For His Eyes Only: Performance and Spectatorship in *Family Happiness*

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> A young Lady may learn the delectable Arcana of Domestic Affairs in as little time as is usually devoted to directing the position of her hands on a Piano-Forte, or of her Feet in a Quadrille, which will enable her to make the Cage of Matrimony as comfortable, as the Net of Courtship was charming. (The Housekeeper's Oracle 1, 1829)

Tolstoy's sincere love of music informs much of his writing, as does the intense and often equivocal response he had toward it. Perhaps the most immediate example of this is his disturbing *Kreutzer Sonata* (1889), the product of the author's dour post-conversion worldview on the one hand, but, on the other, also the result of ethical and aesthetic thinking that began to take shape at the dawn of his career in such works as *Childhood* (1852), "Albert" (1858), and especially *Family Happiness* (1859). As others have noted, elements of Marya Alexandrovna, or Masha, the novella's narrator and main protagonist, reemerge in Natasha Rostova, Kitty Shcherbatskaya, and Anna Karenina (Poggioli 270; Kissellef 239; Steiner 577–578; Hruska 634; Weir 151). Thirty years after the original publication of *Family Happiness*, Masha's marital woes would be seen to devolve on a fellow pianist, Pozdnyshev's nameless wife, and to culminate in her violent death.

Arthur Loesser has remarked that "the history of the pianoforte and the history of the social status of women can be interpreted in terms of one another," and this corollary extends back to the piano's precursors: the clavichord, harpsichord, spinet, and the evocatively named "virginal" (267).[1] In the late 1700s, it was expected that women who moved in elite social circles be able to play, and by the middle of the next century the piano had become a symbol of middle class comfort. Given that women presided over the family piano, it was intimately associated with household culture. The instrument signified a marker of feminine breeding and decorum, confirming the position of women as keepers of the hearth and domestic harmony (Leppert 134). None of this is very surprising, and there are countless examples of piano-playing heroines in nineteenth-century fiction for whom musical training serves as a means to be courted or to exhibit respectable domesticity.[2] What is remarkable, however, is the fact that no substantive attention has been afforded to Masha's musicianship in *Family Happiness*, a work profoundly concerned with Hestian values and one in which the main romantic relationship is organized around music. It is by way of Masha's piano playing, or lack thereof, that we are made aware of her constantly performed life, which begins in the intimacy of the family parlor and eventually strays to the ballroom and the public eye. Unlike mere playing, performing presupposes an audience, and for Masha this conceptual dyad functions as the main scaffold for her relationship with men and, most especially, Sergei Mikhailych.

When Masha first mentions the piano, it is specifically to underscore her refusal to play it: "What for? What is the point of doing anything when the best part of my life is being wasted like this?" Prior to the death of her widowed mother, the seventeen-year-old had been eagerly anticipating their move to St. Petersburg, where she was to star in the role considered to be every young lady's defining moment: that of a debutante. Instead, "though I was young and pretty, as everyone told me, I was killing a second winter in the solitude of the country." In other words, the opportunity to display her assets and perform her desirability as a woman had been rescinded. Masha actually admits that having to forego this formative social ritual upsets her at least as much as her mother's death, and in mourning the loss of one she simultaneously grieves over the other. The conclusion of her opening line, "I spent all that winter alone in the country with Katya and Sonya [her governess and younger sister]," reveals a great deal about Masha's frame of mind at the story's outset. Under the circumstances, to be surrounded by familiar women is, effectively, to be alone, for in the rural isolation she inhabits, Masha does not have access to the companionship she considers her due: an audience of potential suitors. Even when she is encouraged not to neglect her good looks, Masha's retort gets straight to the point: "For whom?" she asks, for there is no point in putting on a show if the target audience is not there to appreciate it (*PSS* 5: 67–68).[3]

Enter Sergei. From the moment he arrives at Pokvrovskoe, this family friend and current guardian to Masha and her sister is presented as a divine gift, and his re-introduction to the family fold is virtually seamless. Although he has not visited the estate in six years, Sergei had once been very close to Masha's father, whose position he in part assumes. But Masha explains why he holds special significance for her: In a passing comment, her mother had once mused that a man like him would make a fine husband for her eldest daughter, which he eventually becomes. This is, to say the least, a strained pairing of roles, and one with which Tolstoy had first-hand knowledge as critics frequently observe.[4] A man charged with protecting a young woman's interests and virtue while also functioning as a potential suitor has an obvious conflict of interest on his hands. Yet, because he has been recommended by Masha's parents in both of these capacities, and since he arrives on the scene as a trusted figure, one is apt to look upon Sergei favorably. The situation is nevertheless perplexing, and Masha's thinking on the matter reflects her own bewilderment: "At the time it seemed strange and even unpleasant to me. […] But still my mother's words stuck in my imagination […] and I would sometimes ask myself fearfully what I would do if he were to propose" (*PSS* 5: 68). Masha at once can and cannot imagine Sergei as a love interest.

While it is true that Masha is given to romanticizing—she had pictured her beau as "slim, lean, pale, and sad" and the flesh-and-blood Sergei, whom she describes as "no longer young, tall, heavy-set" and "always cheerful," jars with this image—she likely never entertained the possibility that she might wed someone like him, local and familiar, simply because she had been preparing to hit the marriage market in the capital. Beyond the standard and often unrealistic hopes and dreams of a teenage girl, Masha's vision of her future marital existence was also structured by her expectations of coming out to Petersburg society. It is not enough simply to attribute her imaginings to excessive reading of romantic novels; there is more to it. As would any young woman in her position, after years of hearing about how the debutante phase works and training for it, Masha is poised to execute her role, and it is evident in the performance she automatically launches into when she first sees Sergei approach the house: “As soon as he turned the corner I hurried to the parlor wanting to pretend that his visit was a complete surprise.” This semblance is the recognizable and well-established pose of the coquette. Since Masha is new at this, she is unable to sustain the act and goes out to meet him. Her reaction to his conduct underscores her inexperience: “When he saw me, he stopped and looked at me for a time without bowing. I was uncomfortable and felt myself blushing” (*PSS* 5: 69).

Masha’s first encounter with Sergei is a seminal yet often misunderstood moment: It establishes from the outset that their adult relationship grows out of an erotic interaction (Poggioli 272; Reyfman 34, 43). Masha’s blush is, after all, an unrehearsed response to the stare of a sexual male. While she may not fully understand the reason for her discomfort, we do, and Sergei’s follow-up confirms it: “How grown-up you are! I used to call you ‘violet,’ but you have become a rose in full bloom!” (*PSS* 5: 69). No longer the child he remembers, Masha attracts and retains the gaze of this longtime family friend as a fully developed woman. Sergei appears either unsure about how to greet Masha or else unwilling to acknowledge her adulthood officially, for though she extends her hand to be kissed, as a young woman of her age and status is supposed to do, he merely squeezes it firmly. Still, his first, guileless reaction to her cannot be erased and the feelings that prompted it are at the heart of his own internal conflict: Like Masha, Sergei both can and cannot imagine himself as her romantic partner.

To a degree, Sergei sublimates his desire into his responsibilities as guardian by adopting a moralizing and didactic posture. When Katya complains to him about Masha’s current apathy and indolence, he turns to his ward and pronounces:

> “It is not good to be incapable of enduring solitude […] Are you really a young lady [барышня]?”
>
> “Of course I am a young lady,” I answered, laughing.
>
> “No, a bad young lady who is alive only when people are admiring her, but as soon as she is left alone, collapses and finds nothing to her liking. All is only for show, and there is nothing for herself.” (*PSS* 5: 71)

Sergei’s admonition is directed primarily at what he perceives as Masha’s need for attention, and he associates this with her social class. In his usage above, “young lady” and “bad young lady” are functionally synonymous. As a remedy, he prescribes Masha a regimen of constant activity that includes, in this order, music, books, and administering Sonya’s lessons, effectively becoming her life’s stage director: “Find more ways to keep yourself occupied and don’t get depressed. […] I shall put you through an examination in the spring” (*PSS* 5: 72). When he returns a year later, Masha feels “obliged to tell him, in detail and with perfect frankness, all [her] good actions, and to confess, as if [she] were at church, all that he might be dissatisfied with” (*PSS* 5: 74). Guardian to the two sisters, financial administrator of the family estate, godsend, director, and pseudo-confessor, Sergei fast becomes an authority on many things, and Masha complies all too eagerly.

