

Empress are vividly and engagingly described in *My Life* (Vol. 92–94). (35)

In the chapter titled “Autobiographical Writings,” Donskov divides all of Tolstaya’s autobiographical materials into three categories: her diaries, *My Life*, and a shorter version, *Autobiography*. He exhaustively analyses each of these elements in historical retrospect and in terms of structure and content. Chapter Four contains a short critical commentary on each of Tolstaya’s literary works, which are printed in the second part of their book in the original:

These comprise: (1) *Natasha*, a story she wrote in her maidenhood; (2) SAT’s contributions to her husband’s anthology *A New Primer [Novaja azbuka]*; (3) a series of five stories published in 1910 under the collective title *The Skeleton-Dolls and Other Stories [Kukolki-skelettsy I drugie rasskazy]*; (4) her novella *Who Is to Blame? [Ch’ja vina?]*, penned in the early 1890s partly as a response to LNT’s controversial novel *The Kreutzer Sonata*, though not published in her lifetime; (5) a subsequent narrative (written following the death of her last son Vanechka in 1895) entitled *Song Without Words [Pesnja bez slov]*, which also remained unpublished until 2010; and finally, (6) *Groanings [Stony]*, which was crafted as a “poem in prose” (a lyrical composition in poetic form but without traditional poetic devices such as metre or rhyme); this was published in 1904 in a Russian women’s literary magazine. (65)

This volume of Sofia Tolstaya’s literary works, which has been prepared appositely by Andrew Donskov, shows in its entirety the undoubted literary gift of the author. The early, now-lost story *Natasha* delighted Tolstoy by the “energy of its truth and simplicity.” Sofia Andreevna’s poetic experiments—especially her *Groanings* cycle, published in 1904 in the *Journal For All (Журнал для всех)* are not even known to every Tolstoy

specialist. Andrew Donskov’s invaluable work in preparing, academically commenting on, and editing Tolstaya’s literary efforts has given us a fabulous opportunity to acquaint ourselves with the work of this surprising woman, Tolstoy’s wife, mother to thirteen children, grandmother to twenty-five and—as is now entirely evident—gifted writer. Accordingly, the next task for the researcher is the preparation of a first real critical biography of Sofia Andreevna Tolstaya.

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Tolstoy, Leo. *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth*. trans. Dora O'Brien. Richmond (London): Oneworld Classics, 2010. 320 pages. Softcover. ISBN: 978-1847491428.

Tolstoy, Leo. *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth*. trans. Judson Rosengrant. London: Penguin, 2012. xviii + 468 pages. Softcover. ISBN: 978-0140449921.

I made myself read *Детство* in Russian before reading either translation of the trilogy. I hadn’t remembered loving *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth*. I hadn’t remembered how many glorious scenes and moments there are (so many!), and I hadn’t expected a twenty-three-year-old Tolstoy to out-Dickens his hero Dickens in his dramatization of childhood feelings (but he does!):

Я решительно не могу объяснить себе жестокости своего поступка. Как я не подошел к нему, не защитил и не утешил его? Куда девалось чувство сострадания, заставлявшее меня, бывало, плакать навзрыд при виде выброшенного из гнезда галчонка или щенка, которого несут, чтобы кинуть за забор, или курицы, которую несет поваренок для супа?

Неужели это прекрасное чувство было заглушено во мне любовью к Сереже и желанием казаться перед ним таким же молодцом, как и он сам? Незавидные же были эти любовь и желание казаться молодцом! Они произвели единственные темные пятна на страницах моих детских воспоминаний. (*Детство* гл. 19)

I really cannot explain to myself the cruelty of my own behaviour. How did it not occur to me to go up to Ilyenka and defend and comfort him? Where had my feelings of compassion disappeared to, those feelings that at times had caused me to sob uncontrollably at the sight of a jackdaw pushed from its nest, or a puppy taken away to be thrown over the fence, or chickens carried off by the kitchen boy for soup.

