

Discussing Art in the Second Redaction of *Resurrection*

Research on the manuscripts of *Resurrection* shows how Tolstoy, in his own words, “discarded from” and “hacked away at the pile” (Пастернак 171)—in other words, edited. Materials from the six redactions of the novel bear witness to the way Tolstoy, who always responded pointedly to the burning issues of the day, removed from the final text direct references, names, and facts, distilling the work down to its timeless, universal essence. However, a reading of Tolstoy’s drafts reveals his level of engagement with his own time and place.

In the variants of the second finished redaction of *Resurrection*, which Tolstoy worked on in the autumn of 1895 and the winter of 1896, we find a discussion on art during a lunch at the Korchagins (in the second redaction the characters’ surnames are Karmalin and Sarmatov). We should note right away that Tolstoy removes this fragment from the final version of the text.

This scene at the Korchagins was already in the first redaction of the novel. After the court session where Nekhlyudov turns out to be a juror and Katyusha Maslova the accused, Nekhlyudov goes home first, and then to lunch. In the note that Alina Karmalina (the future Missy Korchagin) sends Nekhlyudov to remind him of his jury duty, she mentions the Tretyakov Gallery: He is told he cannot “go with us and Kolosov to the Tretyakov Gallery” (PSS 33: 24–25). In the final version, the phrase is preserved, but the reference to the Tretyakov Gallery is removed: “[Y]ou cannot go with us and Kolosov to see the paintings” (PSS 32: 13–14).

In the second redaction, when Nekhlyudov arrives at the Karmalins (read: Korchagins), Tolstoy includes a discussion about visiting the Tretyakov Gallery. When Nekhlyudov asks himself, “And why did I come here? [...] What will I say to her?” (Описание рук. 22, л. 159), Alina and Kolosov begin to argue about painters:

She told him about their visit to the Tretyakov Gallery yesterday and that she always viewed Kramskoy’s Christ with new admiration.

“That’s a floor polisher, not Christ,” said Kolosov decisively. “Only Vasnetsov’s paintings are decent. You and I won’t agree on this.”

“They always argue,” said old man Karmalin, washing down his cake with wine and guffawing loudly. (PSS 33: 112)

The conversation is joined by Katerina Alexandrovna who, “mixing Russian words with French, talked about the impression Vasnetsov’s *Mother of God* had made on her” (Описание рук. 22, л. 159).

In the next variant of the second redaction, this fragment is developed with a description of Kolosov, while Katerina Alexandrovna’s reference to Vasnetsov’s *Mother of God* is excised. Tolstoy writes of Kolosov: “He studied Kugler in the [18]60s, saw all the remarkable sights in Rome and thus considered himself an expert on art, although he was completely bereft of any personal taste and relied on expert opinion” (PSS 33: 112). Originally, in the manuscript there was another description of Kolosov, later crossed out: “[H]e was a pure aesthete [when it came to] painting” (Описание рук. 23, л. 91).

As we have already noted, in the final version of *Resurrection* these descriptions of Kolosov are not preserved, but as Nekhlyudov, who is still far from understanding the extent of his guilt with regard to Katyusha, reflects, we find dreams of “freedom” that go back to the description of Kolosov in the second redaction: “Yes, to breathe freely. To go abroad, to Rome, and to work on my painting” (PSS 32: 100).

In the second redaction, the discussion of painting and art will be continued in the study of Sofia Vasilievna, the “recumbent lady.” Here Kolosov “condemned even Ibsen’s plays and on this occasion voiced views that thirty years ago would have been new but that had long been

rejected. Sofia Vasilievna expressed her own opinion. She defended Ibsen” (*Описание рук*. 23, л. 97).

Only fragments of this conversation remain in the final version of the text. At the Korchagins Nekhlyudov asks: “And you? Did you go and see the paintings?” Missy answers: “We postponed that. We went to play lawn tennis” (PSS 32: 91). All the names and realia from the second redaction are excised. Only Repin’s name is mentioned with regard to the painting Nekhlyudov cannot seem to finish. Sofia Vasilievna, Missy Korchagin’s mother, asks him about this painting: “Well, and how about your painting? It interests me very much” (PSS 32: 95). When Nekhlyudov answers that he has “completely abandoned” the painting, Sofia Vasilievna remarks to Kolosov: “In vain! You know, Repin himself told me he had real talent” (PSS 32: 95).

Tolstoy’s aesthetic reflections and contact with cultural figures in the 1890s provide us with a broader context for the discussion of art cited above.