In contrast to other visitors, Sergei resists extending the mourning that has reigned at Pokrovskoe all winter. Puffing away on a pipe that once belonged to Masha’s father, he tries to redirect dampened energies and re-establish former domestic activity. When Katya is moved to tears as they reminisce on Masha’s deceased parents, he turns away from her, enjoining Sonya to resume child's play: "Sonya, show me your toys." Soon thereafter, Masha hears him "sit down at the piano and strike the keys with Sonya's little hands" (*PSS* 5: 70). This is the first of many instances in which we observe Sergei transition to teacher mode, for while he had initially asked to see Sonya's toys—one supposes, in order to play with her—he ends up at the piano directing her movements. On the surface, this appears to be a perfectly innocent gesture—I have myself done this countless times with my own children—but in light of the discussion ahead it is most revealing. Play, or at least the presumption of play, is morphed into an opportunity to instruct, indeed control, and to do so specifically through music.

Once he has done with Sonya, Sergei summons Masha to the makeshift classroom. It is here that he establishes the paradigm of performance that characterizes her behavior throughout the narrative: "Marya Alexandrovna! […] Come here, play something." It is difficult not to notice Sergei's predilection for imperative verb forms in this first music scene. At first, Masha welcomes them: "I liked his easy behavior with me and his friendly tone of command." In Russian, Sergei's directive reads "сыграйте что-нибудь," meaning "play something, anything, it doesn't matter what as long as you play." But in truth, he does have something specific in mind, and by the time Masha enters the parlor the open-endedness of "что-нибудь" has disappeared: "'Play this [вот это сыграйте],' he said, opening a book of Beethoven's music at the *adagio* of the *Sonata quasi una fantasia.*" Leaving Masha at the piano, Sergei takes his cup of tea and seats himself in a corner of the room announcing: "Let's see how you play" (*PSS* 5: 70).

Had he remained by her side, a gesture that would signal a certain degree of informality, even camaraderie, Masha's playing might have developed as a shared musical moment. Instead, it becomes an all-out performance with distinct roles: She plays, and he consumes from a distance. Masha senses the stakes right away: "I feared his criticism, knowing that he understood and loved music." This anxiety of performance soon extends even beyond the musical context: "I worried about each word I spoke: I wished so much to earn for my own sake the love that had already been given to me simply because I was my father's daughter" (*PSS* 5: 71). Masha experiences variously, and acutely, the need to earn the approbation of her audience. Not only does Sergei's statement, "let's see how you play," frame the scene as an evaluation, but it also exposes the fundamental truth about his interest in Masha's music making: It is visual. Sergei is the novella's most active viewer according to Irina Reyfman, who conducts a detailed examination of its extensive visual imagery (Reyfman 33). While it is true, as Caryl Emerson has remarked, that Tolstoy is often "fixated on the anxieties and emotions generated in *listeners*" (Emerson 443), sonority often takes second place in *Family Happiness*.

Before we take a closer look at how this seminal episode unfolds, some background is in order. William Stein Newman, whose *History of the Sonata Idea* is devoted to this prodigiously widespread form, emphasizes the importance of the sonata's pedagogical function. He identifies two separate markets for composers in that genre: the concert hall and the classroom (Newman 51). Charles Rosen adds, not without sexist overtones, that because the vast majority of them were relatively easy to play, the solo sonatas were primarily the arena of the female amateur (10). The truth is that it was never an expectation, either of or by women, that their accomplishments as pianists be showcased in the public sphere. As Abraham Mendelssohn-Bartholdy put it to his own daughter and gifted pianist, Fanny: "Music will perhaps become [Felix's] profession, while for *you* it can and must be only an ornament" (Hensel 82).[5]

Many women derived genuine pleasure from time spent at the keyboard, but others resented the obligation deeply, often because they had neither talent nor interest. Personal inclination toward music was, of course, not the point of the exercise: As a girl, the ability to play was simply a social and curricular requirement, much as the corset was a basic vestimentary accouterment. Masha's response to Sergei's request confirms social expectation: "With him it was impossible to refuse or say beforehand that I played badly. I sat down humbly at the clavichord and played as well as I could" (*PSS* 5: 70). The fact that the piano, thus far referred to as «фортепьяно», has suddenly been transformed into a clavichord, as though the instrument belonged to an earlier and socially more conservative era, works to emphasize female submission even further.[6]

That the sonata was closely associated with the sphere of women's education and social development is clear, but of special interest to my discussion is the perception of Beethoven's *Sonata Quasi una Fantasia in C-sharp minor (No. 14)*, also known as the "Moonlight Sonata" as traditionally belonging "in the repertory of every boarding-school miss and […] consequently suffer[ing] a great deal of harsh treatment."[7] Beethoven himself lamented over the *adagio* of his sonata but for entirely different reasons: Its fame, he believed, overshadowed all his other work. Indeed, that particular movement has enjoyed unparalleled popularity as an independent composition wholly divorced from the two sections that follow it and make up the sonata as a whole. This artificial truncation is also manifested in *Family Happiness*:

> The *adagio* was in tune with the remembrance of past days evoked by our conversation at tea and, apparently, I played quite decently. But he would not let me play the *scherzo*. "No, you don't play this well," he said coming up to me. "Stop playing it. But the first movement was not bad. You seem to understand music." (*PSS* 5: 70)

The tenor of evaluation established only moments earlier is restated here through an obvious concern with meeting standards. To judge from the narrative sequence, and also from Sergei's injunction, "Stop playing," a verb denoting the cessation of activity, Masha, who appears to be observing Beethoven's own *attacca subito* directive, can hardly have played more than a few measures before being curbed. How does Sergei come up with so categorical and dismissive a verdict?

Masha is under the impression that Sergei is something of a music *connoisseur*. Yet anyone who has played Beethoven's sonata knows that the second movement is labeled *allegretto*, not *scherzo*. There are, in fact, two sonatas *Quasi una fantasia* that make up Beethoven's opus 27: the "Moonlight," which is listed second, and the first one in E-flat, where there is no *scherzo* either. Since *Family Happiness* is a first-person narrative, it is not readily apparent which of the two characters first used the term. Masha, who performs the piece from her own book, would have seen the score as well as the correct notation many a time, so it seems unlikely that the term originates with her. She might be repeating "scherzo" in her account simply because it was first used by the all-knowing Sergei, to whom she instinctively deferred at the time. Then there is Tolstoy himself, an accomplished pianist, well acquainted with the sonata, and someone who maintained a lengthy, if thorny, relationship with Beethoven's music throughout his life. Might this be his misnomer? Given the conviction with which Sergei prohibits the second movement, and, by extension, also the third, *presto agitato*, I am inclined to believe that this hiccup in terminology is bound up with issues of spectatorship and control rather than knowledge of music. I will explain by jumping ahead a bit.

As readers, we begin to intuit Sergei's feelings for Masha well before she does. I have already discussed the sexual manner in which he looks at her when he first arrives at Pokrovskoe, and we see further evidence of his attraction in subsequent episodes. When he visits the estate a second time, Masha launches into another social performance for which she is this time criticized:

> I got up, wanting to leave and change my dress, but he intercepted me just at the doorway.
>
> "Why stand on such ceremony in the country," he said, looking at the kerchief on my head and smiling. "You're not ashamed before Grigory [the butler], and I am just like Grigory to you." But precisely at that moment it seemed that he was looking at me in a way quite unlike Grigory's way, and I felt uncomfortable. (*PSS* 5: 74)

Masha senses that Sergei's words do not correspond to the message in his eyes, but she does not yet fully understand what this discrepancy means. He wants to fantasize and gaze upon her as a "young peasant woman," which is how he describes her moments later, whereas she wishes to be seen as she has been taught to present herself: a proper young lady of the gentry class. Back in her room, the memory of his visual disposition persists: "How strangely he looked at me" (*PSS* 5: 74). Only after checking her appearance in the mirror—how she sees herself being viewed by others—does Masha return downstairs, rejoicing that "everything will be more fun," now that Sergei has returned. Of course: She has regained her audience. As John Berger remarks in *Ways of Seeing*: "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at […] Thus she turns herself into an object—and most particularly an object of vision: a sight" (47). While Sergei (and Tolstoy through him) may believe that his intentions are wholesome in their Rousseauean attempt to keep Masha natural and free of the social artifice and "ceremony" of society, the fact is that he wants to have his cake and eat it, too. He purports to be no different from Grigory, a trusted family servant rather than a male outsider on the prowl, yet his actions betray him. Sergei's equivocation speaks to a notion that would begin to preoccupy Tolstoy later in his career, authenticity, which he conceived as antithetical to performance of any kind. In Masha we can discern two conflicting perspectives at play: On the one hand, Sergei wants her to "act naturally" and resist adopting the conventional role of "барышня," ("young lady") while on the other he encourages her to perform as a "молодайка крестьянская" ("young peasant woman," *PSS* 5: 74), which she clearly is not.

