

TOLSTOY
STUDIES
JOURNAL

VOL. II
1989

TOLSTOY STUDIES JOURNAL

VOLUME II

1989

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A Publication of the TOLSTOY SOCIETY

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Annual dues: Full-time faculty: fifteen dollars

Part-time faculty, graduate students, retired:
ten dollars

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ISSN 1044-1573

TSJ VOL. II

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TSJ

FROM THE EDITOR

The year 1989 marks the second anniversary of the International Tolstoy Society and the second issue of our publication, the Tolstoy Studies Journal. The 1989 issue is almost two times the size of Volume One, with well over one hundred pages of scholarly work about Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy covering a wide spectrum of approaches to his life and writings. The format of the journal is basically the same as it was in 1988 with the addition of a section of translations of critical material.

Starting with Volume Three (1990), we will be a refereed publication, with the articles submitted for the Criticism section going out to competent readers. Those articles must, therefore, be submitted no later than the middle of April. We also encourage the submission of shorter notes or squibs, abstracts of papers on Tolstoy presented at regional, national, or international conferences, and suggestions of books to review. These shorter pieces may be submitted up until the middle of June. Bibliographical entries and off-prints should go directly to Gary Jahn [See Bibliography in this issue]. We also invite responses to any article or review that appears in TSJ.

The success of our journal depends on the scholarly contributions of our members. Our only source of funds is the annual membership renewal; without it we cannot function. The next meeting of the Tolstoy Society will be at the December 28-30 AATSEEL Convention at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. We look forward to seeing you there.

Kathleen Parthé

Kathleen Parthé
Editor, TSJ

Round Table

Gary Saul Morson. Hidden in Plain View. Narrative and Creative Potentials in 'War and Peace'. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987. 322 pp.

Five Critiques and a Reply

Freeman Dyson, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey

Two great spirits presided over the birth of modern science in the seventeenth century. Francis Bacon, the Englishman, said:

"All depends on keeping the eye steadily fixed on the facts of nature, and so receiving their images as they are. For God forbid that we should give out a dream of our own imagination for a pattern of the world."

René Descartes, the Frenchman, said:

"I showed what the laws of nature were, and without basing my arguments on any principle other than the infinite perfections of God, I tried to demonstrate all those laws about which we could have any doubt, and to show that they are such that, even if God created many worlds, there could not be any in which they failed to be observed."

In the history of science, from its beginnings to the present day, the Baconian and the Cartesian traditions have remained alive, Baconian science emphasizing empirical facts and details, Cartesian science emphasizing general ideas and principles. The healthy growth of science requires that both traditions be honored. Bacon without Descartes would reduce science to butterfly-collecting; Descartes without Bacon would reduce science to pure mathematics.

What has the history of science to do with Tolstoy and with Morson's book? Since I am a scientist, I see Morson's dichotomy of literature into prosaics and poetics as analogous to the old dichotomy of science into Baconian and Cartesian. War and Peace, as Morson describes it, is a supreme example of Baconian literature. In his arrangement of incidents and characters, as well as in his historical interpretations, Tolstoy is following Bacon's dictum: "God forbid that we should give out a dream of our own imagination for a pattern of the world." The Tolstoyan view of history is firmly Baconian. Strategic plans and theories are repeatedly shown to be illusory. The true cause of historical events lies in the innumerable and unpredictable details of human behavior. The aim of the novelist and historian

should be to observe and describe the details of events, "receiving their images as they are," not to explain them with preconceived theories.

In opposition to Morson's concept of prosaics stands the Aristotelian notion of poetics. According to Aristotle, poetry and drama must be subject to strict rules. The doctrine of the Poetics decrees that the portrayal of human destiny be squeezed into a formal structure. To a greater or lesser extent, all of classical literature from Plutarch's Lives to Milton's Paradise Lost followed the Aristotelian pattern. Man's fate is deduced from general principles. Nothing happens by accident. Tolstoy consciously and deliberately violated the Aristotelian rules. He held that the imposition of Aristotelian patterns upon history led to nothing but falsehood and illusion. If Tolstoy had been a scientist, he would have rejected just as vehemently the attempt of Descartes to deduce the laws of nature from philosophical principles. If Bacon had been a novelist, he would have approved Tolstoy's method: "I was more interested to know in what way and under the influence of what feeling one soldier kills another than to know how the armies were arranged at Austerlitz and Borodino."

Tolstoy failed to convert the majority of writers and historians to his way of thinking, just as Bacon failed to convert the majority of scientists. In science as in history, dogma dies hard. Deep in human nature is the desire to explain the cosmos with all-embracing schemes. In my own professional field of particle physics, the Cartesian spirit reigns supreme. The young explorers are furiously engaged in the search for a "theory of everything." Few of them are listening to the cautionary words of Bacon:

"The subtlety of nature is greater many times over than the subtlety of the senses and understanding, so that all those specious meditations, speculations, and glosses in which men indulge are quite from the purpose....The logic now in use serves rather to fix and give stability to the errors which have their origin in commonly received notions than to help the search after truth."

Likewise, few of our contemporary historians and sociologists have chosen to follow the method of Tolstoy as Morson describes it:

"Tolstoy's uniqueness lies in his profound understanding of the ordinary, and in the very ordinariness of his profound understanding. In his view, truth is not buried but camouflaged. Unlike most thinkers of his time and ours, he rejected philosophy's prevailing impulse to locate meaning in the distance, in a concealed order. Tolstoy was instead a philosopher of the present, of the open present, with all its unrealized opportunities and wasteful carelessness."

In my book Infinite in All Directions, I have described the history of science as a dialogue between unifiers and diversifiers. Roughly speaking, unifiers are following the tradition of Descartes, diversifiers are following the tradition of Bacon. Unifiers are trying to

reduce the prodigality of nature to a few general laws and principles. Diversifiers are exploring the details of things and events in their infinite variety. Unifiers are in love with ideas and equations; diversifiers are in love with birds and butterflies. My friend and colleague, the physicist Chen Ning Yang, told me once that when he was a boy of six in China he looked up at the stars and asked what are the laws that make them move across the sky. I said, "But when I was a boy of six in England I looked up at the stars and asked what are their names." Yang was interested in stars in general; I was interested in stars as individuals.

In the sphere of history, Karl Marx was the great unifier, believing that with his single key of dialectical materialism he could unlock the mysteries of the past and future. Tolstoy was the great diversifier, believing that historical truth can only be found in details, in the actions of individual human beings. Yet Tolstoy understood, as the scientist studying birds and butterflies understands, that individuals are tied together in an infinitely complicated web of interdependence. Science is our exploration of the web that ties birds and butterflies together. History is our exploration of the web that ties human actions together.

Perhaps we may interpret the new revolution which Mikhail Gorbachev is trying to bring about in Russia as a move away from narrow Marxism toward a more Tolstoyan view of the human predicament. In many places in Gorbachev's book Perestroika, we hear echoes of the message that Tolstoy put at the end of War and Peace. Tolstoy was describing an analogy between the Copernican revolution in astronomy and the new view of history to which his study of war and peace had led him. Here is Tolstoy's final sentence, proclaiming the mutual interdependence which both East and West must learn to recognize:

"In astronomy we had to give up our illusion of fixity in space and accept an imperceptible motion; in exactly the same way, in history, we have to give up our illusion of freedom and accept an imperceptible dependence on one another."

The Three Last Pages

Alfred J. Rieber, The University of Pennsylvania

Saul Morson has done for Tolstoy and War and Peace what no one else has done. He has accepted Tolstoy at his word. The idiosyncratic form of War and Peace was a deliberate attempt to transcend all previous narrative conventions, whether literary or historical, and create something radically new. As proof of his intentions Tolstoy wrote War and Peace the way he did, and Morson has unravelled his

intentions in a work of Tolstoyan clarity, so that at the end we say: yes, that is the way it must have been written. It is not an immanent critique, to be sure. Morson has drawn on a vast critical tradition, with Bakhtin occupying the place of honor. But the scholarship is worn lightly, more lightly, it might be said than the historical sources that weighed down Tolstoi. But Morson has put his book together in a most unTolstoyan fashion. His argument is severely disciplined, constructed on triads; three parts each constituting the equivalent of three chapters and subdivided in rigorous order. The effect is symphonic, each section picking up the thematic threads of the previous one and working it into the text in fresh and imaginative ways.

It is mainly war: part one wars on narrative conventions; part two wars on conventions in history; finally part three introduces the peace of reconciliation or revelation, albeit "ambiguous." Having guided us through the negation of systems Morson brings us to Tolstoi's vision of the self. It is a modern (and very ancient) truth, a harsh truth. "The most profound 'revelations' about how to endow one's life with possible meaning comes to those who never consciously analyze the truths they live... The revelations that are recognized as such are never more than partial or negative truths." (One wonders how Tolstoi might have characterized his own revelations in War and Peace.)

It would be possible for me to go on in this frankly admiring manner for the remainder of the review. But I would prefer to engage the author in another episode of a dialogue begun long ago. He acknowledges my advice graciously, but I feel compelled to demur if only to be able to continue a discussion I have always enjoyed. There is above all the little matter of the last three pages, most appropriately entitled "The Afterword." It is not a conclusion but Morson's drawing out of the implications of Tolstoi's theories of history and psychology (and what of literature?) "for us today." Morson presents us with an almost irresistably attractive picture of Tolstoi as the middle way between "semiotic totalitarianism" and "the silence of absolute negation," the ancient Scylla and Charybdis of determinism and relativism. Then, Morson enjoins us with Tolstoi "to have nothing to do with broad synthesis," to achieve a perspective "not by the construction of new interpretative telescopes but by careful attention to richly trivial events hidden in the diffuse light of plain view." As a historian who polishes lenses for new telescopes, I have to take issue; my honor is at stake.

The implication of Morson's last three pages is that Tolstoi is right about history and historians. What he ends of doing then is accepting Tolstoi's absolute skepticism about historical truth and his relative skepticism about literary truth. Tolstoi rejected history and...the novel; they are not equivalents. This comes close to accepting fiction and rejecting fact. Or better, in order to avoid these doubles entendres, to place istina over pravda. Ambrose Bierce (as quoted by Morson in a chapter heading) had it right: a nihilist is "A Russian who denies the existence of anything but Tolstoi. The

leader of the school is Tolstoi." (p. 93) I leave it to others better qualified to draw up a list of literary conventions that Tolstoi retained; of historical conventions he retained none.

Tolstoi catalogues the fallacies of historians: the arbitrary selection of events, presented in a gaggle of artificial conventions based on the false recollections of faulty memories by narrators hopelessly mired in their own time and place. To destroy history he created a parodic history, a form which destroys totally; to destroy the novel he merely disregarded some of its literary conventions. Tolstoi's skepticism about history has been shared by historians who are probably more skeptical about what they are doing than any other class of citizens. And they have done what they could, if they were any good, to guard against the fallacies. But parodic history is difficult to defend against because it is the most clever of iconoclasm. Tolstoi's parody of Napoleon is devastating. L'empereur, he would convince us, was a believer in systems who took as a great sign, nevertheless, the twitching in his left calf on the eve of battle. Napoleon's fatuous egotism blinds him to the haphazard in battle. Yet it was not Napoleon who favored the maxim "On s'engage, et puis on voit," that Lenin was fond of repeating and applying on more than one occasion. It is a mistake to make pictures before a battle, Napoleon counseled. It was good negative advice. When he disregarded it, Napoleon lost, but that is different from assuming he never understood it.

Great men have their limitations. For "while absorbed in their mundane interests," they are but "history's unconscious tools and organs." Thus, Hegel, who also had his moments. Tolstoi illuminated more clearly than anyone else the terrible truth that all events are determined in the sense that they are all caused, but since we have no way of knowing all the causes of a single event...this is also an empty truth. History or, to be fair to the best case Tolstoi makes, the outcome of battles is a matter of choice.

Before taking up chance, we might linger over battles, Tolstoi's preferred mis en scene for his historical ruminations. Battles are great set pieces; they have a beginning and an end and possibly even a middle. They are also the most dramatic, desperate and extreme form of mass human behaviour for the highest stakes. Battles offer the best chances that chance makes all the difference. An incident that under any other circumstances would be insignificant, such as a stumbling horse and a fallen standard or an impulsive Nikolai Rostov charging when he might have retreated, might when described by a skillful narrator and a veteran himself appear "to turn the tide of battle." But Tolstoi knows full well that such random events are taking place all over the battlefield. One would expect that thousands of random events would cancel out one another resulting in chaos. And this could be extended if one wishes for the moment to apply Tolstoi's dubious methods to history or indeed to all life. Yet the whole history of man is a struggle to reduce or eliminate chance, that is, the tyranny of nature over man. True, the

result may have produced just the opposite, order is not necessarily progress, but that is a different argument.

Morson mentions at least twice the role of chance or minute signs upon art. There is a case of the dripping candle accidentally altering a canvas with startling results and the artist Bryllov adding a stroke to a student's drawing that transforms mediocrity into, well, art. Another Tolstoyan trompe l'oeil! A canvas is like a battle, a restricted field of vision and of action; it is also frames. Art is not history; fiction is not fact; each has its own truths. But Tolstoi and "perhaps" Morson will have none of it, at least not in his "Afterword." The humanities, he admonishes us, should bury itself in "richly trivial events."

An acquaintance of mine, a justly obscure scholar, once devoted five years of his life to proving that a single entry in a massive statistical compilation had been falsely included. A Tolstoyan, sans qu'il le sache, no doubt. There was something heroic if futile about the exercise. Historians are painfully aware that there are always too few pieces of surviving reliable evidence to ever be sure about how, let alone why, a particular event or sequence of events occurred. That explains the obsessive search for new sources, the rummaging of archives, the reliance on new techniques of dating, of deciphering, of reinterpreting. Tolstoi, himself a seeker, should have understood. Historians constantly refute one another, declared Tolstoi; so do writers. If Aristotle had been right after all about art and the unities then there would not have been a Tolstoi.

Historians have also been painfully aware that historians have created dangerous myths. They have not been alone in doing this, as Russian literature among others reminds us. But this does not excuse them. The most dangerous myths are not, I believe, "semiotic totalitarianism" defines by Morson as "a pattern that can explain everything." In fact, I can think of no historian and few philosophers of history including Marx who ever believed in a pattern that explained "everything." The greatest historical myths are those that endow a particular group of people, race, class, nation or gender with superior moral attributes. The same, incidentally holds for literary myths. Sometimes I wish, for all my admiration for Tolstoi as an artist and for War and Peace as a work of art that he had found it in his heart to give us one decent Frenchman, un seul bon francais, ou meme une bonne francaise.