Was that fine feeling stifled within me by my love for Seryozha and by my desire to appear in front of him just as fine a fellow as he was himself? In which case that love and desire to appear a fine fellow were not to be envied. They produced the only dark blots on the pages of my childhood recollections. (O'Brien 63)

Over the course of reading all of Rosengrant's translation, I continued to be dazzled by Tolstoy:

Все было то же, только все сделалось меньше, ниже, а я как будто сделался выше, тяжелее и грубее; но и таким, каким я был, дом радостно принимал меня в свои объятия и каждой половицей, каждым

окном, каждой ступенькой лестницы, каждым звуком пробуждал во мне тьмы образов, чувств, событий невозвратимого счастливого прошедшего. (*Юность* гл. 28)

Everything was the same, only it had been made smaller, lower, while I seemed to have become taller, heavier and coarser. But the house joyfully took me in its embrace even as I was, and with every floorboard, every window, every step of the stairway, every creak, it awakened in me a host of images, feelings and events from the happy, irrecoverable past. (Rosengrant 317)

Rosengrant's introduction and notes are good except when he's over-bold and pretentious in the usual defensive way of translators:

The translation is completely new and is based on a study of the young Tolstoy's language in relation to both its social and historical context and to its use within the trilogy as a self-contained work of art—in relation, that is, to how the language may reflect a particular time and place (Russia in the 1840s and 1850s), yet acquire distinctive internal meanings and resonance as its elements are arranged according to Tolstoy's own cognitive and aesthetic purposes. (xxxix)

Rosengrant claims that he uses no words that were not in English in 1850, which at first sounds impressive, but then I realize, so what? I think if he wants to go for period-instrument *éclat*, he has to go whole-hog here and *phrase* everything as Trollope and George Eliot would have. Vocabulary is only part of what makes Tolstoy's Russian so peculiarly his and Victorian English what it is. In his ambition or vainglory, Rosengrant comes off sounding like Borges' renown Pierre Menard, who set out to write *Don Quixote* word-for-word: "Initially, Menard's method was to be relatively simple: Learn Spanish, return to Catholicism, fight against the Moor or Turk, forget the history of

Europe from 1602 to 1918—*be Miguel de Cervantes*” (91). If Rosengrant could miraculously write at the level of a major-league Victorian novelist, okay; but he can’t, so let’s have an English that conveys as much of the Russian sense and feeling to us today as can be mustered. Instead, Rosengrant’s translation occasionally sounds as if it had been composed by one of Oscar Wilde’s long-lost disciples:

Sitting and eating something at a small table in the main room was a short, stocky civilian gentleman with a red moustache. Sitting next to him was a tall brunet without a moustache. They were speaking French. Their glances gave me pause, but I decided, even so, to light my cigarette off the candle standing in front of them. With my face to the side to avoid their gaze, I went over to the table and started to light the cigarette. After it was lit, I couldn’t help myself and looked at the gentleman who was dining. His grey eyes were staring at me with a hostile expression. I was about to turn away when his red moustache moved and he said in French, “I don’t care for smoking, sir, while I’m dining.” (Rosengrant 264)

В большой комнате сидел за маленьким столом невысокий плотный штатский господин с рыжими усами и ел что-то. Рядом с ним сидел высокий брюнет без усов. Они говорили по-французски. Их взгляд смутил меня, но я все-таки решился закурить папироску у горевшей свечки, которая стояла перед ними. Поглядывая по сторонам, чтоб не встречать их взглядов, я подошел к столу и стал зажигать папироску. Когда папироска загорелась, я не утерпел и взглянул на обедавшего господина. Его серые глаза были пристально и недоброжелательно устремлены на меня. Только что я хотел отвернуться, рыжие усы его зашевелились, и он произнес по-французски:

— Не люблю, чтоб курили, когда я обедаю, милостивый государь. (*Юность* гл. 16)

If your Russian is as crude as mine—call me a remedial Russian reader—it’s perhaps cheeky to dispute an expert’s phrasing into English, except that, after all, I’m a professional reader of *English*, and I’m not sure how he could have missed that sarcastic “милостивый государь” or chosen the Frenchy “brunet” over “brown-haired.”

A translation is not simply lining up corresponding vocabulary; it conveys *tone*. If we want a *Childhood* trilogy closer to the nineteenth century, we can do okay with Leo Wiener:

In the large room a short, thick-set gentleman in citizen’s clothes, with a red moustache, was sitting at a small table and eating. By his side sat a tall, dark-haired man without a moustache. They were speaking in French. Their gaze disconcerted me, but I decided, nevertheless, to light my cigarette at the candle which was standing in front of them. Looking about me, so as not to meet their glances, I walked up to the table, and began to light my cigarette. When the cigarette burned, I held out no longer, but cast a look on the gentleman who was dining. His gray eyes were directed fixedly and threateningly at me. I was about to turn away, when the red moustache came in motion, and he uttered in French: “I object to smoking, sir, when I am at dinner.” (Wiener 312)