During that same visit, Sergei finds other ways to discomfit Masha with regard to their relationship. Chided by Katya for dismissing the possibility of marriage, he defends his position that he is too old by thrusting the unsuspecting Masha in the middle of an impossible hypothetical situation: "Suppose that by some misfortune I married a seventeen-year-old girl, like Mash… Marya Alexandrovna. This is a marvelous example, I'm glad it came up; it's the best possible example" (*PSS* 5: 75). Masha expresses her confusion as to why the instance is so fortuitous, but to us it is crystal clear: Sergei is testing the waters of his own, actual, circumstances. Though he encourages her to speak "honestly, hand on your heart," all the while adopting a "joking" tone, he himself is being manipulative and underhanded. For him, this for instance is essentially risk-free, exploratory research, while for her it is distressing: "I began to feel uncomfortable and was silent, not knowing what to answer." In response to his insistent "am I really the kind of husband you dream of when wandering along the paths in the evening? Wouldn't it be a misfortune?" Masha does as she is asked—she tells the truth. Yet, as with Beethoven's sonata, she is not allowed to express herself in full: "'No, not a misfortune,' I began. 'But a bad thing,' he ended my sentence. 'Yes, but I might be mistak…' But he interrupted me again" (*PSS* 5: 76). It is true that Sergei thanks Masha for her honesty, but he follows this up with a backhanded comment: "For me too it would be the greatest of misfortunes," he says, meaning that marriage to a seventeen-year-old comes with substantial baggage. There are, in fact, conspicuous structural similarities linking this episode to the earlier piano performance. The progression is identical in each case: Sergei seeks to evaluate Masha's conjugal viability or her piano skills; he presents her either with an initially vague piece of music or an abstract situation that turns out to be quite concrete; she experiences performance anxiety and worries about the evaluation of her output; finally, he cuts her off midstream with a fraught mixture of criticism and praise. It is not just Masha who switches to performance mode whenever Sergei is present; he forces her into that position for his own benefit.

Even though she had been interrupted and run down for her partial interpretation of Beethoven's second movement, Masha was ultimately delighted by the overall "moderate praise" she had received for the *adagio* (*PSS* 5: 70). In the later episode, however, she comes away from her exchange with Sergei feeling troubled: "Again we were silent, and again I felt uncomfortable. I could not help fancying that I had wounded him by agreeing that he was old; and I wished to comfort him but didn't know how" (*PSS* 5: 76). When Sergei abruptly announces his departure, she devises a possible solution by offering to play him a new sonata. This ruse, which Masha will employ to dispel tension on more than one occasion, is effectively an attempt to reestablish their previously harmonious interaction in which he listens to and evaluates her playing. In other words, Masha realizes that she has not met whatever expectations he had of her when he pressed her to weigh in on his hypothetical situation and, sensing the awkwardness, tries to restore the upper hand to him through the vehicle of music. She wants another shot at performing for him, but Sergei shuts down her initiative: "'Another time,' he said coldly, as it seemed to me" (*PSS* 5: 77).

Although he cites the need to return home for supper as the main impetus for his departure, one can read Sergei's flat rejection of Masha's proposal in different ways. Unwilling to be consoled, he is perhaps eager to flee the scene of his recent humiliation, or he might be engaging in some tit-for-tat: Since Masha refused him a performance as a "young peasant girl" earlier, he will not agree to be her audience now. Whatever the case, and though he seems bent on sparing her from social "ceremony" and affectation, Sergei is simultaneously uninterested in, if not opposed to, his ward's instincts and initiative taking. Besides telling her how to keep busy during his extended absences, and hearing out her dutiful "confessions" upon his return, Sergei eventually becomes the exclusive source of her moral and intellectual capital: "At that time, all my thoughts and feelings were not really mine: They were his thoughts and feelings, which had suddenly become mine and passed into my life and lighted it up" (*PSS* 5: 79). Sergei alternately chooses Masha's books and sheet music or observes how she carries out Sonya's lessons, and his presence at these endeavors, whether actual, implied, or merely foreseen, serves as the motivating factor for her assiduousness. As though he were God himself, Masha absorbs Sergei's teachings, lives by his values, and performs for him the diligent, upright lifestyle he appears to favor. In a remarkable twist, she even eschews her looks for him, which she had been taught to play up, because he exhibits "complete indifference and even contempt" toward them: "He wished to believe that there was no coquetry in me. And when I understood this, not a trace of coquetry remained in the clothes I wore, the arrangement of my hair, or my movements" (*PSS* 5: 77–78). Masha's performed modesty, however, is the stuff of deception, and she is entirely conscious of this: "There emerged an affectation of simplicity [кокетсво простоты] at a time when I could not be simple […] I deceived him without wishing to, and, in deceiving him, I became better myself" (*PSS* 5: 78). Though her deception affords her a measure of control, it is still a product of her initial submission to Sergei. By enacting her adopted role with such determination, Masha's character improves in real life, but, aside from being necessarily flawed, her rehearsed simplicity is further proof of her eternally performed existence. Even the novella as a whole, written as it is in the first person, is a narrative performance, this time for her reading audience.

To judge by the performance paradigm I outlined earlier, it was likely at the keyboard that Masha honed her showmanship skills at large:

> Learning a whole piece of music by heart had seemed impossible to me; but now, when I knew that he would hear it and praise it, I would play a single section forty times over till poor Katya stuffed her ears with cotton wool, while I was still not sick of it. (*PSS* 5: 79)

She even adds that "the same old sonatas were somehow entirely different in their phrasing, came out in a completely different way and were much improved." The sheer stamina and dedication committed to perfecting her execution of a piece—or a demeanor, as we saw earlier—comes through quite clearly in this passage, and central to Masha's focused discipline is the only spectator that matters, Sergei. Katya, who is an actual, physical resident of Pokrovskoe, is blithely overlooked as a disgruntled audience member; her real experience of the music comes as a distant second to the promise of Sergei's engagement with it. It is not simply what Masha plays, but how she plays that is influenced by him (in the same way he affects her thoughts as well as her appearance), and her musical renderings automatically benefit, just as she herself is improved, from his authoritative input. And this from a man who is not himself a pianist! Indeed, unless they were professionals (and often composers), like Liszt, Paderewsky, Chopin, or Rubinstein, men of the gentry class did not usually play the piano during the first two thirds of the nineteenth century; it was considered neither seemly nor masculine (Burgan 59–60; Leppert 148).[8] Rather than performers, men were expert observers for whom the piano, and by extension piano playing, were highly gendered quantities (Leppert 119). As I show in the discussion ahead, and beyond music itself, it is the visual reception of the performance, the "sight of sound" in Leppert's wording, that truly occupies Sergei.

Masha's description of the deep connectedness she feels with her guardian in all things reads rather like an occupation. While he enjoys a disturbingly complete penetration of her—he is, after all, inside her head in the shape of his thoughts and ideas—Sergei does not allow her equal access: "Whenever I turned the conversation to his affairs, he frowned in a way peculiar to him, as if he were saying: 'Enough, please, this is no business of yours'" (*PSS* 5: 77). In the end, Masha is forced to obtain full access to him underhandedly, and, after being made to feel guilty for this illicit acquisition, she absolves her sins through music.

In his insightful examination of *Family Happiness*, Richard Gregg also emphasizes Sergei's god-like status, which he unpacks by way of the Psyche myth. But nowhere is the Judeo-Christian flavor of his divinity more apparent, as Gregg himself notes, than in the novella's pivotal orchard scene, when Masha disrupts male hegemony by helping herself to forbidden fruit (274). Wishing to refill an empty plate of cherries, guardian and ward find themselves locked out of the orchard with no gardener in sight; Sergei has sent them all away to help with the harvest. Although Sonya has run off to procure a key, he is unwilling to wait, so he climbs up and, raising the net that keeps pilfering birds out, jumps inside the orchard leaving Masha, for whom it is impossible to follow, on the other side of the wall. Though he offers to gather fruit, Masha insists on doing it herself, and, convinced that Sonya is incapable of finding the key, informs Sergei that she will go fetch it. And this is when the idea of disobedience slithers into her head:

> But at that very moment I felt that I wanted to see what he was doing there and what he was looking at—that I must watch his movements while he assumed that no one would see. I was

> simply unwilling just then to lose sight of him for one minute. Running on tiptoe through the stinging nettles to the other side of the orchard where the wall was lower, I climbed up on an empty cask so that the wall reached just below my chest, and leaned over into the orchard. (*PSS* 5: 84)

A rich and revealing allegory begins to emerge here, for the orchard, which Sergei has rendered inaccessible to all but himself, is, of course, his own mind. The net suspended over the fruit trees may stave off birds, but Masha, who is also barred from the enclosure, as she is from the inner recesses of Sergei's psyche, and cannot openly climb in with him, quite literally finds a way around the obstacles he relies upon—the wall and locked gate—managing to get through where her guardian's guard is not quite high enough. Since men generally had the monopoly on spectatorship, and Sergei is averse to granting deeper insight into himself, Masha, who is single-mindedly preoccupied with vision in the passage above, is forced to steal a look. She is not the first woman to disobey in this manner—Lot and Bluebeard's wives are prominent examples—and she will regret her indiscretion soon enough.