Cathy Popkin, Columbia University

As I have had occasion to affirm elsewhere (in Canadian-American Slavic Studies), Gary Saul Morson has written an important book. Lucidly argued, it recuperates the real idiosyncrasies of a work that has come to be regarded as smooth, canonical, the "perfect embodiment of the novel tradition." Morson succeeds in making palpable again the strange-

ness of a novel full of loose ends, characters who are developed only to disappear, incidents that lead nowhere, and philosophical tracts that leave the fiction behind altogether; and he demonstrates forcefully that this strangeness is integral to Tolstoy's intentions.

Tolstoy's innovation (and Morson's great insight) is to allow the random to stand as absolutely random and accidental. Both author and critic staunchly oppose what Morson refers to (with terminological felicity) as "semiotic totalitarianism," a tendency to assign meaning to everything, to see every detail as the sign of an underlying order or system, to explain every accident as somehow logically entailed. Tolstoy's principle of composition defies Chekhov's later credo about the gun that had better go off by the last act or never have been mentioned. War and Peace is full of such unfired guns because, as Morson explains, Tolstoy's hero is Truth, and in life, most weapons we happen across are never wielded; they remain pure potential.

Since Tolstoy's "creation by potential" includes guns and other effects by "happenstance" rather than according to consequence, we are in no position as readers to appraise the significance of all we encounter, some of which may turn out to be radically insignificant. Hence, War and Peace gives us a tacit but whopping lesson in "epistemic modesty" to counteract our semiotically totalitarian tendencies. Making sense is especially difficult because the truly significant, as Morson reminds us by peppering his prose with his title phrase, is "hidden in plain view," too ordinary to draw our attention. Tolstoy's novel is a celebration of "prosaics—...the infinitesimal, ...the accidental, ...the trifling incidents on which everything ultimately depends."

"Prosaics" has got to be one of the most intriguing aspects of Morson's descriptive project, because its implications are so wide ranging and compelling. If, for instance, life's random infinitesimals are more important than its splashy, heroic — and memorable — exploits, prosaics would force a reconsideration of most traditional modes of historiography, with their time-honored goal of discerning pattern and meaning in the events of the past and canonizing its larger-than-life figures; Morson's treatment of Tolstoy's historical polemics is especially suggestive in this respect. Interestingly, out of Tolstoy's original conception for a novel about the Decembrists there emerges a perception of both behavior and narrative practice diametrically opposed to that of Tolstoy's proposed heroes. (I refer to Lotman's essay on "The Decembrists and Everyday Life," in which he distinguishes "poetic" -- daring, memorable, historic, significant -- and "prosaic" behavior, noting that in the Decembrists' code of conduct, only the former was admissible. "Just as in literature," writes Lotman, every act had to be "suitable to be inscribed in the tablets of history," while the "prosaic" was regarded as incommensurate with both life and text.) Moreover, prosaics has much to say about the way we understand, remember, construct narratives about, and ultimately falsify the events of our lives if, paradoxically, what is noteworthy and memorable cannot be significant if structure and patterns are imposed, and most of

what we behold is not inherently meaningful.

All of which goes to show that Morson has written an important book on more than just War and Peace, and I find myself reacting to it all the time -- both explicitly and implicitly -- in my own work. Morson's personal enthusiasm for "prosaic" vision is palpable as well. One senses considerable excitement in a critic whose own earlier position was substantially more "semiotically totalitarian": If a work is assumed to be complete, we are justified in hypothesizing the thematic and formal relevance of all its details," Morson had proposed in his Boundaries of Genre. "No detail..can be completely irrelevant." How liberating to discover that this may not be the case, that the reader's project need not be to explain each "hitherto unexplained detail." Although Morson confines himself to a brief pages of "Afterward" to explore the implication of Tolstoy's insights for "us," we somehow feel that we are being exhorted throughout to relinquish our own totalitarian expectations. The forward to Hidden in Plain View disavows adherence to the tenets of any theoretical or critical school; but to what extent is the book's program to establish one? Or am I reading into this book what I know to be a broader concern of Morson's? Is this exposition of Tolstoy's philosophical and aesthetic project purely descriptive? And what would the normative force of prosaics be for literary narrative in general?

The chief value of the narrative treatment of the accidental, the imperceptible, the "hidden in plain view," for instance, seems to be its representational probity. Works that, on the contrary, chronicle big events and perceptible changes lie about what life is really about. Good plot, narratable stories, are not "true." But just because Tolstoy's hero was "Truth," is the goal of all fiction invariably to avoid falsity? (Or, for that matter, is every writer's truth Tolstoyan, based on the insight that the fundamental state of things is disorderly?) Even if we concede that good stories are false, might they not nevertheless make good stories? Especially as, in Morson's words, "narratives -- all of them -- are lies"? Some of the aspects of storytelling that Tolstoy condemns as falsifying may well be the ones that have produced the most enjoyable stories. Even Morson admits that perceptible events may be interesting, but maintains that their visibility vitiates their real importance.

"Prosaically" speaking, what is important is by definition imperceptible; the deeds of real saints, we are told, are unnarratable. Prosaics -- perhaps in response to Tolstoy, in whose honor it has been defined -- seems to wield "significance" as not only a mimetic, but also an ethical scorecard, as an index of both realism and morality; something is "important" if it is true and virtuous, but definitely not if it is noteworthy. While I am more than willing to join Morson in discarding the prerequisite that an event be big in order to be significant, in the narrative context I find it difficult to eliminate the requirement that it be interesting or, at the very least, perceptible, a departure from the norm. Perhaps in narrative terms, the "important" is by definition what is "narratable," perceived as "worth telling" and consequently "worth reading." If the pleasure of reading derives from

the recognition of significance (Boundaries — or has this, too, been superseded?), but the perceptible structure readers crave necessarily falsifies, must we relinquish the very possibility of a "good read" in favor of Truth? It could be objected (as Morson has done in an earlier exchange) that War and Peace is a good read -- to be sure, we feel that this is so. But as Morson himself demonstrates in detail, Tolstoy's refusal to cater to the persistent "desire for narratable stories" is part of what made the novel so disconcerting and irritating to its first readers.

How, in short, does prosaics approach texts with goals other than those of Lev Nikolaevich? I fully realize that I am asking for clarification that goes well beyond the purview of the book under discussion, but part of its remarkable achievement is to provoke such questions. If prosaics does have broader aspirations, if all prose should be addressed not by poetics but by prosaics ("Prosaics: An Approach to the Humanities," American Scholar 57 [Autumn 1988]: 516) then I want to know more.

Text-internally, Hidden in Plain View presents certain difficulties of its own, but even these are less formidable than provocative. If, for example, conventionally novelistic, coherent psychological portraiture is false, does Tolstoy himself lie by making Kutuzov so consistently wise (and so consistently available to Morson as the perfect example of epistemic modesty)? Morson's reader, having accepted his terms, wants to object to the totalizing, iconic portrayal of a character whose very excellence lies in his refusal to subject life to totalitarian scrutiny.

Slightly more troubling is the Bakhtinian notion of absolute language addressed in the opening chapter. On the one hand, War and Peace is shown to be "saturated" with absolute language as Tolstoy, who aspires to be a prophet, attempts to speak trans-historically and omnisciently. At the same time, insofar as he flouts novelistic conventions and polemicizes at every turn with existing historical approaches, his word, even his "absolute" word, is fundamentally dialogic, addressed always to other words. The status of Tolstoy's own "scriptural" pronouncements is unclear, given his disdain for all human attempts to impose meaning on reality. At first this seems to be resolved by limiting Tolstoy's omniscience to his "negative absolutes," strategy of exposing the inadequacy of all who do presume to know. But many of the proclamations cited by Morson are affirmative ones. From his absolute perspective, for instance, Tolstoy identifies the happiest moment of Nikolai Rostov's life — something not even Nikolai himself could know. Tolstoy's insight that no individual enjoys a perspective privileged enough to discern relevance, to notice what is by definition imperceptible, at once necessitates absolute perspective and precludes it. While Morson acknowledges this paradox, what it actually means for War and Peace is unclear.

The problem is one of integrating the first chapter, which introduces the Bakhtinian issue, with the body of the book, which is

otherwise so carefully structured and such a pleasure to read. Only the final chapter exhibits a slightly less organic unity of topics. Where, for instance, does the sudden concern (not inconsistent, but seemingly unmotivated) with "Revelations" come from? And what does "The Imminency of the Word" have to do with Nikolai's quiet heroism? The move to elide falseness and language comes a bit quickly and seems less scrupulously derived than what has come before. And while we are more than willing to accept Princess Marya's remarkableness, its treatment is uncharacteristically sketchy. The chief index of her specialness seems to be her brother's inability to appreciate her (real heroes are by definition unrecognized; ergo, Marya is an unsung heroine).

If not knowing what will turn out to have consequences is so integral to reading War and Peace, is this a book that cannot be reread? By knowing its outcomes, do we begin to view its developments as inevitable? As Morson emphasizes, neither can we experience the important indeterminacy of length that so disoriented the readers of the original serial edition.

And is there something dangerous, given all the commitment to chance and randomness, in identifying a design behind Tolstoy's text? Is the study itself too coherent to be true to Tolstoy? Might the very project of selecting passages to document a critical assertion be compared to the historian's mendacious need to subsume data to preconceived patterns? If so, if this makes Hidden in Plain View a lie, it's still a terrific story, and good stories such as this are the greatest achievement of all.

Carol Any, Trinity College

The hallmark of Gary Saul Morson's work is his imaginative use and modification of modern critical theories to arrive at new interpretations of Russian literary classics. The title of his first book, The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's "Diary of a Writer" and the Traditions of Literary Utopia, was suggested by the Formalist notion of the fluctuating boundary between literature and byt; more recently, in Hidden in Plain View: Narrative and Creative Potentials in "War and Peace," he expands some of Bakhtin's ideas to give us the most coherent and complete reading yet of War and Peace.

For Bakhtin, Tolstoy was the quintessential monologist, who subordinated all other voices to his own. For the Formalists, he was a parodist whose parodies of Romanticism were mistakenly interpreted as realism. Hidden in Plain View, while making extensive use of the theories of both Bakhtin and the Formalists, arrives at conclusions that these critics would never have contemplated.

Hidden in Plain View applies such Bakhtinian notions as unfinalizability and dialogism to the writer Bakhtin himself considered least

amenable to these theories. Although in his opening chapter Morson discusses what he calls Tolstoy's "absolute language," he goes on to show that War and Peace is a deeply parodic and therefore dialogic work. Thus in quoting historical accounts of the Napoleonic wars, Tolstoy inserts his own ironic comments, changes direct speech to indirect parodic speech, and counterposes to the historical accounts his own fictional, but more plausible alternatives.

Like earlier critics, Morson emphasizes the disunity of War and Peace. He is more sympathetic to those who have sought the merits of this disunity than to those who have seen it as a defect. In this, and in pointing out the parodic nature of War and Peace, Morson draws on the Formalists. He reminds us that Tolstoy refused to classify War and Peace as a novel, and in a move reminiscent of the Formalists, re-educates us as to the many ways in which Tolstoy broke with the literary conventions of the time. But while the Formalists tended to regard parody, disunity, and the breaking of conventions as artistic ends in themselves, Morson goes further. Tolstoy declared war on narrative, to use Morson's phrase, because he believed that traditional narratives, whether fictional or historical, falsify the way in which real life events unfold.

The disunity of War and Peace, in Morson's view, is intended as a practical application of Tolstoy's ideas on history, freedom, and necessity detailed in the non-fictional passages that interrupt the fictional narrative. As in real life, not every detail turns out to be significant. In order to make his narrative as true to life as possible, Tolstoy included events that lead to nothing, as well as characters like Dolokhov, whose apparent significance early in the book does not prevent him from disappearing from the rest of the narrative.

The triumph of Hidden in Plain View is that within the randomness of the "open" text that he believes War and Peace to be, Morson is more successful than any previous critics at giving us a comprehensive reading of Tolstoy's novel. It is, he tells us, a book about the large role played by accident in determining the course of events. Isaiah Berlin was wrong: Tolstoy was not masquerading as a hedgehog, he was a hedgehog. Morson believes that to demonstrate the importance of the accidental and seemingly insignificant incidents, Tolstoy built the potential for accident into the creative process of his own narrative. Each of the vast number of incidents in War and Peace has the potential to affect the further development of the plot, but not all of them actually do so. "Tolstoy's method of writing by potential allows incidents to achieve their own significance, unforeseen by the author and unrestrained by a usual plot." (188) Morson's interpretation makes War and Peace a novel in the Bakhtinian sense of the word -- a text that questions generic conventions and opens the way for change.

Was War and Peace really conceived and written "by potential,"

as an open text whose own author did not know how everything would come out in the end? Did Tolstoy purposely let characters like Dolokhov drop out of his narrative because that is how things happen in life? Or would he, if he had put the manuscript through further revision, have corrected such imbalances? Boris Eikhenbaum, in his pathbreaking Tolstoy in the Sixties, attributed these imbalances to what he believed was Tolstoy's changing conception of War and Peace during the six years that he was writing it. Eikhenbaum documented his position by tracing a succession of intellectual acquaintanceships that influenced Tolstoy at various times during this period. By the time Tolstoy finally finished the novel, says, Eikhenbaum, he had lost interest in making any but hasty and careless revisions.

Eikhenbaum's position is backed by historical evidence; Morson's is more speculative but gains credence in light of his new and persuasive interpretation of War and Peace as a book that, in both the story it tells and in its narrative technique, teaches the importance of the accidental and the unnoticed. Their views are not totally at odds; to write "by potential" is to grant oneself considerable freedom to modify the conception of the book during the writing. One could even cite Eikhenbaum's research on the novel's metamorphosis in support of Morson's hypothesis, discarding only Eikhenbaum's conclusion that Tolstoy could have been expected to eliminate inconsistencies and irrelevancies if he had been able to sustain his interest a little longer.

Whether Tolstoy really wrote War and Peace as an open text remains an open question. But on finishing Hidden in Plain View I had the satisfying feeling, to which few critics even today are indifferent, that the pieces of an elusive puzzle had been united.

Prosaics as Narrative Politics

Anna A. Tavis, Williams College

In the late 1980s it is no longer new to assert that a text's initial message and its structural novelty eventually fades and disappears from overexposure to interpretation and criticism. It may also appear somewhat anachronistic to resurrect the Russian Formalists and their concept of "defamiliarization" in the wake of Bakhtinian dialogism and the post-deconstructionist debate. And not the least threat to one's critical reputation is to be seen falling out of step with the exhilarating glasnost' opportunities by turning to Tolstoy's securely canonized novel War and Peace.

It takes Gary Saul Morson's critical insight and his perspicacity as a reader to accept the challenge of the familiar and recognize that to move away from critical cliches and stagnant reading strategies

often means to return and rehabilitate the past. A liberating and provocative perestroika move, indeed. Not only canonized texts should be carefully reread, but new critical practices should evolve based on these new perspectives.