Concurrently with his work on *Resurrection* Tolstoy wrote articles on art. His diaries from the end of the 1880s and into the 1890s illustrate the various stages of this work and reveal many reflections on the meaning of art in modern life. In Tolstoy’s letters to N. N. Strakhov and V. V. Stasov we find references to the sources Tolstoy used. For instance, in a letter to Strakhov he mentions Franz Kugler, the artist admired by Kolosov.

Tolstoy’s arguments in *What is Art?* essentially proceed from one basic concern, namely the effort people expend on “satisfying the demands of art:” “For any ballet, circus, opera, operetta, exhibition, painting, concert, or book publication the intense labor of thousands and thousands of people is needed” (PSS 30: 32). The question concerning art’s content is of primary importance to Tolstoy: “And that is why in a society in which works of art are created and supported we need to know whether what passes for art is indeed art” (PSS 30: 33).

In Tolstoy’s correspondence with Stasov from the 1890s, the question of art’s content becomes a burning issue. After reading Tolstoy’s “Preface to Maupassant’s Works,” Stasov wrote on June 28, 1894: “[T]he ‘Preface’ gladdened and excited me even more in its call to focus first of all on the content and not the outward form of an artistic creation.” Further on Stasov draws the following comparison:

[T]he novel, drama, painting, statue, opera, symphony—these are not dessert but the main course. They should not please the tongue and palate, but rather nourish the stomach. And if the provisions are spoiled and rancid, then whatever ‘talent’ the chef and confectioner have is not worth anything. (Толстой и Стасов 132–133)

Recall that the characters talk about art only after lunch. That this discussion is “dessert” is made clear in the second redaction: Nekhlyudov “saw, first of all, that Sofia Vasilievna and Kolosov had no interest in Ibsen or even in one another, and that they regretted having finished eating and wanted to fill this gap with something. Coffee with liqueur, which Kolosov drank, smacking his lips, and discussion filled the gap” (*Описание рук*. 23, л. 78).

In the final text references to painting, music, theater, and artists are fragmentary and made in connection with the life of high society and officials. Nekhlyudov’s endeavors in painting are noted already in the fourth chapter of part one. Nekhlyudov hears the sounds of Liszt’s “tiresome rhapsody” in the home of the jail inspector. At Fanarin’s, where Nekhlyudov goes to help Maslova, he meets a writer, while Fanarin’s wife invites Nekhlyudov to a “literary matinee.” Later, when Nekhlyudov speaks of the court’s inanity and the unfairness of the judicial system, the lawyer Fanarin calls on Nekhlyudov to discuss “general questions” and to meet with “scholars, litterateurs, and artists.” Nekhlyudov and Mariette discuss

French theater and the recently-arrived actress in Countess Charskaya's drawing room. In part three Nekhlyudov, following Maslova to Siberia, hears Beethoven's Fifth Symphony at the General's.

In these episodes, art oriented toward pleasure and far removed from pressing social issues is exposed as "false."

Tolstoy's interest in art is not only philosophically grounded. His aesthetic works are the culmination of a living dialogue with his era. Here we will focus only on the topic of painting.

The reference to the Tretyakov Gallery in the early redactions of *Resurrection* dates to 1895–1896. Not long before, the gallery had been ceremoniously donated in Moscow. Tolstoy knew P. M. Tretyakov through personal acquaintance and correspondence, and in 1889, he inspected Tretyakov's collection at great length. In his diary for March 14, 1889, he writes: "Rethought my position on art again [...]. Went to Tretyakov's" (PSS 50: 51–52). In a letter to Tretyakov dated June 14, 1894, Tolstoy writes once more of his visits to the gallery: "I went to your gallery three times last winter [...]" (PSS 67: 154). In the same letter, Tolstoy touches on the topic of contemporary painting:

Form-technique has been developed to great perfection in our time [...] but those who possess content, that is, artistic reflection and the ability to illuminate important questions in new ways [...] are becoming fewer and fewer in number [...].

What comprises contemporary painting, in Tolstoy's words, is "nonsensical genre painting and fabricated historical and religious works by Uhde, Béraud, or even our own Vasnetsov. There are no sincerely heartfelt paintings of substance" (PSS 67: 153).