It is the promise of catching him unawares that tempts Masha most, and the Russian for plucking fruit, "рвать," meaning to rip or tear, keenly speaks to the abuse about to be perpetrated:

> He likely thought I had left and that no one was watching. With his hat off and eyes shut, he was sitting on the fork of an old tree and carefully rolling a lump of cherry glue into a ball. (*PSS* 5: 84)

Sergei, his vigilant eyes closed and partially undressed without his hat, is variously exposed, and his presumed solitude occasions further revelation: "Suddenly, he shrugged his shoulders, opened his eyes, muttered something, and smiled. Both word and smile were so unlike him that I felt ashamed of myself for spying on him." Under the circumstances, the neutral act of looking, which had been rendered earlier as "I wanted to see," "didn't want to lose sight of him," and "saw," is now negatively charged as "подсматриваю," or spying. A few sentences later, Masha's newly and visually acquired knowledge has become a "forbidden joy." Evoking Eve but also Psyche, who disobeys Eros and dares to look upon him in secret, Masha has defied her own god and extracted information he dearly wished to keep from her: "'Masha' […] 'Darling Masha!' he said again, in an even lower and more tender tone." No wonder she recalls him "not resembling himself" when he speaks her name and divulges his true feelings, for Sergei has been putting on a show of his own. Throughout the narrative, he appears to Masha alternately as mentor and avuncular resource, or as a giddy "schoolboy," that is to say, in roles that allow him to camouflage who he truly is: a desirous thirty-six-year-old man. In the orchard he becomes fully visible to Masha: "He had ceased to be the old uncle who spoiled or scolded me; he was a man on my level who loved and feared me as I loved and feared him" (*PSS* 5: 84).

Occasioned as it was by Masha's visual trespassing, the relative transparence between the main characters is short-lived, for Sergei resumes "his cold paternal tone" and attempts to restore order: "You had better get down, you will hurt yourself […] and do put your hair straight; just think what you look like!" (*PSS* 5: 84). The latter is surprising admonition from someone who scorns any concern with outward appearance and reminds us how inconsistent Sergei's expectations of Masha are. Conscious of his emotional vulnerability before her, Sergei is frazzled and seeks "to hide his embarrassment by feigning annoyance" (*PSS* 5: 85). As in Genesis, the onset of pudency is catching:

> It infected me too, and made me blush […]. I reproached myself, I repented what I had done, I was frightened; I thought that, through my actions, I had spoiled his image of me [что я

> навеки погубила себя в его глазах этим поступком]. (*PSS* 5: 85)

Having disappointed the quasi-divine Sergei, who had specifically banned her from his personal affairs, Masha expresses her regret in clearly performative terms: She is anxious about how she presented herself and about how he will look upon her in the future.

Back at the house, and in the presence of Katya and Sonya, Sergei's visit appears to continue without further tension, yet Masha admits that the memory of her actions "weighed on me like a crime" (*PSS* 5: 86). Earlier, Sergei's obvious discomposure had given her pleasure, but now his perceived need to pretend and mask his feelings, all of which confirms a loss of control on his part, distresses her. In order to restore the previous economy of their relationship, in which he was always in charge, she walks to the piano and he follows:

> "Play me something—it is long since I heard you," he said, catching up to me in the parlor. "I was just going to…Sergei Mikhailych!" I said, suddenly looking straight in his eyes. "You're not angry with me, are you?" "What for?" he asked. "For not obeying you this afternoon," I said blushing. (*PSS* 5: 86)

Masha immediately plots her query along an axis of disobedience, and the double reference here is key: Though she appears to be expressing regret for her refusal, with a flat "No" (*PSS* 5: 85), to come down from the orchard wall, in other words, for failing to comply, Masha is in fact apologizing for her visual transgression, which is of far greater, and graver, consequence. By taking a peek at Sergei when his guard was down, she has essentially seen him naked; the very memory of it causes her to blush. And even though he acknowledges, by way of a grimace, that Masha has misbehaved, he is unwilling to dole out a scolding. Still, Masha confirms her blameworthiness by resuming her docile role at the keyboard: "'So it's alright, and we're friends again?' I said, sitting down at the piano. 'Of course,' he said" (*PSS* 5: 86).

Sergei has no immediate hand in the selection of the piece Masha plays that night, but her choice of music is still suffused with his relentless influence, and the performance in question goes well beyond a musical expiation of sins:

> He sat behind me, so he was not visible to me; but everywhere—in the semi-darkness of the room, in every sound, in myself—I felt his presence. Every look, every movement of his, though I could not see them, found an echo in my heart. I played a fantasy sonata of Mozart's, which he had brought me, and which I had learnt in his presence and for him. I was not thinking at all about what I was playing, but it seems I played it well and I believe that he liked it. I felt the pleasure he experienced and, without looking at him, I felt the gaze fixed on me from behind. (*PSS* 5: 87)

It is now Sergei who feasts his eyes liberally, and transgressively, on Masha. He may express his longing to "hear" her play, but it is once again the visual that dominates in the passage above. It is critical to appreciate the nature of his viewing here, for though he has Masha's permission, indeed her encouragement, to watch her play the piano, the orientation of his gaze is intensely sensual, even predacious, and, as such, constitutes forbidden observation for a purported guardian, all the more so given the suggestive semi-darkness of the room.[9] So unremitting is Sergei's penetrating stare, and so palpable his pleasure, that Masha feels their power despite the fact, as she repeatedly tells us, that she cannot see him; the premise of this interface is decidedly voyeuristic. In fact, Sergei's invisibility surely heightens the erotic quality of his viewing process and allows him to abuse her musical performance for his own carnal ends. The fact that Sergei insists on dissimulating his romantic interest in Masha bears emphasizing here, for he benefits underhandedly from the tradition of piano performance as courtship ritual.

Critics have traditionally made much of Masha's romantic imagination (see, for example, Gustafson 112; Steiner 588; and Kisselef 339), while her guardian's penchant for fantasizing, though significant, is never addressed. As in a peep show, Sergei, who is once again Masha's sole spectator, can by way of private delectation indulge his imagination and desire without being exposed. Thirty years later, the *Kreutzer Sonata's* Pozdnyshev would express more openly what is as yet merely suggested in *Family Happiness*:

> A couple are occupied with the noblest of arts, music; this demands a certain nearness and there's nothing reprehensible in it […] Yet everybody knows that it is by means of those very pursuits, especially music, that the greater part of the adulteries in our society occur. (*PSS* 27: 57)

In contrast to her previous performances, Masha is, this time, not interrupted by her rapt audience. Quite the opposite, for when she stops playing at one point, and meets his "shining eyes"—a well-established trope of sensuality, especially in Tolstoy—Sergei shakes his head "reproachfully at the music, for [her] to go on." Why, indeed, would he wish to cut this number short? Although Katya, from the wings, expresses her dissatisfaction with the overall performance, Sergei counters her opinion, declaring that Masha had "never played so well." Needless to say, Katya, who was actively listening, is speaking to the musical content, while Sergei offers a review of something else entirely. As for Masha, who believes her playing was good, she does not appear to be either deliberate about or emotionally engaged in musical activity: "I was not thinking at all about what I was playing" and "moving my fingers unconsciously" bespeak a detachment from Mozart's piece (*PSS* 5: 87).

Here I must emphasize, lest one be tempted to interpret Masha's withdrawal as a sign of complete abandonment to the music, that nowhere in her account is there ever any evidence of musical transcendence, or profound engagement, on her part. As reflected in her own description of the event, Masha is far more attuned to the venue, to the vehicle of performance and the resulting spectatorship, than she is invested in the notes themselves. Moreover, now that she has confirmed his emotional vulnerability to her, Masha is able to perform all the more persuasively.