In Tolstoy's case, Morson claims, the rehabilitation process should begin with a reformulation of the concept of the familiar. For Tolstoy, Morson persuasively argues, life's inner essence hides in plain view of everyday rhythms and is consequently all the more difficult to discern. The seeming importance of revolutions, wars, and Freudian unconscious drives only distracts from the main issues; they are no more than intellectual constructs invented by the historians, philosophers, and psychologists of later time. For a writer who seeks "truth," however, these climactic events are only a flashy surface which should be of no concern to a serious thinker. Tolstoy's own writings, Morson reminds us, are conceived as an extension of his philosophy of life, history, and human behavior. His major political program consists in the denial of riddles at all levels, existential, metaphysical, and narrative. In Tolstoy's world all answers are already given; once they are perceived, no questions need to be asked. The problem humankind has, however, is in seeing the obvious. (p.5) Thus Tolstoy extends his own Borodino battle to arrive at lucid meanings beyond the limitations of language. War and Peace emerges as a perfect example of Tolstoy's powerful anti-narrative politics; the message of the work situates itself in the totality of life's meanings, never in the language alone. Tolstoy uses language as a weapon in a strategic move to reveal life's creative potential. He sets up a perfect trap, however, which whole generations of readers have failed to detect. As Morson persuasively demonstrates, literary poetics fail as a critical approach to Tolstoy's texts. In response to this recognized failure, Morson develops his own anti-poetic critical method of prosaics which better recognizes Tolstoy's creative project and responds to his anti-narrative creations. If indeed Tolstoy used absolute language to create his anti-novel, Morson argues, he never became semantically totalitarian but instead opened himself up to freer dialogic exchange. Morson's study of Tolstoy's narrative politics represents a new reading of the text and shows how earlier interpretative tactics shortcircuited into gross misjudgments of Tolstoy's magisterial study of life and language.

In the palimpsest of critical responses to Tolstoy's War and Peace, Morson argues, only the first ones captured the extent of the work's formal and thematic originality. Ironically, however, these first interpreters were also the ones who started its canonization. Since the first publication, the "snowball" effect of popularity has taken its toll. The seeming simplicity of Tolstoy's style and mistakingly applied poetics where prosaics was at work, misled even such astute interpreters of discourse as Bakhtin, Leontiev, and Merezhkovsky; not to name the majority of Western scholars. Thus it came about that Tolstoy, one of the foremost encyclopedic minds of the 19th century, began to be

represented as a primitive and untutored genius, "the least self-conscious in his use of the literary medium."¹ Tolstoy's works were read as direct outpourings of raw thoughts onto paper.

Morson delivers his project with clarity and persuasion. Having shown what went wrong with the preceding critical strategies, Morson restores the unspoiled plain view of the initial reception and produces the definition of Tolstoy's art as an anti-narrative means. By situating War and Peace in its proper dialogical context of Tolstoy's life and ideas, Morson leads his readers to an exciting discovery of narrative and creative potentials in War and Peace.

1. Philip Rahv, "Tolstoy: The Green Twig and the Black Trunk" in: Rahv, Literature and the Sixth Sense (Boston, 1970): 134-5. Quoted in Morson: 2.

Reply

THE POTENTIALS AND HAZARDS OF PROSAICS

Gary Saul Morson, Northwestern University

Sometimes friendly reviewers perceive one's shortcomings more acutely than hostile ones. That is because they have taken the pains to get inside one's argument and so are in a position to notice each small step that need not have been taken; to sense the small non sequiturs; to question the dubious choices, and propose better alternatives. I suppose that this is what Bakhtin meant when he insisted that agreement, not just disagreement, is a dialogic relation.

Cathy Popkin, Alfred Rieber, and Freeman Dyson all sense a larger agenda in my book, especially in its concept of prosaics. (As one of my students once commented about Moby-Dick: Melville was not interested only in whales, he had other fish to fry.)

It is entirely correct that I did have other purposes in mind when I wrote Hidden in Plain View. To a considerable extent, those other purposes drew me to Tolstoy and continue to do so. I sensed in War and Peace an important set of ideas that, while in some sense timeless, also have a special relevance for "us" today. By "us" I mean not only scholars in the humanities, but also the wider world of cultural thought.

I wanted to understand Tolstoy's perspective from within, sort out what was valuable from what was not, and then think further with that revised viewpoint. Hidden is devoted primarily to the first goal, and only secondly and occasionally to hints about how Tolstoy's ideas might be extended.

At the same time I was working on Hidden, I was also working with Caryl Emerson on a study of Bakhtin, who, we believed, shared not only important parts of Tolstoy's perspective but also a key idea I have called "prosaics." By assessing prosaics as it was variously developed by two original and idiosyncratic thinkers, I hoped to see it in greater depth, and to "triangulate" it in the hope that it might lead to still more insights.

Such a process is bound to change the idea; indeed, if it does not, the process has failed. Bakhtin refers to "two aspects that define the text as utterance: its plan (intention) and the realization of this plan. Their divergence can reveal a great deal."¹ In the course of working on these two books, in writing a couple of articles on "prosaics," and of preparing a study of Anna Karenina, my sense of

prosaics has indeed changed. Criticisms and suggestions like the ones offered in this forum continue to be enormously helpful.

Chronocentrism

In working out this idea, I wanted to avoid a pitfall into which theorists often fall, into which some have argued it is impossible not to fall. I have in mind the danger of reading into an author only the views one already holds and of seeing in an author only what one already knows. If one does that, and if one believes that one cannot help doing that, reading can teach nothing new. Because I am old-fashioned enough to try to derive wisdom from literary works, I try so far as is possible to understand writers in their own terms before I enter into dialogue with them.

What I wanted to avoid, then, was a kind of ideological criticism that is very common today. For all the talk of "otherness" in literary theory, critics who brandish the term often find in authors only that old familiar otherness which is already a part of themselves, an otherness that is not really "other" at all. An author is judged progressive or reactionary, epistemically enlightened or benighted, from some standpoint sanctified by the current values of literary orthodoxy, and so criticism takes on the tone either of a defense attorney's brief or of a journalistic expose. This sort of criticism might be called an example of "chronocentrism" (by analogy to ethnocentrism). It sacrifices what I take to be a special reward of literary education: the experience of encountering and considering other viewpoints, other perspectives, other sets of values or, for that matter, one's own values worked out in surprising ways in an alien milieu. As Bakhtin would say, such criticism knows only one individualizing principle: error. It does not enlarge our sense of the possibilities of humanity, and its assumption that current critics are wiser than great authors, deprives us of the real challenges that literature might provide to current pieties.

To be sure, seeing the world as much as possible from within the author's standpoint should not be the final step. One also wants to return to one's own, see the now well-understood (or better understood) perspective of the author through one's own eyes, and indeed, see one's own perspective through the author's eyes. Bakhtin called this process "creative understanding." And one can go further: to see Tolstoy's perspectives not only through one's own eyes but also through Dostoevsky's (or any other writer's) eyes; to extend both their arguments; and to imagine how they would have reformulated them in light of each other's objections (real or imagined) and in light of later events they never lived to see. If one cannot do that with an author, the author remains just a monument or, as in much modern criticism, an object lesson. (Modern criticism seems to echo Oleg: ego primer drugim nauka.) Under such circumstances, literature has lost its function of enriching our moral and social sense of other people.

This is all rather a long digression to explain why I chose in Hidden to use the technique Rieber calls an immanent critique, with the added correction that in Hidden there is proportionally more immanence than critique. Not that the criticism is entirely absent; in the first chapter, I tried to convey some irony toward Tolstoy's deathbed tribunes and other acts of posing, and in the course of analyzing War and Peace, I occasionally allowed myself irony and in some cases even outright criticism, usually consigned to footnotes. But such passages are rare because I was trying to see the world through Tolstoy's eyes.²

Every method has its disadvantages, and the one I chose more or less precluded distinguishing my own views carefully enough from Tolstoy's. If my views had been more hostile to Tolstoy's, such distinctions would have been easy. But they were and are not; rather, they constitute a form of dialogic agreement, agreement with reservations and stipulations Tolstoy would not have accepted, agreement with updating qualifications. And this I failed to convey, as the replies to Hidden illustrate. In my attempt to avoid attributing my own form of prosaics to Tolstoy, I gave the impression of entirely accepting his, which I do not.

Prosaics and Its Occupational Hazards

So I would now like to supply what my book lacks. Popkin writes with the shrewdness that is her signature: "The foreword to Hidden in Plain View disavows adherence to the tenets of any theoretical or critical school; but to what extent is it the book's program to establish one? Or am I reading into this book what I know to be a broader concern of Morson's? Is this exposition of Tolstoy's philosophical and aesthetic project purely descriptive? And what would the normative force of prosaics be for literary narrative in general?" Popkin's phrasing — a question that seem to wonder whether it is rhetorical — is exactly right. I am not trying to establish a school, which in current American parlance would mean a group that "applies a method." Prosaics itself would suggest that that is a bad way to investigate literature. But I am trying to propose a sort of alternative to schools in that sense by defending and advancing a perspective that has in fact been around for a long time and is represented today by various thinkers in diverse fields. I would like to underscore what these thinkers have in common (without flattening out their differences) so that "dotted lines" can be drawn from their various positions. By supplying a name to this perspective, I hope to make it more self-conscious, more aware of itself as an alternative to current trends, and more confident in generating new insights from an already existing set of approaches.

The term "prosaics" has a double derivation. As opposed to "poetics," it is a theory of literature that takes prose on its own terms and seeks to explore the special character of great prose literature, especially the novel. The great theorist of prosaics is Bakhtin, which is why Emerson and I chose to call our forthcoming

book Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics. Secondly, as a view of the world, prosaics is characterized (1) by a suspicion of all-embracing systems and a respect for all that eludes them, and (2) by a reluctance to equate the noticeability of events with their importance. From this latter tendency, prosaics derives its focus on the ordinary and "prosaic" events of daily life. War and Peace and Anna Karenina are cardinal texts of prosaics as a view of the world. In fact, I think that Russian literature and thought are especially rich in prosaic insights, which perhaps developed as a counter-trend to the dominant ideological strands of Russian thought. Dostoevsky once observed that a Russian intellectual is someone who can read Darwin and decide to become a pickpocket; Russian prosaic thinkers -- Tolstoy, Herzen, Chekhov, Bakhtin and others -- respond with a principled suspicion of what Bakhtin called "theoretism."

Dyson, as usual, puts his finger precisely on one aspect of the prosaic sense of the world when he cites Bacon: "The subtlety of nature is greater many times over than the subtlety of the senses and understanding." What Bacon says of nature, I would say of "culture" and "literature." And so I would also adapt Dyson's other citation from Bacon: "For God forbid that we should give out a dream of our own imagination for a pattern of the literary work." Dyson's book, Infinite in All Directions, is itself one of the subtlest works in the tradition I am advocating; and his earlier study Weapons and Hope not coincidentally contains some of the most remarkable products of a "creative understanding" of War and Peace.

Dyson's anecdote about himself and another future physicist as boys also captures a debate in which prosaics is engaged. One boy wants to know the laws that make the stars move, the other wants to know their names. Chen Ning Yang wants to see what is generalizable, Dyson what is particular; and Dyson today tells us that even the hardest of the hard sciences requires both efforts. Still more, then, must the humanities cultivate an appreciation of the particularities.

In a similar spirit, Stephen Jay Gould has also argued that one characteristic of evolutionary biology and paleontology is that a sense of contingency, of what cannot be reduced to the simple unfolding of timeless laws, is absolutely essential to those disciplines, and that we do a disservice to science to assume that it is all Cartesian, all like Chen Ning Yang. Evolutionary biology must be understood as in a deep sense historical, that is, dependent on contingent events that no method can eliminate or think away.

If natural entities must be understood as historical in this sense, still more must cultural entities. For when we examine culture and literature, we are dealing with people, after all, and people have choice, history, everything that Bakhtin means by "surprisingness" and "unfinalizability." The dream of general laws of culture and society (in the strong sense of laws) looks increasingly like a mirage, as does the belief in a hidden system beneath the chaos of the world that ultimately "explains" everything. These are

prime examples of the semiotical totalitarian impulse. That impulse is what the underground man has in mind when he speaks of the "table of logarithms," and what Tolstoy has in mind when he writes that if life could ever be exhaustively explained by reason, the possibility of life would be destroyed.

Freud was very far from prosaics in declaring that there are absolutely no accidents in the psyche, and that every act of forgetting is the result of an intention to forget. If this were true, it would be pointless to try to design automobiles or air traffic controls with the aim of minimizing unintentional error. Unprosaic, too, is the Freudian "scientific" pride in denying the humanist idea of responsibility and freedom; as is the entire "therapeutic" view of human life.³ Perhaps these views account for Bakhtin's dislike of Freudianism and explain why he dwells so long and so brilliantly on Dostoevsky's statement that "I am not a psychologist."

Fortunately, many Freudians, and even Freud himself, are inconsistent on these points. But so long as they adhere to the spirit of their school, it is hard to see how they could offer an alternative to it. Semiotic totalitarians often try to have it both ways, offering ad hoc qualifications without renouncing "ultimate" adherence to an all-embracing system. The qualifications are welcome, but so long as the view is maintained that knowledge to be real must be systematic and describe its object as a system, the way to a real alternative perspective on knowledge is blocked.

In their qualifications, such thinkers resemble the generals in War and Peace who claim to believe in a science of strategy but then say one cannot push it too far, without saying what sort of knowledge their "science" then becomes. It will be recalled that Prince Andrei (and Tolstoy) prefer Pfuhl, who makes no concessions, and so at least, lets us see the consequences of his position. (The early Russian Formalists were similarly consistent in an untenable position, which is one reason that Bakhtin and Medvedev judged them significant and worthy opponents.)

Sartre advances much the same criticism of "Marxism with concessions," the qualified assertion that everything "ultimately" fits the laws of history Marx discovered, despite such unimportant accidents as the Napoleonic wars. Like Tolstoy, Sartre is a marvelous satirist in these passages. Marxists, he writes, tend to see only what can be "denatured" or "dissolved in a bath of sulphuric acid" to fit their laws, and then proceed by "getting rid of the particular by defining it as the simple effect of chance."⁴ But this chance is denied any rich definition — it is infinitely far from Tolstoy's "for some reason" — not to mention any real effectiveness. Having made these observations, Sartre, rather disappointingly, suggests that we need to supplement Marxism with Freudianism — to correct the limitations of one system by integrating it with another, which is rather like remedying astrology with a dose of alchemy. It is what we so often get when literary theorists offer us (as Pangloss or Polonius might have) combinations of

fashionable schools, so that when someone joined Freudianism with narratology, or deconstruction with Marxism, he could expect regard as an innovator. Nevertheless, two half truths do not make a whole one.