The artists mentioned in the second redaction of *Resurrection* (I. N. Kramskoy, V. M. Vasnetsov, and in the final version, I. E. Repin) are connected to the Itinerant exhibitions. Tolstoy deals with the

works of these artists in *What is Art?* where he maintains that "Christian love" is expressed in a Kramskoy painting (PSS 30: 160), while Vasnetsov's religious painting is judged a "bad imitation of an imitation of imitations" (PSS 30: 146). In the "Preface to Maupassant's Works," Tolstoy calls Repin a "sophisticated contemporary painter who depicts life without understanding its meaning" (PSS 30: 15).

Tolstoy's correspondence attests to the close attention he paid to matters concerning contemporary Russian painting. We find similar "accounts" of the Itinerant exhibitions in Strakhov's letters. Stasov sent Tolstoy his article, "The 1878 Itinerant Exhibition." In his response, Tolstoy mentions G. G. Myasoedov, K. A. Savitsky, Repin, and Kramskoy (PSS 62: 404–405).

Tolstoy mentions visiting the exhibitions in his diary entry for April 7, 1884: "Going to the exhibition. Kramskoy's work is beautiful. Repin's didn't turn out well. Had a good talk with Tretyakov" (PSS 49: 79).¹ In her letters to Tolstoy, Sofia Andreyevna wrote about her impressions of the exhibitions. One letter from April 15, 1887, reads: "Was at the exhibition today [...] Standing before Polenov's *Sinner* I felt uncertain and confused" (Толстая 404). On May 14, 1887, Tolstoy wrote N. N. Ge regarding this same exhibition: "I was dragged along to the exhibition. You know, there is nothing that compares to paintings as words, made not by hands but by the human soul [...]" (Толстая 311–312).

The discussion of art at the Karmalins' centers on the representation of Christ. Alina Karmalina is "enraptured" by Kramskoy's Christ (*Christ in the Wilderness*), whom Kolosov calls a "floor polisher." According to V. F. Lazursky's memoirs, Tolstoy described Polenov's representation of Christ in his *Christ and the Sinner* similarly: "Polenov is lovely, but vacuous [...] His Christ is some kind of floor polisher" (Лазурский 54).² Meanwhile, Tolstoy was sympathetic to Kramskoy's Christ: "Kramskoy's *Christ* is a fine thing. I understand this Christ and

see in him a profound idea [...] [H]ang this painting on your wall and it will forever make your soul uneasy” (Жиркевич 13).

Tolstoy’s July 14, 1894, letter to Tretyakov, in which he compares artists by discussing the representation of Christ in Russian painting, is telling:

Some are horrified by Ge’s latest paintings, others are horrified by Vasnetsov’s—I can’t help calling it—daubing, which hangs in your gallery [...] People are horrified by Vasnetsov’s works because they are utterly false, and everyone knows that such Christs, such Lords of Sabaoth, such Blessed Virgins never existed, could not have existed and should not exist. People who are horrified at Ge’s works are horrified only because they do not find in it the falsehood that they love. (PSS 67: 175)

Further on Tolstoy gives a very brief description of Kramskoy’s *Christ in the Wilderness*: “This is the best Christ I know of” (PSS 67: 175).

Painters of the time sensed the need for a new interpretation of the image of Christ and the Gospel stories. Stasov noted a new wave of interest in representing holy figures (Стасов 313). In a letter to Stasov of April 30, 1884, Kramskoy wrote of the representation of Christ: “I reject representation of the historical Christ on the basis of its being in any case a myth, a fatal myth” (2: 138). Kramskoy created a completely different image of Christ. It is not by accident that the artist found in Tolstoy’s religious texts a correlation to his own artistic quests. Regarding the *Harmonization and Translation of the Gospels*, Kramskoy wrote to Stasov:

Up until now, naïve people, lulled by Orthodox commentators, have thought that the Gospel was a peaceful book. Now they will have to part with this mistaken belief [...] It is a very, very merciless doctrine, but merciless with regard to man’s egoism and hypocrisy [...] Leo Tolstoy definitely deserves punishment, and if

catastrophes over his head are not being prepared, then once again it must be through mistake. (2: 138)

Regarding the strong contemporary resonance of Christian doctrine and the destruction of the “canon” as of blinders and screens veiling the dramatic content of the Gospels, Kramskoy wrote Tolstoy in 1885:

Indeed, how can I convey to you the turmoil you stirred up in me just by your translation of the Gospel. I knew and I know that the meaning of this book, despite constant reading, was utterly lost, and suddenly a new translation appeared that everyone understood. I was struck and frightened, frightened by the fact that now a new crucifixion of the preacher had been made possible, that modern man, like ancient man, will be prepared to crucify Christ with the very same conviction as a Jew of Jerusalem [...] This is a horrible book for mankind, and at the same time, the only salvational one. (2: 170)

