Copperfield's mother. Much as Tolstoy, and I, admire the historical Victorian emphases on family life, on Christian charity, on honest work, and on self-sacrifice in the name of cherished ideals, Victorian *fiction* offers a seductive and duplicitous version of its own culture, especially where the experience of marriage is concerned. I whole-heartedly concur with Professor Orwin's reminder that Tolstoy certainly loved "the family idea" in *Anna Karenina*; my point would be that he was, therefore, all the more critical of that fictional falsification or idealization of the real demands of family life and the dangers for creating frustrated desire in those who expected their married lives to resemble those of novelistic heroines.

I emphatically concur with Orwin's assessment of the significance of childbirth and mothering for Tolstoy and would go further to assert that the greatest love scene in *Anna Karenina* is between mother and child. In fact, precisely on this point I would take issue with her statement that the only successful communication in the novel is erotic in its foundation; what about Kitty's communion with her son? Anna with hers? Despite this, there is unquestioningly a disillusionment with family life at the heart of *Anna Karenina*; to Professor Isenberg's challenge as to how serious that is, I would only observe that Levin, "a happy family man," must hide ropes and knives from himself to avoid suicide. While it would be anachronistic to argue that, in 1875, Tolstoy had already formulated his 1898 rejection of the notion of Christian marriage, we, as readers of his entire oeuvre, can certainly recognize in the malaise in *Anna Karenina*, the beginnings of the later assertion, no matter how strongly we would ourselves oppose

Before turning to Professor Isenberg's concerns about Tolstoy and realism I would like to respond to his first question: "What is the argument for associating the sublime and the beautiful with, respectively, the masculine and the feminine?" The engendering of these categories is clearly discernable in the discourse of aesthetics, beginning with Burke's comparison of the sublime and the beautiful, where, "sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small; beauty should be smooth and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy; beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid, and even massive." I am limited by the constraints of this forum, and therefore prohibited from tracing further the metaphorical erection of the binary qualities of beauty and sublimity, easily recognizable as masculine and feminine attributes, in the history of aesthetic discourse. The feminist critique of aesthetics usually relies on this construct.

To take up Professor Isenberg's provocative questions about my treatment of "realism," I would certainly agree that "realism" was not a developed theoretical category for Tolstoy or his readers at time of writing *Anna Karenina*, and that interpretive communities not only define realism but constitute it, as Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth has elegantly demonstrated in her study *Realism and its Consensus*. I also certainly would not take issue with Professor Isenberg's point that the types of symbolism and (pre-)figuration I (and other critics) have noted in *Anna Karenina* characterize many novels which we would term realist: "The realism of the romanticists has its dialectical counterpart in the romanticism of the realists, and it would be hard to say under which category we should classify *La Chartreuse de Parme* or *Les Misérables*," as Harry Levin writes in "What is Realism?" One could even argue that such a use of symbolism and figuration is essential to realism, in the Dostoevskian "higher sense," or as what Courbet termed, "*l'allegorie réelle*." In defining realism, I was deeply influenced by Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth's work which theorizes the aesthetic impact of realism in terms of the pictorial canvas, a strategy which seemed eminently suitable to the theme of my book (framing). According to Ermarth, realism is best defined as an aesthetic that organizes a collective viewpoint along an agreed

upon perspectival horizon, so that, "[i]n realism, points of view must intersect to create a uniform horizon, disagreements must be resolved so that the final picture or narrative achieves consistency in all its relationships. Realism forces its readers and viewers into a "middle distance" that makes possible the perception of a unified, single 'set of meanings'." (36). Such a reading is easily aligned with a feminist critique of the reading experience, such that realism acquires a hegemonic, oppressive, even violent character in "forcing" certain "meanings" upon its readers while driving to the margins those who would deviate from it. Victorian realism, in particular, seems culpable within this interpretive strategy; as J. Hillis Miller argues, "For the Victorian novelists . . . the existence of an authentic satisfaction of desire makes the happy ending possible." (137) In other words, everyone *ought* to be happy at the end of the Victorian novel, given that it is, within the fictive universe of the Victorians, entirely possible to obtain the complete satisfaction of desire through the acquisition of family and estate. Yet, Hillis Miller continues: "Victorian fiction raises for the 20th century reader the dark question of whether the assimilation of the protagonists into the community . . . is a valid resolution, or whether, to our deeper insight, it should appear as a covering over and forgetting of the fundamental fact of human existence . . . --in the drive for some 'illimitable satisfaction.'" (135) What is pernicious in reading realism in general, therefore, is the promise that the desires aroused by reading can be satisfied; what is cruel in Victorian realism in particular, is the imposition of a consensus as to what constitutes the adequate means of satisfaction and the allowable parameters of desire. Those who are blocked in their reading experience--as feminist critics would argue women are, or as I sought to demonstrate that Anna is, both as a woman and as a Russian reader of European fiction--are exiled into resistance: "Any move toward the margins of experience means accepting a distortion uncongenial to the realistic gambit." (Ermarth, 35) For Anna, such resistance culminated in adultery.

Professor Isenberg asks, perhaps jestingly, if I "mean to suggest that Anna commits adultery for the sake of estate," or that Anna is drawn to Vronsky because his estate is larger than Karenin's. Rather, my implication was that Anna is ruined by her assimilation of false narratives. Just as Mme Bovary is seduced by romantic accounts of adultery, Anna is frustrated by apparently realistic narratives that depict "English happiness," in terms she desires, indeed, already possesses, but which have failed her.

This is not a desire for real estate, but for *real* estate. A friend recently characterized *Better Homes and Gardens* as a feminine version of *Penthouse*, depicting a glossy and unreal, yet apparently possessable reality, that ends by creating perpetual dissatisfaction with one's own (usually rumpled) environment. In a sense, this schema of reading interrogates Kant's theory of aesthetic disinterest and, in Tolstoy's later work, supplants it with the (in)famous notion of infection. In those terms, in order for texts (and Anna consumes many) to act in this way, it is not necessary for Anna (or the reader) to be a clean slate, only for the texts themselves to be infectious. Anna's "experience, her situation, and her chain of choices" (to quote Professor Isenberg) do indeed "determine how she will read, how she will live, and how she will die:" Anna, like all of us, is seduced by narratives

and visions, while struggling to resist their impending foreclosure on self. I appreciate Professor Isenberg's graceful description of my thesis that "Anna's reading and her adulterous passion are implicated in attempts at self-knowledge and self-expression." Perhaps a feminist argument becomes unavoidable at this point, if we ask what the cost is for a woman who takes up such pursuits, and whether she will find genuine answers in the texts available for her study? Ultimately, I would agree that we "cannot see Anna as the product of a discursive field called 'Victorian fiction'", however, we can read Anna as very much in dialogue with that same field.

It was my intention, in examining Tolstoy's adaptation and critique of Victorian literary conventions, to explore his larger aesthetic concerns beyond the pages of *Anna Karenina*, while remaining on their borders. Victorian realism as a specific category came to represent for me, as I worked through the later Tolstoy's increasing skepticism for and distrust of "bourgeois art," the signal and significant epitome of that problem in Tolstoy's thought. His rejection of Western ways of theorizing the "beautiful" in aesthetic discourse, his objection to artistic practices that exclude certain viewpoints, whether feminine or impoverished, albeit expressed coherently only in *What is Art?*, were responses that seemed to me to be born in the composition of *Anna Karenina*, whose heroine is destroyed through the imposition of frames on beauty, shade on light, and "reality" on reality.