Between Rosengrant and O’Brien, anyway, I have preferred O’Brien’s untheoretical, tumbling, vigorous language, perhaps partly because it reminds me of my own happy tumblings through Tolstoy’s prose:

In the main room, a short, stocky gentleman with a red moustache and dressed in civilian clothes sat eating something at a small table. Next to him sat a tall, brown-haired, clean-shaven gentleman. They were speaking French. I was embarrassed when they looked at me but

still resolved to light my cigarette at the candle in front of them. Glancing away so as not to catch their eyes, I walked up to the table and began lighting my cigarette. Once it was lit, I could not help taking a look at the gentleman who was dining. His grey eyes were fixed on me malevolently. I wanted to turn away, when his red moustache began to twitch and he said in French: "I don't like people smoking when I'm having dinner, dear sir." (O'Brien 212–213)

I like that "malevolently," and the "twitch" is absolutely better than "moved" or "came in motion."

Let's line up and compare a couple of the famous observations. From chapter twenty-two of *Childhood*:

И мое воображение унеслось далеко за этим милым образом. Я вспомнил луг перед домом, высокие липы сада, чистый пруд, над которым вьются ласточки, синее небо, на котором остановились белые прозрачные тучи, пахучие копны свежего сена, и еще много спокойных радужных воспоминаний носилось в моем расстроенном воображении.

... and my imagination carried me far away following that sweet vision. I remembered the meadow in front of the house, the tall lime trees in the garden, the clear pond **above which swallows hovered**, the blue sky in which **lingered** white transparent clouds, fragrant stacks of fresh hay and many other peaceful rosy memories swirled about in my confused imagination. (O'Brien 72)

And her sweet likeness carried my imagination far away. I recalled the meadow in front of the house, the tall lindens in the garden, the clear pond with swallows swirling above it, a blue sky in which **translucent** white clouds had come to a rest, and fragrant ricks of fresh hay, among many other bright, serene memories that

wafted through my distraught imagination. (Rosengrant 88)

And my imagination carried me far away after that dear vision. I recalled the meadow in front of the house, the tall lime-trees in the garden, the clear pond over which the swallows circled, the azure sky with motionless transparent clouds, the **fragrant heaps of new-mown hay**, and many other peaceful and bright memories floated through my distracted imagination. (Maudes 95)

And my imagination was transported far, after that sweet image. I recalled the meadow in front of the house, the tall linden trees of the garden, the clear pond, over which the swallows circled, the azure sky, on which white, transparent clouds hovered, the fragrant ricks of newly mown hay; and many other **peaceful, glowing recollections arose** in my distracted imagination. (Wiener 101)

Am I allowed to like them all? I do. Beyond that, I have bold-faced the words and phrases that seem especially fine touches. Of "confused," "distraught," and "distracted," however, none seems quite perfect here for расстроенном.

Now from chapter twenty-six of *Boyhood*:

Похвала так могущественно действует не только на чувство, но и на ум человека, что под ее приятным влиянием мне показалось, что я стал гораздо умнее, и мысли одна за другой с необыкновенной быстротой набирались мне в голову.

Praise has such a **monumental** effect on a person's feelings and on his mind that I felt myself becoming even cleverer under its pleasant influence, and one thought after another **swarmed into my head** with unusual speed. (O'Brien 166)

Praise has such a powerful effect not only on a person's feelings but also on his mind that it

seemed under its pleasant influence that I had become much cleverer, and new thoughts entered my mind one after another with unusual speed. (Rosengrant 205)

Praise acts so powerfully not only on a man's feelings but also on his reason, that under its pleasant influence I felt as if I had grown much wiser, and thoughts gathered in my brain with unusual rapidity. (Maudes 215)

Praise acts so powerfully not only on the feelings, but also on the reason of a man, that under its pleasant influence I thought that I had become much wiser, and ideas one after another **crowded into my head** with unusual rapidity. (Wiener 246)

Here, I'd give the crown to O'Brien—but, again, they all do the job.

For a change-up, let's compare an exchange of dialogue, in a scene featuring the horrid spoiled Etienne (chapter twenty of *Childhood* [Детство]), from the two new translations:

"... Whenever we go out in the evening, I always sit on the box. It's a lot more fun. You can see everything. Filipp lets me drive, and sometimes I take the whip. And sometimes, you know, I go like that! at those passing by," he added with an expressive gesture. "It's excellent!"