For the attentive reader, the composition featured in this episode is not without meaning. While no such "fantasy sonata" [соната-фантазия], as Masha refers to it, exists in Mozart's oeuvre, she is likely playing his "Fantasy and Sonata in C minor," the only such compilation according to the Köchel catalogue, comprising two pieces that were originally published as a set. The surface similarities with Beethoven's *Sonata Quasi una Fantasia in C-sharp minor* are remarkable: Both entail the same generic hybridity and coupling; both are in the minor mode and in keys barely separated by a half step; and both sonatas are numbered fourteen. Tolstoy is vague as to which of the two pieces, if not both, Masha plays for Sergei on that evening, but the term through which she refers to the Mozart is revealing. We no longer have "almost a fantasy" [*quasi una fantasia*], but rather a *fait accompli*: a sonata that is a fantasy. To be sure, the effects of this nominal change are evident in Sergei's experience of the music, since his erotic imagination is stimulated to such a degree that he is incited to pace through the house once Masha ceases to play: "Then he began to walk about the rooms, through the drawing room to the dark parlor and back again to the drawing room, each time looking at me and smiling" (*PSS* 5: 87). It is as though he were an animal circling a female in heat. That same night, Masha decides to fast in preparation for her birthday, at which point she will take communion and become engaged to Sergei.

Masha’s description of her ritual cleansing, complete with calculated acts of kindness, “studied humility,” “humble bowing,” and meek posturing—she lies to Katya about her whereabouts in order to give alms to a serf—is reminiscently performative (*PSS* 5: 91–92). She even imagines how Sergei might react to her charitable actions, casting him, yet again, as the implied spectator of her activities. However, following the acquisition of what she regards as greater “moral elevation,” he no longer appears as a separate conscience inhabiting her daily experience, but as a second self (“я думала о нем как о себе”), not loftier, but rather her equal (*PSS* 5: 93). Then again, this equality soon shifts, granting Masha the kind of inaccessibility once solely associated with Sergei. After taking communion on her birthday, Masha returns home to find that he has come to congratulate her: “Never since I had known him had I been so at ease with him and so self-possessed as on that morning. I felt in myself a whole new world that was incomprehensible to, and higher than, him” (*PSS* 5: 94).

Masha's disposition has changed radically: Where she once sought Sergei's firm, guiding hand and basked in his penetrating gaze, she now exults in the knowledge of her inscrutability. Masha even believes that “he understood the cause of this feeling,” and we might, too, except for this: When she approaches the piano of her own volition, moved not by the need to act contritely but by her newly found self-reliance and inner confidence, Sergei promptly locks the instrument and hides the key in his jacket pocket. Though he tells her benevolently that she should not spoil her present mood—”you have such music in your soul right now, better than any on earth” (*PSS* 5: 94)—this obstruction is the most extreme example of his tendency to interrupt Masha's process. In the case of Beethoven's second movement, as during their conversation regarding the hypothetical May-September romance, Sergei cuts short an action already in progress. This instance is far more severe, for he is quashing intent itself. Once again, the salient tension between notions of authenticity and role-playing, and also between performer and audience, which we first witnessed in the episode surrounding Masha's disputed change of clothes, comes through very clearly here. Her own behavioral instincts, and how Sergei wishes that she conduct herself, are visibly at odds with one another.

As Lina Steiner suggests, and Sergei appears to fear, Masha's developing self-consciousness poses a threat to his sense of control and, therefore, to the very possibility of such “family happiness” as is announced in the novella's title (587). If, as Masha believes, Sergei understands her self-possessed and entitled state of mind, then he appears to disapprove of it as of the behavior it elicits. The mere curbing of her initiative-taking makes this obvious, but the mention of locks and keys deepens our understanding of the control being exerted. Verbal prohibition is evidently not sufficient: Sergei must lock the fallboard and hide the key on his person. Such measures imply a suspicion that the currently more assertive Masha will not heed his words, but Sergei has likely also learned from past experience. After all, and despite both verbal and facial interdiction, Masha had not only disobeyed him at the orchard by accessing his private garden, but also creatively circumvented any obstacles presented by locks and keys. Earlier, it was the need to conceal his true feelings from his ward that had prompted Sergei’s symbolic act of locking. What serves as the impetus on this occasion?

Part of the answer can be found in his announcement, at dinner, that he plans to leave for Moscow on the following day. Given his intimate reception of Masha’s last performance, and in light of his ongoing struggle with his feelings towards her (which are prompting him to escape her ambit), Sergei does not want to be aroused again prior to his departure. Thus, though he couches his shuttering of the keyboard as solicitousness for her inner being, he is in truth anxious about unleashing what is raging inside of him. In a characteristic move of patriarchal subjugation, Sergei seeks to placate his erotic drive by suppressing Masha and her effect on it. Her piano playing, which is visually restricted to him throughout the novella, functions as an erotic trigger, and he reserves the right to turn it on and off.

While Masha is "grateful to him" (*PSS* 5: 94) for his authoritarian wielding of the piano key, she does take Sergei to task for running away from her and demands that he unlock his box of emotional secrets. After he admits that it is difficult to share the truth with her, Sergei again invokes "A," the hypothetical older (alpha!) man and "B," a much younger woman who is like a daughter to him.

> "But he forgot that B was so young, that life was still but a little game to her," he continued with a sudden swiftness and determination and without looking at me, "and that it was easy to love her in a different way and that this would amuse her. He made a mistake and suddenly became aware of another feeling, as heavy as remorse, making its way into his soul, and he was frightened." […] As he said this, he began to rub his eyes as though he were indifferent, and then closed them. (*PSS* 5: 95–96)

Sergei is all eyes when Masha is on display, and with her back turned to him, but he is incapable of looking at her, and meeting her gaze, when he himself is in the hot seat, so to speak. Already in this early novella, we see Tolstoy's tendency to associate erotic awareness with guilt and remorse, but here Sergei is chiefly plagued by the fear of being made a fool. In the passage above, Masha's relative youth is from the outset construed defensively as a gateway to flighty games and amusement in which she plays with his heartstrings. When she asks Sergei earnestly about A's fears, he completely misunderstands her intent: "It evidently seemed to him that I was joking." His eventual response—now articulated in personal terms—which he expresses in an offended tone, confirms the nature of his fear: "You want to play and I need something else. Play, but not with me." Sergei is reluctant to continue the conversation, yet, when pressed, he ventures that though "A behaved badly […] it all came to an end and they parted…as friends" (*PSS* 5: 96).

This story ending does not suit Masha and she begs another from Sergei, who complies by restating his angst-ridden point of view: "Some say that A went off his head, fell passionately in love with B, and told her so. But she only laughed. To her it was all a joke" (*PSS* 5: 96). And this brings us back to the start of the novella and the mystery surrounding the interruption of Beethoven's second movement. "Scherzo" is Italian for joke, suggesting, in retrospect, that Sergei's original musical veto had little to do with the piece itself, or with Masha's technique, but rather with the emotional fears of an older, vulnerable man.

In a journal entry dated January 7, 1858, Tolstoy mentions a *scherzo* by Beethoven but provides no further identification. It was Beethoven, in fact, who, beginning in the early nineteenth century, pioneered the trend of replacing the more standard minuet and trio with the *scherzo*, which he invested with vigorous tempos, propulsive metric patterns, and sudden rhythmic shifts, making it a genre that musical culture at large, and perhaps Tolstoy himself, associated intimately with the German composer (McClelland 11; Carew 229). Structurally speaking, the *scherzo* is a minuet frequently accompanied by a contrasting trio, as is the case of the "Moonlight Sonata." Of greater pertinence to my essay, however, is that genre's intent: to make a joke at the listener's expense, hence its name. In some cases, it is obvious to the listener why a piece is designated a *scherzo* based on its playfulness and giddy rhythmic patterns, while in others "scherzo" is largely in the ear of the listener. The second movement of Beethoven's *Sonata Quasi una Fantasia* is a case in point: Though most critics refer to it by its tempo marking (*allegretto*, or lively), others, insisting on its character and tone, call it a *scherzo*. Before being curtly interrupted, Masha may well have been performing an *allegretto*, but Sergei, conflicted as he was from the moment he laid eyes on his ward, and fearful of becoming the butt of a romantic joke, heard a *scherzo*. Just as he misinterprets her tone as "jocular" [шутливый] during their discussion of A and B, so does he misconstrue her abbreviated rendition of the second movement as derisive and puts an immediate stop to it.

In order to understand Sergei's generic proscription and its narrative significance more fully, we must now pause on the *adagio sostenuto* that precedes the so-called *scherzo*. With the *ostinato* ("stubborn" or "persistent") triplet rhythm that ceases only in the penultimate measure, its almost constant dynamic marking of *pianissimo*, and the sustained *adagio*, or slow tempo, that conjures up feelings of hardship and grief—a "lamentation," as Héctor Berlioz put it—the first movement of Beethoven's sonata belongs to the repertoire of *Trauermusik* (Jones 78). Masha alludes to this mood in the opening line of the novella, when she tells us "we were in mourning [траур] for my mother" (*PSS* 5: 67). Yet it seems counterintuitive for Sergei, who actively seeks to redirect the paralyzing grief that has overtaken Pokrovskoe, to choose this particular piece for Masha and then stop her from playing the *allegretto* which should, logically, work to lift everyone's spirits, especially given the modal shift from C-sharp minor to D-flat major. We are now better placed to appreciate the nature of Sergei's response to the second movement, but the opening *adagio*, which Masha will take up once more at the novella's conclusion, deserves our attention as the recurring incidental music to Tolstoy's narrative of "family happiness."