Let me stress: prosaics suggests that knowledge to be real does not have to be a system; neither must its object be imagined as a system. After all, most of the knowledge we use in our everyday life is not a system, and it is nonetheless quite valuable.

Current ethical theory embraces a movement that Bakhtin and Tolstoy would likely have admired. It argues, as Levin and Pierre learn, that ethics must not be viewed as the discovery and applications of timeless norms. Rather, it consists of a deepening understanding of particular cases, as Aristotle suggested long ago. This position does not imply that general statements are of no value; on the contrary, in understanding the circumstances that have prompted them, one can learn a great deal and in seeing where they fail, a good deal more. Norms can help us to sharpen our ethical sense of particular situations and real people in all their unrepeatability, which is what real ethics, real "oughtness," is all about. The same point applies to the humanities generally.⁵

But every view of the world has its "occupational hazards," prosaics included. By "occupational hazards" I mean the mistakes that are likely to arise from a strong theory when it is pushed too far or improperly applied, the blindnesses that are the other side of its insights. Every theory, I imagine, has such occupational hazards. For prosaics, the temptations are to make a system out of avoiding system, a categorical refusal to believe that noticeable or great events could ever be important, and, perhaps, to embrace a form of nihilism that is hostile to the very spirit of prosaics itself. Tolstoy clearly succumbed to these temptations at times, and Rieber detects a similar deviation in me. In failing to distinguish my views from Tolstoy's clearly enough, I have evidently given cause for such an interpretation. So I would like to clarify what I really do mean and where I part company with Lev Nikolaevich.

Carol Any cites Sir Isaiah Berlin's famous classification of thinkers into foxes and hedgehogs. I would adjust Berlin's idea to say: Tolstoy was by temperament a hedgehog, who discovered the value of foxiness. He was often tempted to make a system of it -- to "hedgehogize" the fox -- which led him rather inconsistently to his radical historiographical nihilism. Incidentally, Tolstoy himself was aware of this danger, which is why he satirized it, even if he yielded to it. For example, when Levin is writing his book on agriculture, he comes to realize that there can be no "general theory" of the subject; but then he somehow finds himself dreaming of turning that insight into a general theory that should save the world -- which will henceforth be indebted to Kostya, who was refused by the Shcherbatsky girl. (My private title for his book at this stage is What Is Agriculture?.)

To answer Rieber directly, then: I do not think that Tolstoy was right in arguing against the very possibility of meaningful historical research. Prosaics should lead to a deep skepticism, not the sort of nihilism Tolstoy succumbed to. That is one place where I part company with Lev Nikolaevich and join forces with Rieber, from whom I have learned so much; another is when Tolstoy categorically denies the possibility that great men or great events can be effective. A better position would be a principled suspicion: perhaps great events in history or our own individual lives seem important because they are so noticeable or memorable, and it would probably pay to see whether in fact the sum total of small events was more effective, even if it is hard to make a good and coherent story from them. But prosaics would not deny the very possibility of great events being effective. Similarly, prosaics, when true to its spirit, does not deny that systems ever exist. What it denies is that they can be presumed to exist, that behind all apparent chaos there must be an order. Thus, it emphatically does not follow from the fact that some forgetting is Freudian that all of it, or even most of it, must be. And in culture, when systems do exist they are (as Bakhtin liked to write) probably less "systematic" than they at first seem. They are in any case not given but created (ne dan, a sozdan). That is, they are always the result of human work, the real effort of real people in real particular circumstances, not just the manifestation of a hidden pattern always there to be discovered. Prosaics is especially suspicious of all attempts to reduce creativity to mere discovery or to regard the outcome of multiple choices as preordained simply because in retrospect one can make a neat story out of that assumption.

In fact, I have very little quarrel with the practice of current historians; on the contrary, I wish literary theorists, especially those who appeal to History, would sometimes be more like them. My real target in the last three pages of Hidden and in my articles on prosaics in The American Scholar and in the first issue of The Tolstoy Studies Journal was the predominant trends and representatives of Theory today. Some are semiotic totalitarians (with or without "concessions": semiotics with a human face) and those who are not tend to be radical relativists, which is simply semiotic totalitarianism in another form. Positive dogmatists are answered by negative dogmatists in an endless spiral of oneupsmanship. Both are equidistant from prosaics. The radical relativists share with the system-builders the assumption that knowledge to be real must be systemic; they simply deny that such knowledge is possible. One group is like Pierre when he imagines that he is "l'russe Besouhof," the other is like Pierre when he decides that since everything is relative then "it's all the same," all a matter of point of view or sheer power.

But what if knowledge does not have to be systemic? What if the literary text is neither a purely free play of meanings in which anything that suits one's interests goes nor a system with a hidden key? What if great literature is richer than the theories we devise to explain it and, to be up-to-date, replace it? When Robert Alter

recently argued as much in The Pleasures of Reading in an Ideological Age (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1989), his point was received as a slap in the face of academic orthodoxy. Fifteen or twenty years ago, Alter's point would have been as uncontroversial as a defence of motherhood, whereas today it is as controversial and as reactionary as — as a defence of motherhood.

Systems, Patterns, and Emergent Meanings

Popkin, Any, Anna Tavis, and Frank Silbajoris (in his review in Slavic and East European Journal) all focus on another "prosaic" thesis of my book I am afraid I did not explain with sufficient clarity. In the section of Hidden devoted to Tolstoy's "creation by potential," a method Tolstoy dramatized as one way to illustrate prosaic insights about time, I contend that Tolstoy developed a way to take advantage of the accidents inherent in the creative process — the drop of wax on Mikhailov's canvas. Creation by potential is opposed to creation by pre-planned structure, because structure eliminates the sort of contingency cultivated by Tolstoy's method, a method in which it is essential that the author not know the outcome of events. If he does, Tolstoy felt, his narrative violates the openendedness of each present moment, which always contains multiple possibilities. As Tolstoy argues over and over again, when one narrates with the eventuality that happened to result from an event already in mind, one narrates anachronistically and closes down the event's multiple possibilities. As Bakhtin would formulate the point, to capture the "eventness" of events, one must recognize that the plot is only one of many possible plots.

Of course, different works or genres may represent the present as more or less open: Oedipus the King, it would seem, depends on a maximal closure of time, because the work's considerable dramatic irony depends on our knowing the inevitable outcome of events in advance, and without such an inevitability the meaning of the work would be quite different. Bakhtin's characterization of novels, and still more of the polyphonic novel, specifies works in which time is, by comparison with other genres, maximally open. It seems to me that for Tolstoy even the novel closed down time too much -- for example, by depending too much on foreshadowing, which smuggles later meaning into present events. Thus, he decided to take the genre much farther in the direction it was already going. He arrived at a form so far beyond the novel as he knew it that he insisted his book was "not a novel"; but at the same time we can recognize it as ultra-novelistic - "as large as life and twice as natural," as a character in the Alice books observes. War and Peace has so much novelness that its author felt it had to be read differently from the great novels he knew.

In reply, critics have pointed to numerous passages in War and Peace and in Anna Karenina that do not seem to depend on a sense of pre-planned structure. No one who writes on Tolstoy is better at detecting such evidence and understanding its rich meanings than Silbajoris.

"To take just one example," Silbajoris writes, "we might consider the punishment of Kuragin. It is really not at all important for the outline of events that Kuragin who came to offer himself as a suitor to Princess Marya of the heavy tread, bounded up the stairs three steps at a time in Bald Hills, played footsie with Mademoiselle Bourienne, later seduced Natasha during a ballet, and finally lost his leg at Borodino. The sequence does make a sustained ironic point, becomes a device akin to Tolstoy's repeated physical details. Of similar value is the motif of birth and death and the closed or open door that recurs with Andrei at his crucial moments, and many other such repetitions amounting in the end, to a system that still awaits inquiry."⁶

I think any perceptive reader of Tolstoy will recognize that, as Silbajoris maintains, such repetitions are common in War and Peace and Anna Karenina. And the one about Kuragin's leg is a particularly superb example, which is (so far as I know) Silbajoris's discovery. There is no doubt that such repetitions exist and that they make an ironic point. But the question is whether they establish a "system." Do these examples render untrue the thesis that Tolstoy created by potential, that is, that he wrote without knowing in advance how he would (or whether he would) exploit particular details? Is it not still possible that instead of planning in advance the structure into which a detail would fit he planted elements of potential use, some of which he found ways to exploit and some of which remained unrealized; and that both the tapped and untapped potentials were part of his special open design?

In daily life, we often repeat ourselves. To our dismay, we recognize that we make the same old mistakes, that we have verbal tics often at cross purposes to our intentions, and that our habits lead us to actions that, if they appeared in a novel, might appear planned in advance. But we know that they were not planned in advance. Without structure or pre-planning by anyone, habits establish a certain consistency of action that surfaces and resurfaces at odd moments. And it is probably for the good that we cannot plan our lives in advance, because then we could not learn from experience even to the extent that we do; and our lives, which would simply unfold like a movie we taped long ago, would not really be lived. Nevertheless, our lives are manifestly characterized by repetitions and regularities, which make it possible for other people to rely on us (to the extent that they do).

Neither repetitions nor characteristics prove a pre-planned structure. Weather has a certain overall regularity we call climate, even though that overall regularity has defeated all attempts at long-term weather forecasting. Authors have certain stylistic habits that often blind them to better solutions. Professions often have an ethos that creates certain familiar rhythms and patterns. We all have characteristic ways of behaving, and we have enormous difficulty changing them even when we become aware that they exist and that they may be harmful. Although in retrospect, a person with an eye for a good story could lend a Sophoclean irony to our lives, in

doing so he would be decisively changing them. In short, it is entirely possible to have repetitions without an advance plan, structure, or system in the strong or non-trivial sense of those terms.

My thesis was that Tolstoy claimed to be writing the way Rostov learned to be a good soldier — that is, by not planning in advance, but by trusting to his skills and laboriously acquired habits to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. The difference of course, is that Tolstoy, unlike Rostov, also creates those opportunities. In doing so, Tolstoy did not know what they would lead to, but rather sensed that they had rich potential for interesting departures in unforeseen circumstances. And my thesis is that those favorable and surprising circumstances also did arise (if they had not, the work would have been a failure).

Thus, examples such as the ones Silbajoris offers are compatible either with the thesis of system or with that of creation by potential. What, then, tells us how Tolstoy created (or, more accurately, how Tolstoy wanted us to assume he created)? To begin with, Tolstoy made a point of saying in his essay "Some Words about the Book War and Peace," published while the work was still being serialized, that he does not know in advance what will happen to his characters; but I admit that that is "external evidence" (even if some of these statements also appear in draft prefaces that Tolstoy apparently considered publishing as part of the work itself). At least as important is internal evidence: all the scenes of rich potential not exploited. War and Peace is rich in characters introduced with great fanfare but who never reappear and in events (like the portentous encounter of Prince Andrei with Prince Dolgoruky, which seems to set the stage for a dramatic confrontation between the two proud men) that have written all over them — "Pay attention! This is important, like the pie Pip gives to a convict" — but which lead to nothing or nothing commensurate. Initial reviewers (and today's undergraduates) experience this aspect of the work keenly, even if we scholars who have read the book long ago and taught it too frequently see it through the obscuring glasses of remembered memories and reinterpreted reinterpretations.⁷

It is to all those wasted potentials, the fact that the text is a fabric of lost as well as found threads, that seem to verify Tolstoy's claim. Tolstoy himself comments on numerous habits of thought that find order by "stencil work," that is, by excluding evidence of disorder, much as Freudians take significant errors as proof that there can be no other kind. It seems to me that both War and Peace and Anna Karenina exploit potentials for just the sort of irony that Silbajoris detects, but that those patterns are not offered as the result of a preconceived design. In fact, they seem all the more powerful if one accepts that there was no preconceived design. They become proof that Tolstoy was, like Rostov and Mikhailov, effective when unforeseen opportunities arose.

We know that in daily life incidents often seem striking that do not seem so when we narrate them: "you have to have been there," we

say. One common reason for this divergence is that, as experienced, the event was impressive because it actually happened as it might have been described in a story; or it was impressive because it happened when we expected that nothing unusual would happen at all. But once one narrates such an occurrence, it already is in a story, and our audience knows that something unusual must have happened, or what would be the point of telling about it at all? (Shaggy dog stories depend on such an expectation by defeating it.) What Tolstoy discovered was a way to defeat such expectations, to avoid smuggling later meaning into events, without making his work uninteresting or unreadable, that is, without making it into a shaggy dog story with modernist pretensions.

Let me also offer an analogy to the problem Silbajoris raises. Gould argues that defenders of evolution misunderstand it when they offer as proof an organism's perfect design, the optimal solution to a problem. For perfect design is also obviously, perhaps still more obviously, compatible with divine creation. It is also a misunderstanding of Darwin to argue that everything in an organism must have a function or else it would not be there (the fallacy of "hyperselectionism"). That, too, is a view more compatible with divine creation than evolution. God could easily have a reason (or several reasons) for every feature of every organism he has made.

No, the best proof of evolution is imperfect design, solutions that barely work, like the Panda's thumb. Having already brought the thumb together with the other digits (as with most mammals), the panda did not have it available when something was needed to perform the functions of a thumb; and so the panda, so to speak, used another bone to form a sort of thumb, which, however, does not work very well. No divine creator, making the organism all at once, would have done it that way; which is why we may infer evolution from imperfect design. When we see a collection of compromises, we may visualize a historical process, one in which possibilities at each moment were constrained by previous choices. In history, it is necessary to tinker with the resources at hand, which are rarely optimal. As Gould observes: "You cannot demonstrate evolution with perfection because perfection need not have history....But, Darwin reasoned, if organisms have a history, then ancestral stages should leave remnants behind. Remnants of the past that don't make sense in present terms — the useless, the odd, the peculiar, the incongruous — are the signs of history....When history perfects, it covers its own tracks....The panda's 'thumb' demonstrates evolution because it is clumsy and built from an odd part."⁸

The same reasoning applies to hyperselectionism: it is the fact that not everything in an organism contributes to its survival that serves as evidence for natural history rather than divine creation. If organisms developed by evolution, then we might expect that some features would be only the by-product of other features; a feature that contributes to survival may bring others along with it. But once those contingent by-products are present, they may create the possibility for new functions and new paths of evolution. Thus,

each stage of evolution not only closes down some possibilities but also creates others, which need not have been there. As a result, no straight line can be projected from any moment into the future; and although it might appear that a straight line or prior plan led to the present, such an interpretation would be mistaken.

It is not necessary that everything in an organism serve a function, it is only necessary that nothing be very dysfunctional. For that matter, the same argument applies against social "hyperfunctionalism": not everything in a society has to serve a helpful function to be there. Rather, practices may continue as long as they are not so harmful that people undertake the considerable effort necessary to get rid of them. The same is true of personal habits.