"Your highness," said a footman, coming into the entry room, "Filipp wants to know where you were kind enough to put the whip."

"What do you mean, where did I put it? I gave it to him."

"He says that you didn't."

"Well, then I hung it on the lantern."

"Filipp says that it isn't on the lantern either, and that it would be better for you to say that you took it and lost it, or else Filipp will have to pay for your prank out of his own pocket," the

irritated footman said, becoming increasingly exercised. (Rosengrant 79)

"... Whenever we go somewhere in the evening, I always sit on the box—it's a lot more fun and you can see everything; Filipp lets me drive and sometimes I even use the whip. And so now and then, you know, the passers-by get ..." he added with a telling gesture. "It's great!"

"Your Highness," said the footman, coming into the entrance hall, "Filipp is asking where you may have put the whip?"

"How do you mean, where did I put it? I gave it back to him."

"He says that you did not give it back."

"Well, then I hung it up on the lantern."

"Filipp says that it is not on the lantern and it would be better if you admitted that you took it and lost it or else Filipp will have to pay up from his own money for your tricks," the footman continued, getting more and more worked up. (O'Brien 66)

And now the original:

Когда мы едем куда-нибудь вечером, я всегда сажусь на козлы — гораздо веселей — все видно, Филипп дает мне править, иногда и кнут я беру. Этак проезжающих, знаете, иногда, — прибавил он с выразительным жестом, — прекрасно!

— Ваше сиятельство, — сказал лакей, входя в переднюю, — Филипп спрашивает: куда вы кнут изволили деть?

— Как куда дел? да я ему отдал.

— Он говорит, что не отдавали.

— Ну, так на фонарь повесил.

— Филипп говорит, что и на фонаре нет, а вы скажите лучше, что взяли да потеряли, а Филипп будет из своих денежек отвечать за ваше баловство, — продолжал, все более и

более воодушевляясь, раздосадованный лакей. (*Отрочество* гл. 26)

If I hadn't been sure of myself before that O'Brien's translation is better, the dialogue convinces me; it sounds like talk! It even sounds more like the nineteenth century. Rosengrant's sounds like...a translation. "Increasingly exercised" is not the language of a rough-and-tumble straight-shooting writer of English.

Finally, not unimportantly, as physical objects, Penguin's edition is softer, easier to bend and twist in your hands as you read it on the train or lying in bed—if you're still reading paper. O'Brien's notes are perfunctory (mostly glosses of the French and German), and the half-dozen black and white photos are grainy and worthless. Her thirty pages of appendices summarize Tolstoy's life and work, concluded by a one-page unpretentious note about the challenges of translating the novel. Oneworld's cover is an uncredited painting of a contemplative beautiful, curly-haired boy. But such an image doesn't fit, does it?; even his angelic mother thinks Nikolenka is "ugly." On the other hand, Penguin's photo of the moody serious twenty-year-old Tolstoy doesn't catch the spirit of the novel, even if it catches Tolstoy's (and Nikolai's) "Comme il faut" pose. Of the two out-of-copyright on-line versions—your students might use these, no matter which edition you require—the choice is easy: Isabel Hapgood's 1886 translation is confusing and odd; Wiener's, while creaky, is alive.

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***Tolstoy on War, Narrative Art and Historical Truth in "War and Peace."* Ed. Rick McPeak and Donna Tussing Orwin. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2012. ix + 246 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0801478178.**

Tolstoy on War is a remarkable volume that brings together a plurality of views on Tolstoy's masterpiece, *War and Peace*. Comprised of twelve essays presented at West Point to commemorate the two hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Borodino, the studies of this collaborative effort show not only how relevant *War and Peace* remains today to literary studies, historiography, political science, world affairs, and global security, but also, and perhaps more importantly, the plethora of readings that Tolstoy's book at once provokes and sustains. This last point I cannot stress enough, for the readings presented in this volume lay bare the polyphonic, even dialectical (*pace* Jameson) nature of *War and Peace*. The implicit tension generated by these essays mirrors that produced by *War and Peace* in the sense that while there is complementarity there is no synthesis; instead, each individual essay, when read against another, extends to every reader the possibility of another reading.

This productive tension is evident in the headings under which Donna Orwin loosely groups each essay in her introduction: "*War and Peace* as Literature," "*War and Peace* as History," "Tolstoy's Worldview," and "Theories of War and History in the Novel." Orwin's tact is helpful in two ways. For readers new to *War and Peace*, they provide a useful pedagogical framework for