In the second redaction of *Resurrection*, true art, which speaks to the most important things, is contrasted with “traditional” art. One should note that in the discussion concerning painters there is one more figure who, albeit unmentioned, is essentially present in the text. Tolstoy’s letters from the first half of the 1890s that deal with contemporary painting are primarily concerned with the work of Nikolay Ge. Ge died in 1894, and not long before his death, his painting *The Crucifixion* had been removed from an exhibition in Petersburg. Soon after the painting’s removal, Tolstoy wrote Ge: “The fact that your picture has been taken down and that it has been talked about is very good and instructive. In particular the words ‘it’s butchery’ [...] Its being taken down from the exhibition is a triumph for you” (PSS 67: 81).

The characters do not mention Ge’s paintings because they could not have seen them in the

Tretyakov Gallery in 1890, when the novel's action takes place. But Tolstoy's unusually active engagement with the artist during his early work on the novel and his lively participation in the fate of Ge's paintings are significant to the text.

It should be added that the history of Ge's late works was dramatic: Neither viewer nor critic understood and accepted his Christian themes, primarily due to Ge's treatment of the image of Christ. Underscoring the connection between his own searching and Tolstoy's reflections, Ge wrote:

Tolstoy and I sought the same thing. For me a new life had begun. I painted *The Last Supper* from a completely different perspective. Christ senses the beginning of the agony that had tormented Him before. In this painting I have a new treatment of Christ. (Порудоминский; Ge).

All of Ge's subsequent work of significance—*What is Truth?* (1890), *The Judgment of the Sanhedrin* (1892), and *The Crucifixion* (1894)—were removed from the exhibition.

What is Truth? appeared at the eighteenth Itinerant exhibition in Petersburg and, according to Mikhailovsky, provoked "very many reactions."

Critical reception focused primarily on the representation of Christ. An "ideal Christ," in A. S. Suvorin's estimation, was desired, a Christ who remained grand throughout His sufferings.

At the end of January 1890, Ge brought a drawing of *What is Truth?* to Yasnaya Polyana. In his diary for January 28, Tolstoy wrote: "Ge senior arrived and brought a sketch of a painting. It's very good" (PSS 51: 15). Tolstoy and Ge's correspondence gives us a sense as to how the artist's work progressed. The dialogue between writer and painter often determined the direction of the work.

Tolstoy participated directly in the subsequent fate of the painting and wrote to Tretyakov on June 11, 1890, about the necessity of acquiring it (at this time the famous collector neither understood nor

appreciated the painting). Describing all the latest attempts at representing Christ by Ivanov, Kramskoy, Polenov, and the early Ge, Tolstoy, in a letter of June 30, explained in detail his understanding of *What is Truth?* and its significance for painting:

And here Ge took the most simple and, now that he has taken it, the most intelligible motif: Christ and his teaching in conflict—not just in words, but in words and deeds—with the teaching of the world i.e., that motif that comprises the main significance of Christ's appearance [...]

The painting depicts with complete historical accuracy that moment after Christ had been led, tormented, beaten, dragged from one jail to another, from one official to another, and then finally brought before the governor, a most kind man who cares nothing for Christ or for the Jews, and even less for some notion of truth, which this ragamuffin interprets to him, a man who knows all the scholars and philosophers of Rome. His sole concern is not to commit a mistake in the eyes of a superior official. Christ sees that before Him is a man gone astray, bloated with fat, but He decides not to reject him based only on his appearance and so He begins to tell him the essence of His teaching. But the governor is not concerned with this. He asks, "What is truth?" and leaves. And Christ looks sadly at this impenetrable man. (PSS 65: 124–125)

Tolstoy concludes: "Such was the situation then, such is the situation that is repeated thousands and millions of times everywhere, always between the teaching of truth and the representatives of this world. And this is expressed in the painting. And it is true historically and true today, and that is why it seizes the heart of anyone who has a heart" (PSS 65: 125).

In a letter to Stasov of June 12, 1894, Tolstoy called Ge, after the latter's death on June 1, 1894,

“one of the great artists who made an era in art” (PSS 67: 147).