By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, young women taking piano lessons were being asked to achieve impossibly strict, indeed "mechanistic" as one critic puts it, levels of regularity and evenness in their playing (Parakilas 138). Carl Czerny—incidentally, a student of Beethoven—whose prolific output included scores of compositions and teaching materials, offered the following piece of advice to Cecilia, an imaginary student, in his *Letters to a Young Lady on the Art of Playing the Pianoforte* (1837):

> Into the error of accelerating time, just such young and lively persons as my dear Miss Cecilia are most apt to fall [...] For the fingers are little disobedient creatures, it they are not kept well reined in; and they are apt to run off like an unbroken colt as soon as they have gained some degree of fluency. (23–24)

As Parakilas remarks, Czerny's epistolary instructions for correct musical expression, which addressed everything from finger position to seating posture, were at the time subsumed into a broadly applicable ideology of child rearing in which strict discipline did not rely on harsh or punitive treatment, but rather ascribed to the idea that by virtue of constant repetition and application young girls could learn to perform in a uniform, controlled manner no matter how challenging the composition (140). Masha's studiously affected simplicity, through which she "became better" in real life, can be understood as an exercise in the same vein.

The term *adagio*, meaning "at ease," describes a slow, leisurely tempo, but it is the accompanying *sostenuto* of Beethoven's first movement that resonates so keenly with the spirit of Czerny's musical program and the resulting expectations of young women. The guiding idea, in piano performance as in life, is to remain poised and even-keeled—in other words, not to rush giddily as "disobedient little fingers" might do, risking a "fall" into treacherously accelerated rhythms—and to sustain this deportment as a general rule. Beethoven's insistence on the importance of maintaining the measured tempo is, musically speaking, entirely necessary, for the continual triplets, combined with the unrelenting, and gradually intensifying, bell-toll motif in the right hand, could well get away from someone and shift into a faster gear. Similarly, from the perspective of Sergei, a seasoned man of thirty-six who expresses more than once his love of rural tranquility and "sitting" (*PSS* 5: 75), there is something deeply appealing about the pace of Beethoven's *adagio sostenuto.* As I argue in the remaining discussion, he will find himself in the position of having to rein the racing Masha back into the appropriate tempo of family life.

Following their wedding and subsequent move to Nikolskoe, Sergei's estate, music dwindles into the background. To begin with, it is scrapped, along with the conventional party, champagne, and special attire, from the wedding day, and although Masha does mention time spent at the piano as one of their favorite activities, her performances never enjoy the kind of narrative prominence they did when she was single. Sergei continues to observe her playing from a distance, where he remains "almost invisible," and the amorousness occasioned by the sight of her sound also persists: "When he was not expecting it, I would rise from the piano, go up to him, and try to detect on his face signs of excitement—the unnatural brightness and moistness of his eyes, which he tried to conceal in vain" (*PSS* 5: 108). While they are presumably engaging in sexual relations as a wedded couple, this is the only mention of observable sensual behavior included in Masha's description of their first two months of marriage.

Thus, music continues to function as an erotic vehicle, but now it is Masha who seeks to satisfy herself visually; she is the intrepid, sexually eager one, while Sergei appears more restrained by comparison. In part, Masha may be attempting to recreate the effect her performance of Mozart's "fantasy sonata" had on him, but her motivation is, I believe, not so much to arouse her husband as it is, simply, to rouse him. Sergei had been quite restrained from the start of their acquaintance, but in her new home at Nikolskoe, which, under the supervision of her mother-in-law, runs with quiet solemnity like a "wind-up clock," where days slip by according to an "unchanging routine," and where "habit was daily petrifying our life into one particular shape" (*PSS* 5: 106, 109, 111), Masha's longing for stimulation is heightened. "His eternal calmness irritated me," she recalls, and then articulates her needs in terms of acute kinetic frustration: "My love stood still [остановилась] […] I wanted movement [движения] and not a calm flow of life [спокойного течения жизни]" (*PSS* 5: 111).

To frame this in terms of Beethoven's arrested sonata, Masha longs to proceed from the *adagio sostenuto* to the movements (also «движения» in musical terms) that come next: the *allegretto* and *presto agitato*. Moreover, it is her need to perform marital bliss publicly that comes to the fore with greatest urgency: "I loved him and saw that I was everything to him, but I wanted everyone to see our love; I wanted them to get in the way of my love for him and to love him all the same" (*PSS* 5: 111). In Petersburg, Masha will discover a more expansive stage for her performative inclinations which are less the product of an "exhibitionist streak" (Reyfman 44, 46) than a pattern of behavior nurtured by Sergei himself.

The couple's eventual *séjour* in the capital is the result of a marital spat occasioned, on the one hand, by Sergei's continued reluctance to grant Masha access, and, on the other, by his love of sedentary life. Her disappointment is expressed once again in terms of forced immobility: "I want to live life, move about […] not stand in one place […] I want to move forward with each day […] and he wants to stand still and keep me standing still beside him" (*PSS* 5: 112). Masha longs for excitement she can share and perform *with* Sergei:

"If only I could go with him to the edge of a precipice […] then, pale with fear, he would catch me with his strong arms" (*PSS* 5: 111). But where Masha sees life's thrills, Sergei finds turmoil. He tells her: "I love you and consequently cannot but wish to save you from anxiety" (*PSS* 5: 114). Sergei wants to spare Masha even before she can approach the precipice and feel the excitement, just as he wishes to avoid altogether the levity and dramatic potential of the *allegretto* and *presto agitato*.

After their disagreement is resolved and they decide to spend time in Petersburg, Masha again plays for Sergei while he paces, declaiming Lermontov under his breath. At one point, she abandons her piano stool, takes Sergei's hand and begins to walk with him, "trying to keep step," and this culminates in a peculiar pseudo-dance: "We took longer and longer steps, and rose higher and higher on tiptoe. And with that same step, to the great dissatisfaction of Grigory and astonishment of my mother-in-law, who was playing patience in the parlor, we made our way through the house and into the dining room" (*PSS* 5: 115). Masha and Sergei's prancing, on which the chapter ends, provides a clever transition into the novella's Petersburg phase. To begin with, their light-hearted jaunt upsets the rhythm of country life, where "patience" is *de rigueur*, but, more importantly, it foreshadows the flavor of urban entertainment, for while Masha makes a show of asking "Why should we go into society?" (*PSS* 5: 116), and states that the theater and opera will amply fill their time, the couple's only interaction with music takes place exclusively in the arena of the ballroom.

No sooner does she arrive in the capital than Masha is swept up by society life. Formerly, the main venue for her performances had been quite modest, but in Petersburg Masha spreads her wings on a much grander stage and for a fuller house:

> At the ball, it seemed to me that, more than ever, I was the center around which everything revolved, that for my sake alone this great room was lit up and the music played, and that this crowd of people had gathered to admire me. (*PSS* 5: 118)

Unlike the dimly lit country parlor, where she played the piano in a corner and for a single audience member whom she could not see, the ballroom is a bright, open platform where Masha can display her talents and also observe the throng that has come to watch her perform. Not only have her spectators multiplied exponentially, but Masha also experiences their gaze in the same way she did Sergei's—as love: "From the hairdresser, to the lady's maid, to the dancers and the old men promenading the ballroom, all alike seemed to make it plain that they were in love with me" (*PSS* 5: 118). No longer tethered to the keyboard, or to Sergei for that matter, Masha can sail across the dance floor freely and with assorted partners, expanding her repertoire of "movements" well beyond that old stand-by, and limiting, *adagio*.

If, as Kisseleff and Poggioli argue, *Family Happiness* is a hybrid work that combines the pastoral or idyll with realist prose, then it does so by taking a lively detour through the society tale (Weir 167). With its highly critical depiction of urban mores and the obvious emphasis on balls and intrigue, the novella's Petersburg and Baden episodes allude strongly to that genre. To be sure, and certainly in Tolstoy's estimation, the ballroom was a well-known topos of dangerous sensual opportunity since physical display, and visual consumption of it, was far less restricted, especially by comparison to the decorum of music-making in the safety of the family home. But the truth is that the viewing in which Sergei had been indulging during Masha's piano playing was only different from standard ballroom ogling insofar as it was a visual monopsony: He was the only spectator.