And the evidence for creation by potential is similar: it is not the passages that seem perfectly designed that are evidence for it, but those that are not. Tolstoy would have us believe, and he created a text that confirms the belief, that he planted potentials. He took advantage of opportunities for rich scenes and interesting developments as they presented themselves, in the process producing new potentials, at times intentionally and at times as the byproduct of exploiting earlier potentials; and so he created a work with both realized and unrealized opportunities for patterning and repetitions, new departures and unexpected changes. He discovered an artistic method that allowed him to create a work that reads as if there were no method, a kind of artifice that allowed him to fabricate the life-like as no one had ever done before or has done since.

Serialization, I argued, was also exploited for this purpose. That is, serialization was not just a fact of publication but an intrinsic part of the work itself. As he reminded his readers in "Some Words," and as he had planned from the outset to remind them in his draft prefaces, serialization was exploited so that the author could not go back to correct what he had done before to make it fit what occurred to him later -- just as one cannot go back in life or history. And for readers, serialization made the experience of encountering each section essentially different from reading it as a whole, because when one knows how much of a book one has read one can guess at what complications are possible. Detective Colombo cannot have solved the crime yet, because we are only half an hour into a two-hour show; this cannot be Raskolnikov's real confession because the book has three hundred pages remaining. For the original readers, War and Peace was not a very long book but a book of indeterminate length. So was Anna Karenina, which is why it was so much in character for Tolstoy to add a part eight after many readers thought the book had ended (as it could have) with Anna's suicide. It was also characteristic of Tolstoy that part eight of Anna deals with events in the real world that had not happened yet when part one appeared, which means that those events could not have been part of the original design. (In writing War and Peace, set sixty years in the past, Tolstoy did not have this opportunity.) But what was part of the original design was the expectation that unexpected events might be exploited and a method of composition adapted to take advantage of such opportunities should they arise.

Popkin asks sagaciously whether such a device makes War and Peace "a book that cannot be reread? By knowing its outcome, do we begin to view its developments as inevitable?" And are we not deprived of the sense of indeterminate length? In short, is it possible to read the book as Tolstoy intended, and if not, why has it lasted? (Popkin does not actually ask these last two questions, but I think she implies them.) My answer in brief is that although we cannot fully capture the original sense of strangeness and indeterminate length, we can imagine it if we think to do so. That is one reason I spent so much time in describing the responses of reviewers to the work when it was still incomplete, and why I pay special attention to the responses of students today who do not know the plot in advance.

I teach a whole course on War and Peace every year, and as the students read each weekly assignment I am careful not to tell them what happens next, and to have them record their impressions as they go along. And many of them do make the same sort of "mistakes" as the early reviewers, who, for instance, assumed Dolokhov was to be equal in importance to Pierre and Prince Andrei. In this respect, students apprehend the text better than we do, which ought to prompt a Tolstoyan question: who should be learning about War and Peace from whom?

But What Are the Facts?

The fact that Tolstoy claimed to be writing without a preconceived design, and that the work gives evidence that this is so, does not conclusively prove that he actually created the way he said he did. It is conceivable that he carefully structured such an impression in advance. Even if that were so, one would still be mistaken to read War and Peace as a pre-planned structure — in the sense that to do so would be counter to the author's intention. I do not know if Silbajoris would agree with me on that point, but I imagine he would agree that it would be of great interest to know whether Tolstoy actually or only ostensibly created by potential.

To answer this question, I turned to the notebooks and drafts, which I found bewildering, and to several studies, including Eichenbaum's, which Amy paraphrases so acutely. As might have been expected, I found many disagreements among the textual scholars. By far the most convincing solutions were to be found in Kathryn Feuer's unsurpassed dissertation on the topic.⁹ But even this study did not answer my question, and I began to wonder whether it was answerable at all.

A quandary presented itself. What would count as evidence that Tolstoy did not know in advance what would happen next? Obviously, there cannot be negative evidence — any more than one can tell us what one is not presently thinking about; there could only be the absence of positive evidence. And the absence of positive evidence would still not prove the case that Tolstoy did not know in advance what would happen to his characters, because it is always possible that he did know but did not write it down. On the other hand, one

could reverse the question and try to demonstrate that Tolstoy did plan falsely to create the impression that his work was unplanned in the usual sense. Of course, even if one found such a direct statement, it, too, might turn out to be false. But in fact I found no such statement, and the evidence I did find was ambiguous, which is to say, like most documents about the creative process, it lends itself easily to anithetical interpretations.

Let me provide an example. Might the notebooks not contain plans for future action? Yes, in fact they typically contain many such plans for actions that do and do not eventually occur in the book as it eventually came to be published. The problem, however, is that such plans are fully compatible with creation by potential. In fact, War and Peace explicitly discusses the logical problems with drawing inferences from such evidence. After an event, Tolstoy repeatedly observes, one can always find "evidence" that someone "predicted" it because there are always so many predictions or intimations of predictions that one of them is bound to come true no matter what, at least most of the time; and we would be likely to remember only such instances in any case. But what about all those predictions that did not come true?

And what are the status of plans for actions that do not happen in the published text? Is it not possible that they were not intended to dictate future action but rather to understand present moments? For one way in which we do understand any present moment is to imagine what might happen as a result of it; and to envision a character in a rich way it might well be helpful to understand who he is by outlining some possibilities of what he might do without ever assuming that he would have to do those and only those things. Even in life, we understand people by considering what they are capable of, without believing they will necessarily do what they are capable of. Of course, they might actually do some of those things, as Tolstoy's characters might fulfill some of those "plans." But such an outcome would in no way indicate that the "plans" were intended to predetermine what the characters had to do. Tolstoy might still have created with a multiplicity of possible outcomes in mind and the readiness to devise a new one if occasion suggested it -- much as he "pardoned" Prince Andrei after Austerlitz and allowed Vronsky to commit and recover from attempted suicide. Did Karenin have to forgive Anna at her bedside? Did Kuragin have to lose a leg? Did Petya have to die? Might Prince Andrei have confronted Prince Dolgoruky, and could Ramballe have come back to play a role in the action, as some of the "plans" seem to indicate?

It is not uncommon for writers to alter their plans in the course of creation. The phenomenon is hardly unique to Tolstoy. But what is unusual about Tolstoy is that he created (or claimed to have created) so as to change his mind in that way, and to take maximal advantage of such unforeseen opportunities. Whether he actually did so I cannot yet decide.

Reading, Overreading, and Underreading; or, Who is to Blame?

I confess to my greatest discomfort when Popkin quoted my earlier book, The Boundaries of Genre, and asked me how I would square my two theories. For in Boundaries I argued that to read a work as literary is to read it as complete; and "if a work is assumed to be complete, we are justified in hypothesizing the thematic and formal relevance of all of its details. This is not to say that all of its details will necessarily be equally relevant....On the contrary, to identify a structure of a work is to construct a hierarchy of relevance that makes some of its details central and others peripheral. No detail, however, can be completely irrelevant....It may be observed, in fact, that a large part of the pleasure of reading literature derives from the identification of that structure, from the process of ordering through which we perceive or postulate the wholeness of a text... The way readers go about this process of ordering, it should be noted, is not a constant....[But] So long as the work is read as literature at all, readers will seek an integral design and postulate a structure so as to reward that search."¹⁰

In light of Popkin's question, we may ask: How is this statement to be reconciled with (1) the prejudice of prosaics against perfect design, and (2) the theory of creation by potential, with its insistence on details that turn out to be irrelevant? Irina Paperno asked me much the same thing in different words. And when I read Popkin's contrast of my two statements, I did what any theorist would do in such circumstances: I squirmed.

Up to a point, I could reconcile the two statements by shifting the emphasis of the first. But in a larger sense, Popkin is right. If the two statements can be reconciled in terms of explicit theory, they are nevertheless very different in spirit. And when it comes to tracing the implication of theories, the spirit is often as important as the letter.

Over the years, I have obviously, bit by bit and tiny alteration by tiny alteration, changed my mind. I imagine I will probably do so again. One reason I changing my mind was working on Tolstoy, Bakhtin, and prosaics; another was my continued work with my favorite topic in literary theory, the nature of the creative process. A statement about literary structure is implicitly a statement about authorial control, and therefore, about how that control was exercised. To describe how a text is "made" is to imply something about the process of its making. Tolstoy apparently felt as much, which is, I suppose, why his essay on War and Peace includes a statement about how he was writing it. It would take me too far afield to discuss this problem in greater detail than I do in Hidden, but in light of these questions, let me now sort out how I would presently reformulate my statements in Boundaries.

First, about the search for order in a text. I still believe that

when readers interpret a text, they would be wise to seek the place of each apparently irrelevant detail in a larger design of some sort. But I would now caution that there is no guarantee they will find that place. The lack of such a guarantee is the consequence not only of an inevitable lack of some crucial evidence, but also, and more importantly, of the prosaic fact that a work of human hands is extremely unlikely to be perfect. That is especially true of a long novel written over many years.

I suppose that for any detail we may readily identify in a sonnet, the author may have imagined a place for it. But when we are dealing with a thousand-page novel written over five years, let us say, such perfection is almost inconceivable. Tolstoy makes Natasha age more in a given number of years than the number of years that have elapsed. Some semiotic totalitarian or textual hyperselectionist, who assumed that for every feature there must be a good structural reason, might detect a sort of surrealist symbolism here, but I think that would be a classic case of overreading brought on by the refusal to recognize the limits of planning and the presence of accident, contingency, and (just plain) mistakes. Memory fails, control lapses. As every proof-reader knows, texts remain imperfect, and the very activity of correcting mistakes introduces new ones. Fortunately, we usually do not notice such lapses, because if they were easily noticeable the author would probably have noticed them too and corrected them - unless so many other things would have to change in consequence (would Andrei have to give up proposing to Natasha if she had aged at the normal rate?) that the author prefers the mistake to the correction.

In any (or almost any) long or sufficiently complex work, there must be many such mistakes that even if noticed detract from the work very little or not at all, and there may also be mistakes that do detract from it. That is, we really need at least three categories -- details that contribute to the design; mistakes that if noticed detract from it; and neutral features that are neither functional nor dysfunctional. In effect, Jonathan Culler's attack on Roman Jakobson's way of reading poems may be seen as a principled suspiciousness of how Jakobson makes every neutral element functional,¹¹ which is another type of overreading no less exasperating than that of turning actual flaws into virtues.

Interpretation is a risky business. Not only do critics risk overreading, but they also face the possibility of underreading. The history of interpretation is filled with instances in which critics dismissed as a flaw what later was shown convincingly to be a well-planned effect. In such cases, previous critics are usually shown to have failed to consider the sort of design the author had in mind; looking for one kind of order, they dismissed as unnecessary a detail that finds its significance in a different kind. The history of criticism of most complex works, War and Peace included, is bound to include numerous cases of both underreading and overreading.

How, then, are we to tell which is which, and whether a given textual feature is functional, dysfunctional, or neutral? Is there a Method for doing so, a Theory that can serve as a court of appeals? Prosaics

answers that there can probably be no non-trivial formulation of such a theory, no rules that can help us in all but the simplest cases, which are unlikely to be troubling anyway. What we can do is offer a few general guidelines that may remind us of past experience and a few tricks of the trade that have proven useful in some difficult situations; but we must ultimately trust to our sensitivity to each text. That sensitivity, which is the product of experience, is, like a good ethical sense, unformalizable. It is what a literary education seeks (or should seek) to convey. There is no "alibi" for it.

If the significance of details is not guaranteed in advance, then why should readers nevertheless "hypothesize" order, as I still think they should? The answer is practical: If order does exist, if a detail does have an unsuspected place, we are unlikely to find that place unless we look for it. The reason to postulate order, then, is not that it is guaranteed but that there is no equally good way to find it if it should be there. To cite Bakhtin: Order is "not given but posited" [*ne dan, a razdan*]. The postulate of order is heuristic, which is to say, a good bet. But we should always be alert to the possibility a given detail could really be neutral or dysfunctional, that there may be no good reason for its presence. Such alertness may guard us from strained readings recommended only by their justification of a favored author, or by the consolation they provide to those who need to believe in perfect design, or by their exhibition of sheer cleverness, or by their conformity to some currently orthodox theory, ideology, or political prejudice.

When I say that postulating order in a literary work is a "good bet," I mean that literary works tend to be a lot more ordered than historical periods, societies, or on ongoing lives. That is what prosaics would lead us to expect, because in a world that is always more or less messy order results from hard work. And literary works are characteristically the product of such work. We cannot make our lives into a work of art, as one of Dostoevsky's characters counsels, because we cannot go over each "scene" many times, perform the neglected better action, adjust the pictures on the wall to suggest an ironic second meaning to our choice, or make the responses of other people fit. In life, each moment is unrepeatable, as Bakhtin would say. But the creation of artworks allows for such reworkings when they would be helpful. So it is hardly surprising that artworks would be more ordered than experience; indeed, that is one reason we read artworks. And artworks require such orderliness because they are typically designed to be of interest in diverse contexts and periods and so must be maximally efficient and patterned. But I doubt that very many, if any, artworks are perfectly patterned.

Because a metaphysical poem by Donne or a lyric by Pushkin is likely to be more ordered than anything in human history, the tendency of some theoretical schools to read historical periods and contexts like metaphysical poems strikes me as intuitively suspect. For what could provide such order, what eliminates the messiness of life, who is the grand historical artificer analogous to an author

and capable of perfect design? Behind such theories lies an implicit appeal to God, or to a leap of faith in historical laws explaining everything, or to some sort of gigantic conspiracy. This way of reading history "as a text" or as a poem is another form of "hyper-selectionism" and as such, is close in spirit and often in practice to conspiracy logic. Historical periods as seamless texts in which the most unexpected details turn out to fit; the psyche as a whole with no genuine accidents or contingencies; the sort of masonic numerology that captivates "l'Russe Besouhof"; the model of events offered in The Protocols of the Elders of Zion -- all these forms of semiotic totalitarianism, so influential in our time, gain their plausibility from the unprosaic assumption of an underlying Order behind all apparently messy or contingent circumstances.

I do not imagine that the world is fundamentally chaotic, only that it is never fully ordered; it contains clumpings -- in fact, many divergent clumpings -- of relative orderliness, aggregates of regularity in competition with and completely unrelated to each other, and some random elements that are about to be incorporated into or have just been "excorporated" from some aggregate of order, whose relative orderliness may have been somewhat unsettled in the process.