Tolstoy wrote Tretyakov in detail regarding Ge’s final works: “I wrote to you once about the significance of Ge’s last paintings. These paintings express Christ not as a man, alone with Himself and with God, as in his [Ge’s] *Garden of Gethsemane* and in Kramskoy’s *In the Wilderness* [...] but the well-known Christ embodying in His relationship to the surrounding world the usual and actual situation of all Christ’s followers” (PSS 67: 175). Tolstoy’s pronouncements on Ge intersect, in letters written in 1894, with the profoundest sorrow over the death of a person spiritually close to him, to whom he was bound by personal friendship and a ten-year correspondence (1884–1894).

It is important to note that the meanings Tolstoy underscores in Ge’s paintings are given new life in *Resurrection*. Tolstoy sees in Ge’s painting a collision between the teaching of Christ and the “teaching of the world.” The betrayal of the “spiritual” man in Nekhlyudov happens because he “ceased to believe himself and started to believe others.” When Nekhlyudov “thought, read, or spoke of God, truth, wealth, or poverty, everyone around him considered it inappropriate and somewhat ridiculous” (PSS 32: 48).

Tolstoy wrote that Ge’s painting depicts the moment when “Christ had been led, tormented, beaten, dragged from one jail to another, from one official to another.” *Resurrection* begins with Maslova being led from jail to court: “[I]t was painful [for her] to walk on the stones” (PSS 32: 6). After the trial, Maslova returns “tired, her feet aching,” and “crushed by the unexpectedly harsh sentence” (PSS 32: 104). In Part Two, Tolstoy gives us the terrible scenes of the prisoners being transported to the hard labor camp and of their death. Truth is spoken by the “vagabond,” the worthless tramp whom Nekhlyudov meets on the ferry in part three and who later turns up in prison. The old man says: “They persecute me just as they

persecuted Christ” (PSS 32: 419). The world of high society and bureaucracy, that is, of people “impermeable to the most simple feeling of compassion” (PSS 32: 351), stands opposed by the world of the wretched, tormented and downtrodden.

The discussion of art that appears in the second finished redaction of *Resurrection* is not preserved in the final version, but the contrast between the true, spiritual, Christian existence of man and the false, self-satisfied conceptions of those who have a foothold in the world—the contrast Tolstoy saw as the main content of Ge’s paintings—is discernible in the finished version of the text.

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Notes

In places I have consulted Christian’s translations of Tolstoy’s diaries and letters (Translator).

1. The reference here is to the twelfth Itinerant exhibition, which included Kramskoy’s *Inconsolable Grief* and Repin’s *They Did Not Expect Him*.

2. Lazursky lived at Yasnaya Polyana during the summer of 1894 and worked as a Greek and Latin instructor to Tolstoy’s sons, Andrei and Mikhail.

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TOLSTOY ON POGROMS? I. Teneromo (Feinerman): “Reminiscences about L. N. Tolstoy. Pogroms” (Translation and Commentary)

After a dark spell of pogroms broke out against the Jews in the 1880s and the ruling Hamans of St. Petersburg organized a new series of persecutions

and restrictive measures, Russian society began to speak up. One could hear authoritative voices of protest, and Lev Nikolayevich was among the first to express his indignation.

Have a look, he said, gesturing. Dillon has sent a protest, drawn up by a group of writers, for people to sign. I am adding mine with joy and a sort of pugnacious resolution, and am ready to keep writing on this occasion.¹ After serfdom I cannot see anything more terrible than this foul torture and humiliation of a whole people. Imagine: To lock up people as if they were caged animals, to hedge them in behind exceptions and disgraceful laws, to place them under the charge of the basest and most venal warders whose bribe-taking gave rise to legendary lore; to push these people away from the sphere of reasonable and human activity, and, most importantly, from the land and from working the land. To undertake all this, moreover, with a sole, revolting purpose of inciting mobs against Jews whenever this conveniences Petersburg, just as lions were let loose against prisoners and Christians in ancient circuses.

Is this not terrible! Just as the Caesars and their obsequious courtiers used to amuse the mob with bloody entertainments, and thus could distract its eyes from the crimes of the court; so now does this bureaucracy—no less obsequious but even more autocratic—set up an enormous circus and gave it the name of the “pale of settlement,” maintaining prisoners within this circus for the same bloody entertainments, and with the same base purpose: to distract the eyes of the people from a whole bonfire of crime that the criminal hand of bureaucracy has started all over this enormous country.

And they arrange for these entertainments exactly when the country begins to experience an awakening, and the falseness of their autocracy becomes apparent to people. When the paw of arbitrary rule clenches too hard on the throat of the country, and the oppressed begin to sound an ominous death rattle threatening to tear apart this