At first, Sergei is proud of his wife's social abilities, remarking in a letter to his mother how "everyone delights in her" (*PSS* 5: 117–118). But he soon thinks better of it:

> Even if I sometimes noticed his attentive and serious gaze directed at me questioningly, I did not understand its meaning. I was utterly blinded by this sudden affection which I seemed to evoke in all our new acquaintances. (*PSS* 5: 118)

This description makes it clear that Sergei's are no longer the only eyes driving Masha's routine, so much so that she only "sometimes" notices them and, even then, does not comprehend what they seek to communicate.

Although he once rejoiced in her social achievements, Sergei now realizes that he can no longer hoard her performances: To counter Tina Turner, Masha is not to be his "private dancer." As she did in the country, Masha fully realizes the effect her performance has on her audience, but now that it is widely and publicly greeted, Sergei is mortified rather than stirred up by it:

> I had a new sense of pride and satisfaction when my entry at a ball attracted all eyes, while he, as if ashamed to confess his ownership of me in public, made haste to leave my side and efface himself in the crowd of black coats. (*PSS* 5: 118)

On the one hand, Sergei's shame is occasioned by the manner in which others feast their eyes on his wife, but, as her "owner," he likely anticipates other, insulting, looks, this time directed at him. In being replaced by other spectators, Sergei is already emasculated, but as the object of their (disdainful) gaze he is humiliated even further. It is also important to recognize that Masha derives great personal pleasure from dancing, something she never expresses or manifests with regard to piano playing, which was largely for Sergei's benefit. When Masha performed for him in Pokrovskoe, and with her back turned, the spectacle was wholly contained: Sergei had a hand in the music selection, when and how much of it was performed, and also controlled all visual activity. The very point of Sergei's particular spectatorial pose was to cache any erotic moments; to make them visually, and by extension empirically, inaccessible to his ward. In other words, Masha was supposed to "contain within her the passive sexuality that can be taken as raw material and molded into the pleasure of its owner, without her enjoying it (that was crucial)" (Leppert 183). In the ballroom, and despite his status as her husband, Sergei is obviously disempowered, and the broad visual access to Masha's performance reads as potential sexual availability. His expectation of passivity, which defined Masha's conjugal experience in Nikolskoe, is shattered by the very vehicle of dance, which has her in constant motion and never "standing still beside him."

Masha may believe that her show is ultimately for her husband's benefit—"'Just wait,' I thought, 'when we get home you will see for whose sake I try to be beautiful and brilliant'" (*PSS* 5: 118)—but he interprets the situation differently. This is evident in Sergei's retort when Masha wishes to delay their departure back to the country so that she might perform, one last time, for another man: "It is sickening that the prince admired you and that you therefore run to meet him, forgetting your husband and your womanly dignity" (*PSS* 5: 122). Sergei puts himself first on the list of Masha's neglected responsibilities and later insists on the performative nature of her offense (a quality he himself nurtured) by putting words in her mouth: "To show myself to His Highness gives me great happiness, but I *sacrifice* it" (*PSS* 5: 121, emphasis in original). Masha's statement regarding her willingness to sacrifice the ball for Sergei had been motivated by genuine affection. Moved by her husband's joyful anticipation of their return to the country, she had resolved not to compromise his needs, not even "for all the balls and all the flattering princes in the world." But just as Masha is about to voice her decision, Sergei provokes her: "He didn't want me to see him as a mere man; in my presence he always had to be a demigod on a pedestal" (*PSS* 5: 120).

Unlike every other quarrel, this one is not resolved at the piano, or at all. To begin with, the keyboard is not even in the narrative picture since it has been supplanted by dance music. Besides, Masha seems uninterested in re-establishing the formerly exclusive, and compliant, viewing relationship: "I was constantly in society, where I didn't need him" (*PSS* 5: 126), she recalls, indicating that Sergei's importance as spectator has evaporated. Although they manage to conceive a child, husband and wife effectively lead separate lives for three years. This marital impasse continues until things come to a head during Masha's stay in Baden, where several events conspire to redirect her outlook and pave the way to the narrative *da capo* on which the novella ends.

Although Masha continues to attract the attention of others, and especially of one Italian nobleman visiting the resort, she is eventually upstaged by a newcomer, the beautiful Lady S, around whom "a more distinguished group gathered" by comparison to the audience she herself commands (*PSS* 5: 129). Not only does Masha's performative drive abate, "I ceased to appear in society," but her visual appeal is, according to some, not even perceptible: "I was completely buried as far as Baden was concerned" (*PSS* 5: 129–130). In the end, it is the brazenness of her Italian admirer that opens Masha's eyes to the fiction she has been living. Before the backdrop of an abandoned castle, Tolstoy restages the orchard scene and has Masha uncover, or more accurately rediscover, knowledge she had been concealing from herself. Instead of spying, Masha eavesdrops this time and overhears the Marquis, whom she repeatedly compares to her husband, expressing his inextinguishable passion for her. Later, forced by circumstances to leave from the castle in his company, she finds herself at once repulsed by and drawn to the Marquis's lusty advances. Just as she is about to give in to him, his voice reminds Masha of Sergei, and she is saved from a figurative fall much as she was spared a literal one at the orchard wall. By the end of the episode, Masha reconfirms what she has known all along: that she loves Sergei, and that her showmanship must be his to have and behold, at least for now.

It is no happenstance that sound (the opportunity to eavesdrop, the consonance of the Marquis and Sergei's voices), and not vision, should emerge as a pivotal element in Masha's penitent road to family happiness. Once she abandons Baden, as well as all it represents, and returns home to the wholesome, Russian countryside, Masha soon reacquaints herself with a particular sound, that of the piano, her old medium, and turns to music one last time in order to mend her relationship with Sergei. Since Nikolskoe is being renovated—an allusion to the fixer-upper that is her domestic life—Masha's household has moved to Pokrovskoe, her "protective" childhood home, and one late afternoon she finds herself all alone with the piano that first set her romantic life in motion. The piece she chooses to exhume after years of inattention is the opening movement of Beethoven's *Sonata Quasi una Fantasia*, a fitting choice, given the moribund state of her marriage. Masha's performance routine returns to her instantly and unchanged: "At the end of the first movement I looked around completely unconsciously, out of old habit, at the corner where he used to once sit and listen to me. But he was not there; his chair, long unmoved, was still in its corner." Masha instinctively remembers not to play through the *allegretto* and *presto agitato* just as she now knows to avoid the accelerated tempo (compare this to Czerny's caveat to female pianists) of society life. When she turns to look upon the first and defining spectator of her performed existence, he is not there, but the familiar props are: The scene is set for Sergei to resume his position. So distraught is she at first, that Masha is unable to continue playing: She is profoundly alone, in her house, in life, and on stage. Placing her elbows on the keyboard and covering her face, Masha considers a seemingly “irrevocable past” and wonders: “Is life really over for me?” Then she begins to play the same first movement over and over again, all the while praying repentantly: “Oh, God […] forgive me if I am to blame, or restore to me all that was once perfect in my soul, or else teach me, what should I do? How should I live now?” By performing an insistent musical loop, Masha answers her own question: The past is not entirely out of reach. With the proper approach it can be summoned up, as can Sergei himself: “Then I heard cautious and familiar footsteps on the veranda […] When I finished playing, the footsteps were behind me and a hand lay on my shoulder” (*PSS* 5: 136). Conjured up by the compulsively dutiful playing of his wife and erstwhile ward, Sergei, like God himself, answers her prayers and reoccupies his rear position as her divine spectator.

While she had rightly identified Beethoven’s first movement as an “adagio” at the start of the narrative, Masha refers to it here as “andante,” meaning “at a walking pace,” as if eliciting her husband’s very footsteps. It is no surprise that Sergei wholly approves of her choice in music: “How clever of you [какая ты умница] to play that sonata,” he says right away (*PSS* 5: 136). Clever, or shrewd. Better yet, obedient. After all, the Russian «умница», especially when applied to girls, speaks chiefly to their goodness and sensible behavior. Tolstoy is careful to have Sergei compliment Masha on her judgment and not on her playing. By choosing to intone the first piece she ever performed for him, the one that launched the organizing principle of their relationship, Masha gestures her obvious willingness to strike her earlier pose. However, what she will perform from here on out is faithful domesticity, as was the expectation of piano-playing women at the time. And we would be remiss not to reflect upon Sergei's telling reduction, for Masha does not play (and indeed never has) Beethoven's sonata, only the *adagio*. His misrepresentation serves as a chilling clue that hers is to be a monotonous and partial existence. Just as Beethoven's glorious, multifaceted composition is reduced by Sergei to a single movement, so will Masha's life be condensed exclusively into maternal duties.