Where Dostoevsky and Tolstoy Stumbles

Which brings me by yet another route to the problem of creation by potential. When Tolstoy wrote War and Peace and Anna Karenina, and when Dostoevsky devised The Diary of a Writer, they hit upon the idea of exploiting unforeseen elements of the creative process to establish a different concept of authorial design. The Diary daringly proposes to make contingent events of ongoing history central to its design; War and Peace develops the unsuspected potentials of its own events. Thus the design of War and Peace is fundamentally different from that of works that were either made, or designed to be read as if they were made, according to a pre-planned structure; our sense of a process with unforeseeable results becomes a part of our experience of the work. With any work, a plot summary leaves out important elements, but in War and Peace the violation is different in kind and so much greater in degree, because, by leaving out the "irrelevant" events and the unexploited potentials, it tends to reduce the work to a "structure" in the narrow sense.

Thus I would not say that War and Peace does not have a structure (in the sense specified) but it does have a design. It has elements that would fit into a structure and elements that would be irrelevant to a structure but are still relevant to the work's special design. The question therefore arises as to whether the kind of design Tolstoy uses could in principle contain events that are irrelevant not only to the structure but also to its design. That is, could War and Peace contain truly irrelevant events? Or does the special status the work grants to "irrelevance" preclude genuine irrelevance?

My answer is that genuine irrelevance is not precluded. Even this method does make anything a sure bet. Not everything could have fit

into War and Peace, because its principle of design has its own rigorous integrity. The author had to be true to his process of creation, and to do so was an enterprise no less demanding, and I suspect much more demanding, than creation by structure. If Tolstoy had chosen events that were not rich in potential — that closed down or eliminated future possibilities — the work would have failed; and perhaps that is one reason he abandoned some earlier projects, such as the longer work of which The Cossacks was to have been a part or his projected novel about a "Russian landowner." (Kathryn Feuer is particularly perceptive with regard to the relation of War and Peace to these earlier projects.)

Indeed, we have in Russian literature an example of an artistic failure based on a version of this method: The Diary of a Writer, which succumbed to what (in Boundaries) I call "generic risks." Every set of constraints that creates the possibility of success also creates possibilities for failure, and I imagine that no one, least of all myself, would proclaim The Diary an artistic success in the sense that War and Peace or Eugene Onegin are. One measure of that failure is that very few readers have recognized that the Diary was intended to be an artistic work at all: the work might have been called, as Mark Twain called one of his stories, "The Private History of a Campaign that Failed."

A reason for this failure is readily apparent. As I understand it, Dostoevsky's design was to create for each issue of the Diary a melange of genres from ongoing events in the press and from the vagaries of his own creative laboratory. A network of possible relations among the different pieces was to be detectable in each issue, and across issues over time. To a great extent, this design does govern the issues of January, February, and March 1876, but by the middle of 1877, mere polemic has overwhelmed everything else. So much has become irrelevant to the work's already open design that the design has faded from view, even for those who attempt to detect it. It would of course be theoretically possible to find an artistic reason for the work's excrescences, but I imagine only those with the supreme confidence of a semiotic totalitarian would argue that the Diary is a success even in its own terms. As an innovative artwork, The Diary of a Writer is interesting primarily for the boldness of its attempt and the instructive nature of its failure, but not for its success in fulfilling its design.

Are there any places where War and Peace also fails in this way, if not to this degree? I think there are, and one regret I have about Hidden is that I was so intent to explicate the nature of the work's design and the way in which it works itself out where it succeeds (as it generally does), that I did not point out instances that either do not fit or do not fit as well as they might.

The argument that follows is pure speculation on my part. What may have happened in the course of writing War and Peace is that not only did events have unforeseen consequences (as Tolstoy's design demands) but that the design itself turned out to change, bit by bit, in

unforeseen ways, thus creating a new and different kind of problem. Specifically, it seems to me that the work began with a sense of historical scepticism and a sense that this scepticism demanded a radically new kind of narrative, but that before long it led to a total historical nihilism, which in turn led to still more radical changes in narrative design. In particular, it seems to me that the early portions of the book, at least through Schongraben and perhaps through Austerlitz, do not evince that total rejection of causal explanations evident later. It is as if in the process of writing, Tolstoy's own work led him further than he had intended. Fortunately, the changes were gradual, and so the design alters in a smooth curve; the differences are apparent only across hundreds of pages. But I do feel now that the earliest portions of the book are somewhat inconsistent with later portions.

I think Eichenbaum, whose views Any has so deftly paraphrased and analyzed, was mistaken when he argued that Tolstoy changed abruptly from an intention to write an English family novel in the style of Trollope to a very different intention to compose an epic. I do not think he ever intended either one, and, more important, I see no abrupt changes. But I do think Eichenbaum was correct in seeing some sort of inconsistency, and in suggesting that the problem of the work's unity becomes supremely interesting, especially because the change did not make the work a failure. My purely speculative guess is that Tolstoy, like Kutuzov and Rostov, was supremely good at solving problems as they presented themselves, and that he realized he could make subtle changes in design work, if they were not too abrupt. If Dostoevsky had done the same, the Diary might not have become an artistic failure.

A second example of a section that may partially exceed even the open design of War and Peace is the famous second part of the epilogue. I am at a loss to give a reason why I think so, except intuition, readerly dissatisfaction, and a sense when I am teaching that beyond the second part's first few chapters, nothing much would be lost by not paying as much attention to it as I do the other essays in War and Peace. Perhaps that is why in other plans and versions Tolstoy made the second part of the epilogue the first part, and in one edition moved it and other essays to an appendix, only to allow it to be restored later.

The number of changes that Tolstoy made or allowed to be made in various editions has prompted Eichenbaum to contend that War and Peace is somehow special in that there can be no definitive edition of it. As Eichenbaum states it, the argument is unsatisfying because many works go through variants, and so the problem is hardly unique to War and Peace. And yet, I think, Eichenbaum did hit on something important. What if — more pure speculation — the changing editions of the book were a sort of continuation of the process that made it to begin with? What if new editions were a form of serialization by other means? Perhaps continuous re-designing, potentially without end, is somehow deeply in spirit with the work as a whole?

Closure and Aperture

These speculations bring me to another question that has troubled reviewers (for example, Helena Goscilo, review in Russian Literature Triquarterly, Spring 1988, pp. 236-7) as well as other readers. I have in mind the problem of closure in War and Peace, or as we might say in this case, its aperture.

As the term closure is used in Barbara Herrnstein Smith's Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End, it refers to the completion of a structure: "Closure occurs when the concluding portion of a poem creates in the reader a sense of appropriate cessation. It announces and justifies the absence of further development; it reinforces the feeling of finality, completeness, and composure, which we value in all works of art; and it gives ultimate unity and coherence to the reader's experience of a poem by providing a point from which all the preceding elements may be viewed comprehensively and their relations grasped as part of a significant design."¹² Smith's reasoning is very close to that of Russian Formalist discussions, especially when she discusses anti-closure, which, like the Formalists, she describes as just another form of closure. From the perspective of Smith and the Formalists, that would have to be the case, because the work could not function as one if it genuinely lacked closure. Anti-closure completes a structure by ostentatiously failing to complete it, and its wit derives from the fact that this supposed violation actually fits the norm.

Thus, from this standpoint, the existence of the poem as a poem per se creates a closural demand: "The poem's status and effect as art, and the reader's sense of its closural adequacy, are, then mutually reinforcing and to some extent mutually dependent. The possibility and significance of precisely that relationship between closure and art comprise, perhaps, the major burden of our argument throughout these pages" (Closure, 260).

It is easy to provide examples of anti-closure that would justify this description: the endings to Dostoevsky's Notes from Underground, to Gogol's "Ivan Fyodorovich Shponka and His Aunt," and to Mark Twain's "A Story Without an End" and "A Medieval Romance" come readily to mind. Robert Bellnap has argued that The Brothers Karamazov was designed much the same way.¹³ Other common examples are romantic poems (including "Kubla Khan"?) that dramatize the whimsicality of inspiration by suddenly breaking off. Anti-closure not only affirms structure but is inconceivable without it.

What is right about the traditional position, then, is its identification of anti-closure as a form of closure. What is wrong with it is its assumption that these alternatives are exhaustive and that in principle a work of art could not have significant design without requiring closure (or anti-closure). And supporting this assumption is another one, which equates significant design with "structure."

War and Peace does not use anti-closure because it does not use closure at all. Because it replaces structure with a different sort of design, Tolstoy's work does away with closure and so does away with anti-closure. Not only is closure not necessary for this work, it would violate its design. Let me here cite one of Tolstoy's own comments in one of the drafts for an introduction to War and Peace:

I cannot determine how much of my work will consist of what is now being published, because I do not know myself and cannot foresee what dimensions my work will assume.

My task is to describe the life and the encounters of certain people in the period 1805-1856. I know that if I were occupied exclusively with that work and if that work of mine were carried on under the most favorable conditions, I should still hardly be in a position to complete my task. But provided that I write it as I want to, I am convinced that interest in my story will not cease when a given section is completed, and I am striving toward this end. It seems to me that if my work is of any interest, then the reader's interest will not only be gratified at the end of each part of the work but will also continue. As a result of this special quality, this work cannot be called a novel.

Because if this special quality, I think that this work can be printed in separate parts without in any way losing the reader's interest and without inciting the reader to read the subsequent parts.

It will not be possible to read the second part without having read the first, but having read the first, it will be very possible not to read the second.¹⁴

It is fairly remarkable for an author to announce not only he deliberately does not know where he is going but also that the reader need not read subsequent parts, which, after all, the author might just as well not have written. And all this is part of the author's design, a design neither requiring nor tolerating structural closure.

And yet it does require a unity, which in this case derives from our sense of a consistent project. Unity without closure is impossible for a work with structure but it is a necessity for a successful work created as War and Peace was created, by potentials. In place of closure, we are given "aperture."

By "aperture" I mean that the work lacks a special place where it can be assessed as a whole requiring (as Aristotle said of endings) nothing that follows. There is never a point, nor is there a need for a point, "from which all the preceding elements may be viewed comprehensively and their relations grasped" in a way that "announces and justifies the absence of further development." The work neither promises nor provides nor in principle tolerates a moment when all the threads are tied, when a continuation "might be the subject of a new story, but our present story is ended" (last sentence of Crime and Punishment. War and Peace is written so that it might go on forever, not as a very long work, but as a work of indeterminate length.

Stated positively, aperture invites us to form a relative closure at several points, each of which could be a sort of ending, at least as much of an ending as we are ever going to get. At the end of each installment, for instance, we may assess events and their patterning, and we may do the same at the "close" of the work, which becomes just the last of these installments we happen to have. At each of these points, some things but not everything will tie together, and we know that the work in principle could continue. If it does, then events that had one significance may acquire another, and events that led nowhere might (or might not) turn out to lead somewhere. What would have been the status of Prince Andrei in War and Peace if it had continued, as Tolstoy considered, until 1856? George Steiner asks: why could there not have been a ninth part of Anna Karenina? To read the work with aperture is to recognize that there could have been; and if there had been one, we would be encouraged to ask the same question about a possible tenth part. This sense of aperture is integral to any work successfully created with a design of open potentials rather than a pre-planned structure.

If this series of tentative considerations of uncompleted patterning seems an odd way to assess meaning, we might reflect that in our own lives that is what we often do — indeed, have no choice but to do. Herodotus and Greek tragedy teach us the danger of such assessments, which may always seem foolish in light of later events: "count no man happy until he is dead." I think this formulation, for all of its wise caution against underestimating change, is profoundly mistaken, because it enjoins us to assess each life, and each action in a life, as it is never experienced. As Bakhtin would say, it teaches us to treat lives as totally "finalized," but human life as we live it and cannot help living it is unfinalizable. My completed death is not an event in my own life. And it is, of course, utterly impossible to reflect on ourselves after we are dead. (The problem does not change if there is an afterlife, which would, after all be a part of our whole lives, and the judgments we make in it would themselves be part of what we are judging.) Tolstoy perhaps has such considerations in mind when he describes the wounded Prince Andrei trying to imagine the world without him, which is in principle impossible, because Andrei would at least have to be present as an observer.

Prosaics would teach us both the value and the limitations of assessing in process. And Tolstoy's fictions, with their design of aperture, make both a part of the experience of reading. To have captured this aspect of living was a remarkable achievement of Tolstoy's, and constitutes another reason why his two great novels are the most realistic works ever written.

Other Works, Other Values, Other Sources of Interest

Popkin asks whether, on the basis of realism, I mean to reject work not created as Tolstoy created War and Peace, whether we must "relinquish the very possibility of a 'good read' in favor of Truth?" Must works that are structurally neat somehow be regarded as superseded?"

She and others have also asked whether prosaics dictates a rejection of poetry. The answer to all of these questions is no.

We read literary works for many reasons, and we derive different kinds of wisdom and pleasure from them. Realism in the Tolstoyan sense is only one criterion; the same may be said of an understanding of ethical problems as prosaically complex and unformalizable.

In elaborating his prosaics, and in celebrating novelistic discourse, sense of character, and chronotope, Bakhtin did not mean to enjoin us never to read poetry. He meant to stress that great novels contain a depth and wisdom to which we have not paid sufficient critical attention and which cannot be adequately understood if we apply norms and practices derived from a reading of poetry. That does not mean that poetry, epic, and other genres do not have their own profound lessons to teach us. Certain genres are best at some things, others at others; and some critical practices offer a better starting point than others for approaching given kinds of texts. If Bakhtin not only described novels but also celebrated them as the greatest achievement of Western thought, it was because they were best at the problems that most concerned him, especially ethics. But there are many reasons to read literature and novels will not satisfy all of them.

One reason I feel so strongly about prosaics is that the world of "theory" today is so captivated by the dramatic, the ideological, the semiotically totalitarian and the totally relativist. My enthusiasm for Bakhtin derives in part from my sense that his "prosaics" offers an alternative to theory and the study of literature as it is now usually understood in departments of English and Comparative Literature (though mercifully not in Slavic departments). I am rather wryly aware that the tone with which I advocate prosaics is somewhat out of keeping with prosaics itself, and I imagine that the various reviewers here assembled are responding, very aptly, to this discrepancy.

In another review, Michael Andre Bernstein writes: "isn't 'prosaics,' by its very articulation as a general theory, in danger of becoming just another kind of 'semiotic totalitarianism,' doomed to discover its own self-confirming truth in every circumstance?" Yes, that is a danger, though not an inevitability. Perhaps an awareness of the danger may aid in avoiding it, but as prosaics itself teaches, there are no guarantees.

1. "The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis" in M.M. Bakhtin, Speech Genres and Other Late Essays, trans. Vern McGee, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U. Texas, 1986), 104.

2. It should be apparent that I am not in principle hostile to intentional criticism. Although it is not the only valid kind of reading, intentional criticism is surely one of the most rewarding kinds, and perhaps the most rewarding when we are dealing with writers who have thought

profoundly about the world. I cannot help thinking that Shakespeare has more to teach us than current literary theorists. It seems to me that the usual debate between intentionalists and anti-intentionalists is off-center, because both sides assume a relatively simplistic understanding of intentionality. As it happens, one of Tolstoy's central goals in War and Peace and Anna Karenina was to offer a much more complex account.