That same evening Masha and Sergei have it out while a cleansing rain, mixed in with her cathartic tears, brings relief from the summer heat. She reproaches him for not curbing her performance while they were in Petersburg: “Why did you give me freedom that I didn't know how to use?” (*PSS* 5: 139). Tolstoy has Masha express nostalgia for those trusty locks and keys that kept her performance in check. Her remonstrations become even more distressing: “Why didn't you tie me up or kill me?” (*PSS* 5: 141). The latter is precisely what Pozdnyshev will do to his wayward pianist wife in the *Kreutzer Sonata* and, in the space of Tolstoy's fiction, it is an idea first expressed by a woman who has acknowledged her ill-suitedness for independence.

For his part, Sergei counters that “all of us, and especially you, women, must personally experience life's nonsense in order to return to life itself,” adding most hypocritically that since he had no right to pressure Masha he thought it best for her to undergo all this on her own (*PSS* 5: 141). Though he does acknowledge some guilt, Sergei is adamant that he and Masha “not try to repeat life” as it once was, meaning that the amorous, “juicy” period of their marriage is over, and that they have entered a new, family-oriented stage (*PSS* 5: 142).

The persistence of the *adagio sostenuto*, which functions very much as an invocation of the past, severely undercuts his statements. Moreover, Masha's return to her childhood home as the site of their truce is a step backward into a previous developmental past; a regression, in fact (Gregg 278). Yet Sergei is right on one score: Although Masha's performative drive will endure, it will manifest itself differently from this point forward. Much as he made his first appearance before Masha in Pokrovskoe's entrance hall and cast himself as her sole spectator, so does Sergei, now "no longer a lover, but an old friend," redirect Masha's gaze toward her son, who makes his own momentous entrance: "'Now we must stand aside and make way for him,' he said pointing at the nursemaid who had approached with Vanya and stopped at the terrace doors" (*PSS* 5: 142). More accurately, it is Sergei who stands aside and willingly relinquishes the spectator's seat to his son (Reyfman 45).

As soon as Masha realizes that her romantic youth is behind her, we are made to witness a pivotal changing of the guard:

> Half asleep [Vanya] moved the parted fingers of one creased little hand and opened dim little eyes, as if he were looking for something or recalling something. All at once his eyes rested on me, a spark of consciousness shone in them. (*PSS* 5: 143)

As devoted mother to her (male!) child, Masha will now perform for him, for his eyes only. And this newly refocused mother is obviously enthusiastic, even stingy, about her offspring's attention: "Mine, mine, mine!" she thinks to herself as she snatches Vanya up in her arms and hides his face from Sergei, claiming: "None but I had any business looking at him" (*PSS* 5: 143). At once performer and spectator—the consummate, multi-tasking mother—Masha is again the visual hoarder here, but since it involves her child, she is not transgressing. Effectively de-eroticized, she has been made to recognize "the *delectable Arcana of domestic affairs*," practically, as this essay's epigraph promises, "in as little time as is usually dedicated to directing the position of her hands on a Piano-Forte." After all, it was her final rendering of the *adagio* that catalyzed Masha's reconciliation with Sergei, allowing her particular "Cage of Matrimony" to become, if not "comfortable," then at least tolerable. In the end, family happiness is neither nurtured nor achieved, but performed, a notion that can be seen to foreshadow Tolstoy's later thinking with regard to the artificiality of marriage as a social institution.

Two narrative peculiarities are frequently cited with regard to *Family Happiness*: First, that it is the only work by Tolstoy written from a woman's perspective, and second, that the author famously rejected it upon publication, calling it a "shameful abomination" in his personal diary, and "shameful shit [г...о], a stain, not only authorial, but human [...] an abominable work" in a letter to Vassily Botkin (*PSS* 48: 21; 60: 296). What comes through most forcefully in the wording of his severe auto-criticism is the moral revulsion the novella provokes in him. The author highlights not only his sense of dishonor, but also the impression of defilement; his writing has forever sullied his reputation. "I am buried both as writer and man," he announces in that same letter (*PSS* 60: 296).

We might recall that Masha's status is also "buried" in Baden's public eye once Lady S. arrives upon the scene, and soon she too begins to grasp the extent to which her own activities have jeopardized both her reputation and her marriage. Although Tolstoy is usually, and understandably, compared with Sergei, there are distinct traits that he shares with his female protagonist, such as orphanhood, piano playing, and a youthful (even harmful) attraction to society life. The fact that he puts so much patriarchal content in Masha's mouth binds him even further to her, of course, but we are quick to see through that veneer.

In a journal entry dated October 23, 1853, Tolstoy mocks the writer Marya Zhukova, stating that "nothing can be more ridiculous than a woman's view of a man's life, which women often undertake to describe. On the contrary, a female author has an enormous advantage in the feminine sphere" (*PSS* 46: 179). Apparently, the inverse was not a given. Perhaps Tolstoy believed that he had greater license because of his own experience with Valeriya Arseneva, his neighbor and ward, with whom he conducted a manipulative, some would say callous, romance. When he attempts to pinpoint the cause of the extreme professional shame brought about by *Family Happiness*, which was generally well received at the time, Hugh McLean turns to this biographical episode and suggests that Tolstoy's violent reaction was, at least in part, induced by deep remorse for having philandered during his courtship of Arseneva and then sanitized the actual facts of his life in a work of fiction (16–19). I agree that the author's categorical repudiation smacks of guilt. However, if there were conscious attempts to sanitize on the author's part, they were largely unsuccessful, for Sergei's impure and improper viewing of Masha comes through nonetheless, allowing this guardian figure to emerge as a far more accurate reflection of the young Tolstoy than the author may have intended.

Ironically, after turning the microscope on Masha, and speaking for her, Tolstoy was likely shocked to realize that he had revealed far more about himself in the process, proving that what is good for the goose—in this instance, Zhukova—is also good for the gander. Sergei is supposed to be read as a solid, generous, and uncompromised character who has, even to a fault, Masha's best interests at heart, but the musical subtext exposes a far knottier and conflicted, even repulsive, man.

"Music was never merely a pastime for Tolstoy, but a way of experiencing the quandary of himself, of testing to the boiling point his own principles and aesthetic values under the emotional impact of art" (Rischin 12). While she does not pause on *Family Happiness* when she examines the author's creative relationship with Beethoven, Rischin keenly zeroes in on Tolstoy's consistent appeal to music in matters of self-inquiry. The diary entries he composed as a young man reveal time and again his attempt to use the keyboard as a vehicle of self-discipline and an avenue to a virtuous, productive, and measured life, as he struggled all the while not to indulge his gnawing sexual appetite. This line of thinking surely guided Sergei's initial insistence that Masha devote herself to the piano so as not to wallow in sorrow and risk letting herself go. And since we are now well aware that the regimented playing of arpeggios did not always keep Tolstoy on the straight and narrow, it is essential to recognize how differently piano music functions for the main protagonists of his novella: For Masha, who plays, it is an anchoring medium, while for Sergei, who watches, it unleashes the very impulses Tolstoy wished, throughout his life, to curb in himself.

Notes

1. The etymology of virginal is disputed: Both *virga/virgula* (rod) and *virgo* (virgin) have been suggested. However, the latter seems the most compelling suggestion in light of keyboard practice and cultural history (See Grove 9: 2).

2. The tendency to depict female pianists as transgressive only arose toward the second half of the century, inspired at least in part by Emma Bovary's bogus piano lessons (Brugan 52; Leppert 154–155).

3. All translations of Tolstoy's fiction are (often modified) versions of Louise and Aylmer Maude's work. All other English renderings are my own.

4. I am referring to Tolstoy's perplexing relationship with his neighbor and ward, Valeriya Arseneva. Beginning with Eikhenbaum, numerous critics have emphasized the relevance of this biographical episode to Tolstoy's novella (See, for example, Christian 90; Cruise 193; Poggioli 266; Reyfman 29; and Steiner 577).

5. Although a handful of women did enjoy careers of varying lengths and acclaim as concert pianists in the eighteenth century, they were the exception. One such prominent example is Maria Szymanowska, a Polish concert pianist who eventually became Russia's court pianist (Swartz 44).

6. Tolstoy will make this keyboard substitution again in the context of Tatyana Semenovna's (Sergei's mother's) home, which is deliberately presented as rooted in the ways of the past.

7. The quotation is by Eugen d'Albert in his introductory remarks to a 1909 edition of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata." See Beethoven xiii.

8. Tolstoy was something of an anomaly in this regard, but while his fiction includes male violinists and singers, his pianists are females. Nikolai Irtenev, who is modeled on Tolstoy himself, is an exception.

9. Reyfman (34–35) also comments on the erotic nature of this scene, but whereas she interprets Sergei Mikhailych's gaze as a symptom of his inability to suppress his feelings, I read it as ongoing suppression: Sergei at once indulges and conceals his desire in the privacy of darkness.

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