3. For an interesting account of the "therapeutic" view and its social consequences, see Robert Bellah, et.al, Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life (Berkeley: UC, 1985).

4. Jean-Paul Sartre, Search for a Method, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (NY: Random, 1986), 43-4, 56.

5. See Stephen Toulmin, "The Tyranny of Principles," The Hastings Center Report, vol. 11, no. 6 (December 1981), 31-9, especially the splendid discussion of Anna Karenina; and Toulmin and Albert Jonsen, The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning (Berkeley: UC, 1988). For Bakhtin's development of a similar position, see "K filiosofii postupka" in the 1984-5 issue of Filosofiiia i sotsiologiiia nauki i tekhniki, a yearbook for the Soviet Academy of Sciences, 80-160.

6. Slavic and East European Journal, vol. 32, no. 4 (Winter 1988), 652-3.

7. As Anna Tavis seems to suggest, the apparently (but only apparently) still more radical experiments of modernism also obscure our reading of the book.

8. Stephen Jay Gould, The Panda's Thumb: More Reflections in Natural History (NY: Norton, 1982), 28-9.

9. Kathryn Feuer, "The Genesis of War and Peace," Columbia University doctoral dissertation, 1965.

10. The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's "Diary of a Writer" and the Traditions of Literary Utopia (Austin: UT, 1981; reprinted Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1989), 42.

11. Jonathan Culler, "Jakobson's Poetic Analyses," Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1975), 55-74.

12. Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End (Chicago: UC Press, 1968), 36.

13. See Robert Belknap, The Structure of "The Brothers Karamazov" (The Hague: Mouton, 1967; reprinted Northwestern UP, 1989).

14. Draft 3 of an introduction to War and Peace, as translated by George Gibian in the Norton Critical Edition of War and Peace (NY: Norton, 1966), 1365. The Russian text of Tolstoy's draft introductions may be found in volume 13 of the Jubilee edition, pp. 53-7.

Criticism

HELENE AS PRE-OEDIPAL SELF-OBJECT

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All Tolstoy fans remember the famous passage early in War and Peace where Pierre Bezukhov suddenly gets captivated by the bust of H el ene Kuragin. The scene is one of Anna Scherer's evening parties. Pierre is attempting to make small talk about a snuff-box:

...the aunt handed him the snuffbox, passing it across H el ene's back. H el ene stooped forward to make room, and looked round with a smile. She was, as always at evening parties, wearing a dress such as was then fashionable, cut very low at front and back. Her bust, which had always seemed like marble to Pierre [Ee biust, kazavshiisia vseгда mramorom P'eru], was so close to him that his shortsighted eyes could not but perceive the living charm of her neck and shoulders, so near to his lips that he need only have bent his head a little to have touched them. He was conscious of the warmth of her body, the scent of her perfume, and the creaking of her corset as she moved. He did not see her marble beauty [ne ee mramornuiu krasotu] forming a complete whole with her dress, but all the charm of her body only covered by her garments [vsiu prelest' ee tela, kotoroe bylo zakryto tol'ko odezhdoi]. And having once seen this he could not help being aware of it, just as we cannot renew an illusion we have once seen through.

She turned her head, looked straight at him, her dark eyes shining, and smiled.

"So you have never noticed before how beautiful I am?" Helene seemed to say. "You had not noticed that I am a woman? Yes, I am a woman who may belong to anyone [vsiakomu] - to you too," said her glance. And at that moment Pierre felt that H el ene not only could, but must, be his wife, and that it could not be otherwise.

He knew this at that moment as surely as if he had been standing at the altar with her. How and when this would be he did not know, he did not even know if it would be a good thing (he even felt, he knew not why, that it would be a bad thing [nekhoroшо pochemu-to]), but he knew that it would happen.

(222-23/4:278-79)¹

Pierre now feels that H el ene is "terribly close" to him: "she already had power over him, and between them there was no longer any barrier except the barrier of his own will" (223).

Some of Tolstoy's contemporaries thought this passage slightly risqu e.² Pierre is obviously aroused, and it is his arousal - not love - which determines that a marriage will take place. At the same time he feels that there is something wrong with being aroused by such a woman. He thinks: "...this is not love. On the contrary, there is something nasty, something forbidden [chto-to gadkoe... chto-to zapreshchenoe] in the feeling she excites in me" (223/4: 280).

Pierre's sexual arousal and accompanying guilt feelings are easy enough to see, and I am not going to dwell on them here. As I show in a larger study, tentatively titled Pierre Bezukhov: An Experiment in Literary Psychobiography, such feelings are essentially Oedipal in their origin and dynamics. That is, they depend on the triangular relationships which Pierre either imagines having or actually experiences with his promiscuous future wife and some other man (e.g., H el ene's brother Anatole).

But at a deeper level the problem Pierre has is with H el ene herself. At this level we are dealing with a dyad, not a triangle. The relationship with H el ene is not only Oedipal, it is pre-Oedipal as well.

How can this be so? A pre-Oedipal relationship is between mother and child. It can probably be agreed that Pierre is one of the most infantile characters in the history of Russian literature. The narrator repeatedly describes him as childlike. But in what sense is Helene a maternal figure?

There are some superficial signs, such as the fact that Pierre accepts H el ene as his wife, or his preoccupation with her promiscuous tendencies. It is an old chestnut of psychoanalysis that a wife represents the mother in a man's psychical life (in semiotic terms, a wife is a mother-icon³). In particular, a wife who is unfaithful is a reminder of the mother, who by definition had to have sex with the father in order for the jealous male child even to come into existence.⁴

But Tolstoy is much more evocative than this. I would like to suggest that H el ene's maternal qualities reside precisely in features which, on the surface, are merely sexual or aesthetic. The narrator so frequently focuses our attention (along with Pierre's) on the physical attractiveness and perfection of H el ene's upper body that we have to suspect that there is more there than meets the eye.

At Anna Pavlovna's first soiree H el ene's "shapely shoulders,

back, and bosom [grudi]" are "in the fashion of those days...very much exposed" (11/4:19). As she listens to the vicomte she sits quietly, "glancing now at her beautiful round arm, altered in shape by its pressure on the table, now at her still more beautiful bosom [na eshche bolee krasivuiu grud'], on which she re-adjusted a diamond necklace" (12/4:19). She seems to be illuminated by "the unusual beauty of a body from antiquity [neobychnoi, antichnoi krasotoi tela]" (4:20). She is so statuesque that the narrator describes her as "turning her beautiful head and looking over her classically molded shoulder [povorachivaia svoiu krasivuiu golovu na antichnykh plechakh]" (16/4:25). The idea of an ancient statue reappears at the second soiree where Helene is again wearing a very low cut dress and her bust seems like marble to Pierre ("Ee biust, kazavshiisia vseгда mramornym P'eru..." -4:278). Pierre is very taken by the "marble beauty" of her bust.

These passages suggest not only sensuality, but an idealized past: it was in the old days that a woman's bosom was exposed like this ("po togdashnei mode"); it was in antiquity that bare shoulders were so perfect ("antichnye plechi," "antichnaia krasota tela"). Her name as well suggests the past, for Helen of Troy was the type of female beauty in classical antiquity: Pierre considered himself lucky "...to be looked on as a sort of Paris possessed of a Helen" (228).

The suggestion of pastness is particularly subtle in the Russian wording of the imagery introduced right after Pierre has seen through the "illusion" ("obman") which clothes H el ene's beautiful body:

Pierre dropped his eyes, lifted them again, and wished once more to see her as a distant beauty far removed from him, as he had seen her every day until then, but he could no longer do it. He could not, any more than a man who has been looking at a stalk of steppe grass through the mist and taking it for a tree can again take it for a tree after he has once recognized it to be a stalk of grass [Ne mog, kak ne mozhet chelovek, prezhde smotrevshii v tumane na bylinku bur'iana i videvshii v nei derevo, uvidav bylinku, snova uvidet' v nei derevo]. She was terribly close to him.

(223/4:279)

Where before Pierre saw a tree, now he sees a stalk of grass, a "bylinka," which etymologically suggests the meaning "a little something from the past" (cf. the related words "bylina" ['a tale about the past'], and the expression "byl'em poroslo" ['long forgotten,' i.e., 'long grown over with grass']⁵). The attractive feminine body, particularly the bust, is suffused with pastness itself. Its pastness and its closeness are indeed inseparable, as the phonological repetitiveness (alliteration, assonance)

of the passage suggests: "...na bylinku bur'iana...uvidav bylinku.. ..Ona byla strashno blizka emu. [...]...Ne bylo uzhe nikakikh pregrad...." The insistent image of a nearby stalk of grass does not seem so odd when the etymology and the phonology of the word in question are taken into consideration.

The narrator says that Pierre's shortsighted eyes cannot but take delight in H el ene's magnificent bust ("...on...nevol'no razlichal zhivuiu prelest' ee plechi i shei..."). Pierre's lips are so close that he can almost touch her with them ("tak blizko ot ego gub, chto emu stoilo nemnogo nagnut'sia, chtoby prikosnut'sia do nee" - 4:278). Pierre is clearly idealizing H el ene's bust at the same time that he considers the possibility of gaining oral gratification from it.

At this moment H el ene is not only sexy. She is maternal as well. It is precisely a woman's breasts that are of interest to a child who is close to them, that is, who is nursing. Pierre's realization that he must marry H el ene is conditioned specifically by the depiction of her bust as an idealized object from the past and as a source of oral gratification. H el ene is at this point what psychoanalyst Melanie Klein would call a "good breast-mother," that is, a mother-figure metonymized by her ideal, orally gratifying breasts.⁶

Right after Prince Vasilii congratulates Pierre and H el ene on their forthcoming marriage, Pierre seems overcome with emotion and several times applies his lips to H el ene's hand. Then, left alone with H el ene, he continues to hold her hand and looks at her beautiful bosom as it rises and falls ("smotrel na ee podnimaiushchuiusia i opuskaiushchuiusia prekrasnuiu grud'" [4:289] - the awkwardly paired participles rather suggestive of her paired breasts). He starts to bend over in order to again kiss her hand, but H el ene intercepts his movement and grasps his lips with her own ("perekhvatala ego guby i svela ikh s svoimi" - 4:289). Pierre's moment of oral gratification has come - whether he likes it or not. Just a few lines later he is married.

One of the psychological characteristics of the nursling at the breast, according to psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut, is the tendency to treat the mother as a selfobject. A selfobject is an object that is in some way not adequately differentiated from the self. That is, it possesses the properties of the self as well as of an object. According to Kohut, the infant initially (pre-Oedipally) has difficulty separating itself from persons (objects) in the environment. At some stage, for example, the infant may need to idealize one of the parents and experience a sense of merger with that idealized parent. Parents are idealized selfobjects before they are objects. Children initially live in a world of selfobjects, and only gradually, through repeated experiences of empathic response from parental figures (interspersed with occasional failures of empathic response), does the child's self develop into a relatively autonomous entity. If for some reason, however, there has been a chronic

absence of empathic response from those responsible for dealing with the child, then a tendency in adulthood to continue to confuse the self with objects, that is, to continue to deal with others as selfobjects, may result.⁷

Pierre has considerable difficulty differentiating himself from Helene, the object of his idealizing tendencies and his powerful sexual desire. For example, at Hélène's name day party he momentarily imagines that he is the one who possesses her great beauty: "...here he was sitting by her side as her betrothed, seeing, hearing, feeling her nearness, her breathing, her movements, her beauty. Then all at once it seemed to him that it was not she but he who was so unusually beautiful [что то не она, а он сам так необыкновенно красив], and that that was why they were all looking so at him, and happy at this general admiration he expanded his chest, raised his head, and rejoiced at his good fortune" (228/4:286).

There is more to this astonishing passage than just the oddity of a man taking on a woman's features. Pierre's attitude is downright infantile (the narrator speaks of the "childish smile" on Pierre's face). Pierre is like the little boy in Tolstoy's story Childhood who, having kissed his sweetheart on her naked shoulder, is reminded of the erotic feeling he has previously experienced in stroking his own naked forearm.⁸

There is a powerful idealizing impulse and obvious narcissistic gratification as Pierre contemplates Hélène's beauty. In Kohutian terms, the self is momentarily acquiring a property of the idealized object, is treating the object as a selfobject.⁹ This is very reminiscent of the way the pre-Oedipal child, in the absence of the father and in the close physical presence of the mother, sometimes idealizes her and glories in her beauty.

After marrying Hélène, Pierre continues to take great pride in her majestic beauty and in her social tact ("...gordilsia ee velichavoi krasoty, ee svetskim taktom..." - 5:35). It is clear that a large portion of his self-worth during this brief period of the marriage derives from what he thinks she is.

Consider also Pierre's obsessive ruminations about Helene's incestuous behavior. These occur before the marriage takes place. He thinks about what Hélène has done specifically in terms of himself. The thought of her past illegitimate liason with her brother Anatole provokes him to think that what he is feeling is illegitimate ("что-то гадкое est' v tom chuvstve, kotoroe ona vozбудila vo mne, что-то запрещенное" - 4:280). It is as if Pierre were the one guilty of incest.¹⁰ There is no idealization here of course, but the tendency to confuse himself with her, to treat her as a selfobject, is evident.

Both Pierre and Hélène are sexually experienced. This is an objective similarity between the two characters, a similarity which

reinforces the reader's awareness of Pierre's tendency to see something of himself in H el ene (or vice-versa, something of Helene in himself). True, Pierre's sexual experience is quite different from H el ene's in that it is not incestuous. Nonetheless Pierre, not liking what he sees in H el ene, still feels that he has crossed over into a forbidden zone, the zone which H el ene and Anatole had already occupied by being in love with one another and not merely having had sex with one another ("...ee brat Anatol' byl vliublen v nee, i ona vliublana v nego..." - 4:280). A few lines later Pierre imagines that he too can be loved by H el ene ("ona mozhet poliubit' ego"). His culminating declaration to H el ene, "Je vous aime," may seem insincere to him, but it too points to that incestuous experience, defined as love, that she has already had.

The similarities between Pierre and H el ene are remarkable, and they strengthen the reader's impression that Pierre is not adequately differentiating himself from H el ene, i.e., is treating her as a selfobject. For example, Pierre, whose name means "stone" in French, marries a woman whose upper body is repeatedly characterized as sculpted stone, i.e., a marble bust. Both characters, moreover, have French rather than Russian names. The narrator prefers the name "Pierre," and avoids the use of "Petr," or "Petia," or "Petr Kirillovich" in scenes where H el ene is present. As for Helene, she is almost never "Elena," which would be the proper Russian name (the narrator does often speak of "Elen," but this is just a Russian approximation of the French "H el ene," which the English "Ellen" used by some translators and critics completely misses). The Russian diminutive "Lelia" rarely appears, and even then only affectedly, when spoken by Prince Vasilii. Thus, for purposes of describing the premarital and marital relationship between the two characters, the narrator uses primarily the names "Pierre" and "H el ene," as if the two were French citizens, aliens in the Russian land. This situation is particularly paradoxical for Pierre, who is traditionally regarded as Russian to the core (given the bear imagery that is applied to him early in the novel, his name really should have been Mikhail/Misha). On the other hand, if Tolstoy wanted to suggest that there is something bad or un-Russian about the marriage, the foreign names are appropriate (when Pierre courts Natasha later in the novel, the properly Russian "Petr Kirillovich" and "Petia" appear quite often).

The duel with Dolokhov provides an occasion for the narrator to disclose Pierre's deepest feelings about H el ene. The night after he has shot and wounded Dolokhov he meditates on the meaning of what he has done. The image of his faithless H el ene comes into his mind: "...emu vdrug predstavialas' ona..." (5:36, italics Tolstoy's). He gets up, moves about the room, he starts breaking and tearing at anything that comes to hand (lomat', i rvat' popadaiushchie emu pod ruki veshchi" - 5:36). This is the same rage he had experienced when he originally challenged Dolokhov. Yet obviously it is H el ene he would now like to be breaking and tearing (cf. his earlier feeling of being "razorvan s neiu"). But he cannot admit this to himself.

He thinks instead of those moments when he had most strongly expressed his "insincere love" for her.

Pierre wants to blame the whole situation on the falseness of his love for Hélène: "'...in what was I to blame?' he asked [himself]. 'In marrying her without loving her; in deceiving both yourself and her [sic!].'" He remembers the evening of the dinner at Prince Vasilii's, "...when he spoke those words he found so difficult to utter: 'Je vous aime.' 'It all comes from that! [Vse ot etogo!]" (342/5:34).

But to blame his predicament on his false love is itself false. It is Hélène who has failed to love Pierre, not the other way around (or perhaps the other way around too). He may not be narcissistically damaged by what society thinks, but he is hurt by what Hélène feels - or fails to feel.

Pierre asks himself why he had not loved her (343), when, logically speaking, he should be asking himself why she had not loved him. He had said "Je vous aime," but she had not replied in kind nor showed that she cared for him in any way. He had desired her beautiful body, but now he is ashamed to have gotten it and nothing else. It is embarrassing for him to remember having needed her sexually (the memory of the honeymoon). Earlier the thought of sex with Hélène had provoked guilt feelings because it represented an Oedipal transgression. Now it provokes shame instead, because of her voracious sexuality Hélène is in effect abandoning Pierre. The woman he had temporarily idealized does not love him, and that is shameful.¹¹

In focusing on the supposed falseness of his "Je vous aime" Pierre is redirecting aggression away from Hélène and back on to himself. He is still confusing himself with the selfobject. Why?

Consider the additional pain he would have to experience if he did not. Were he not to focus on his own "insincere" love for her, then he would have to deal much more directly than he does with her utter disdain for him. After all, she had not been merely unfaithful to him (he had half expected as much). She did not care in the slightest if he chose to be unfaithful (Natasha will be a very different kind of wife in this respect). She had always been condescending toward his attempts to communicate his inner reflections to her. She had married him for his money. She had even refused to mother his children: "One day I asked her if she felt any symptoms of pregnancy. She laughed contemptuously and said she was not a fool to want to have children, and that she was not going to have any children by me" (343). It is difficult to imagine a more unwifely and unloving thing to say to a husband. Yet Pierre does not seem to comprehend this. Instead he keeps imagining that his "insincere love" is what created the bad marriage. He is such a narcissistic dummy.

It is evident to the reader that H el ene would not have been very sorry if Pierre had been killed by Dolokhov in the duel. But there is a woman who would have been very pained indeed to learn of Dolokhov's death. We are suddenly introduced to her in a conversation between the wounded Dolokhov and his second, Nikolai Rostov:

"...I have killed her, killed...She won't get over it! She won't survive...."

"Who?" asked Rostov.

"My mother! My mother, my angel, my adored angel mother," and Dolokhov pressed Rostov's hand and burst into tears.

When he had become a little quieter he explained to Rostov that he was living with his mother, who, if she saw him dying, would not survive it. He implored Rostov to go on and prepare her. (341)

Dolokhov may be a dreadful bully, but he at least has a mother who cares.¹² Nice guy Pierre at this point has neither mother nor father not loving wife. In particular, the poignant mention of Dolokhov's mother only heightens the sense of Pierre's motherlessness, that is, the sense of H el ene's failure to be the devoted mother-icon a wife is supposed to be.

The only aspect of H el ene that Pierre is able to actively and consciously condemn as he meditates on his bad marriage is her sexuality. This topic had already been on Pierre's hidden agenda, for H el ene's promiscuous behavior is what Pierre had needed in order to advance to an Oedipal level of functioning. That is, he had been unconsciously working all along at losing H el ene by Oedipal means, by covertly creating a triangle that was sure to cause disaster (this view is developed at some length in my book-in-progress). But now that Pierre has accomplished this goal he can be frank with himself about H el ene's sexual behavior, even though this frankness is now quite beside the point. In fact it is defensive, for he is using it to block awareness of Helene's profound indifference toward him. He admits that she is a "depraved woman" ("razvratnaia zhenshchina"), he vividly recalls her allowing herself to be kissed on the shoulders by her brother, he remembers the coarseness and vulgarity of her speech, etc. She is a bad girl indeed. For a moment he even seems to think that H el ene's sexual looseness is the cause of the bad marriage: "It is all, all her fault."

But no sooner has he said this than he starts in again on his "Je vous aime": "Why did I tell her that 'Je vous aime'?" he keeps repeating to himself. And having repeated the question ten times, and having failed to cross the barrier of repression that separates him from the answer, a famous saying of Moliere suddenly pops into his head: "Mais que diable allait il faire dans cette gal ere?" - and he laughs at himself (343/5:36).

If Pierre is going to get out of the mess he is in, he has to act. This is no time for questions. He has to separate completely from the person he had said "Je vous aime" to, not ask why he said it. But because he has in fact repeated the question so many times he has deautomatized its meaning, he has hinted at other meanings hovering around its periphery. He has, in short, come as close as he can to the unspeakable question of why Hélène has not loved him.

Although Pierre may be incapable of expressing to anyone in any language his deep resentment of Hélène's failure to love him (as opposed to her sexual depravity), he nonetheless finally does reach a point where he can at least act on (or psychoanalytically speaking, "act out") this resentment. The day after the meditations on "cette galère" Hélène marches haughtily into Pierre's study, "a wrathful wrinkle on her rather prominent marble brow." She proceeds to berate her husband for his outburst of jealousy. Although she denies having taken a lover, she declares that Dolokhov is a "better man" than he, that she prefers Dolokhov's company to his, and that there are few wives in her situation who would not have taken a lover.

Pierre begins to feel a terrible weight on his chest. He cannot breathe. He suggests a separation:

"Separate? Very well, but only if you give me a fortune," said Hélène. "Separate! That's a thing to frighten me with [Rasstat'sia, vot chem ispugali]!"

Pierre leaped up from the sofa and rushed staggering toward her.

"I'll kill you!" he shouted, and seizing the marble top of a table with a strength he had never before felt, he made a step toward her brandishing the slab.

Hélène's face became terrible, she shrieked and sprang aside. His father's nature showed itself in Pierre. He felt the fascination and delight of frenzy. He flung down the slab, broke it, and swooping down on her with outstretched hands shouted, "Get out!" in such a terrible voice that the whole house heard it with horror. God knows what he would have done at that moment had Hélène not fled from the room. (345/5:38)

The final straw, i.e., what leads Pierre to commit an act of physical violence, is Hélène's mockery of the idea that they might be separated. As if she cared! In other words, Pierre does care (which is his narcissistic problem, not love). And he hates Hélène for having made him care, or for having made him finally realize that he does care. His tentative idea that they might separate leads to an unmistakable sign of her utter indifference to being with him. This is the most painful thing for Pierre, the greatest possible blow to his narcissistic self. It is no wonder that he

gets violent specifically at this point. What happens here is a good illustration of Kohut's thesis that destructive rage is motivated by an injury to the self.¹³

Pierre directs his fury at H el ene. But H el ene is not only H el ene. She is also a (defective) icon of Pierre's pointedly absent mother (note the parallel of what Dolokhov says about his mother - "I have killed her!" - with what Pierre says to his mother-icon - "I'll kill you!"). Pierre's emotions are so powerful because they derive from very archaic and primal feelings about having been insufficiently mothered. There is more in this explosion than anger at having been cuckolded. Pierre is accomplishing even more than was on his hidden Oedipal agenda. He is regressing far back to a pre-Oedipal rage.

It is just before he has his fight with H el ene that Pierre recalls her as she appeared in the early days of their marriage, "with bare shoulders [s otkrytymi plechami] and a languid, passionate look on her face." He also recalls her brother Anatole kissing her "bare shoulders" ("golye plechi"). When H el ene then marches majestically into the room where Pierre has been trying to come to grips with himself, the narrator reintroduces the marble-imagery that had been applied to H el ene's upper body from the very beginning of the novel. H el ene's angry brow is like marble ("na mramornom...lbe") as she approaches Pierre, and a short while later Pierre smashes a marble tabletop ("skhvativ so stola mramornuiu dosku," "razbil ee") as he chases her out. In effect, Pierre finally confronts his mother's invidious rejection/abandonment of him by smashing her cold, stony representation. The "marble beauty" ("mramornaia krasota") of the mother-icon's bust has been dealt a blow. In Kleinian terms, where earlier there had been a "good breast" idealized by the infantile Pierre, now there is a "bad breast"¹⁴ which provokes an act of aggression from him.

A week later Pierre turns over control of his Russian estates to H el ene and travels alone to Petersburg. There is no sign of mourning. But he has achieved some degree of separation from his defective mother-icon, so it is high time he returned to the unresolved issues concerning the men in his life.

NOTES

1. For translation purposes I have used an old standard, the Maude's version (as reprinted in the Norton Critical Edition of War and Peace edited by George Gibian). Occasionally I have had to correct errors in this translation or make changes to reflect the Russian text of the novel as edited by E.E. Zaidensh ur and published in the 20-volume edition of Tolstoy's works in 1961-3. References are given in parentheses, with the page number of the Maude's translation first, then the volume and page of the Russian edition.

2. For example, Shchebal'skii 1888 (1868), 84.
3. Rancour-Laferrriere 1985, 136 ff.
4. See, for example: Freud, Standard Edition, vol. XI, 165-75.
5. See: Dal' 1984 (1862), I, 235; Dal' 1955 (1880-82), I, 149; Fasmer 1964, vol. I, 258-9.
6. See: Klein 1977, 377, 379, 380, 394, etc. Later, when the marriage to Hélène is falling apart, she will become what Klein calls a "bad-breast mother" (see below).
7. See, for example: Kohut 1977; Greenberg and Mitchell 1983 352 ff.
8. Cf. Ossipow 1923, 30.
9. In more traditional Freudian terms, Pierre has made a "narcissistic object-choice" (cf. Freud, Standard Edition, vol. XIV, 90).
10. The idea that Pierre is willing to marry Hélène because she reminds him of his own unclear conscience has already been expressed by Gary Saul Morson:

In the end, Pierre marries Hélène not out of lust but out of guilt over lust. Without a totally clear conscience, he is unable to see any difference between marrying or not marrying a woman he suspects to be guilty of incest.

(Morson 1987, 237)

In other words, Pierre's lack of a "totally clear conscience" might itself have something to do with Helene's incest. But Morson does not come right out and say this, nor does he consider the narcissistic, Oedipal, and pre-Oedipal substrata of Pierre's feelings about Hélène.

Quite often in his interesting book on Tolstoy Morson seems to be teetering in this fashion on the brink of psychoanalysis. His implicit rejection of psychoanalysis (made explicit in his article in the first issue of Tolstoy Studies Journal, 1988) is apparently based on an acceptance of Tolstoy's own anti-intellectual rejection of the possibility of finding causal laws to explain human behavior. However, it is one thing for Tolstoy to design his narration in such a way as to suppress connections between narrated entities, it is quite another to accept the philosophy behind such suppression (as Morson has apparently done).

11. On the psychoanalytic distinction between guilt and shame, see Piers and Singer 1953.
12. Dolokhov is apparently fatherless, however. He is never once referred to by his patronymic. Anna Mikhailovna dubs him "Dolokhov, Mar'i Ivanovny syn" ("Dolokhov, son of Mar'i Ivanovna" - 5:19).
13. Kohut 1977, 116. See also Piers and Singer 1953, 24.
14. See: Klein 1977, 262 ff.; 191 ff.; 306-307; Rancour-Laferrriere 1985, 211.

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Male and Female Sense of Self in Tolstoy's Trilogy
and Anastasia Tsvetaeva's Memoirs

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In the autobiographical texts about childhood left to us by A.I. Tsvetaeva and L.N. Tolstoy, the categories of gender and genre collide, creating very different narrative structures. An examination of the male and female autobiographer's sense of self raises complex questions about the nature of literary art and about our definition of the literary canon.

Anastasia Tsvetaeva's memoirs, unlike the fictionalized autobiography of Lev Tolstoy, have never been read as literature. Yet they are tantalizingly, even disturbingly, close to the borderline between non-fiction and art. To examine the areas of commonality and of difference in these two childhoods is to increase our understanding of that gray area between literary text and historical document, and to suggest possible patterns of difference between female and male self-representations.

Some passages of Tsvetaeva's memoirs effectively carry the reader back into the hot, close world of her childhood. She writes:

Our heads bump, pushing hard at each other, each trying to gain control of the eyepiece, through which you can swim into the stereopticon, as you enter a house by crossing the threshold. But Musya's head is harder and her fist hits me in the side, quietly (so Mama won't see), and in spite of all the heat of my opposition my defeat screams with all its might, and my protracted, at once triumphant and frightened EEEEEEEEEEEEEEE is drowned in Mama's angry defense: "Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Musya? You're older..." —and in Musya's whispered "You're going to get it later..." (54)

The little girls in this scene, Musya and Asya, are the sisters Marina and Anastasia Tsvetaeva. The passage is drawn from the first part of Anastasia's "Vospominania"; this section is titled "Detstvo" and the next "Otrochestvo i iunost'," making the comparison to Tolstoy difficult to avoid.

In fact, in Chapter 8 of his "Detstvo," entitled "Games," Tolstoy describes an analogous scene: The hero Nikolen'ka's older brother Volodya teases and bullies the younger children, trying to puncture the make-believe of their game of "Swiss Family Robinson":

When we sat down on the ground and, pretending that we were going fishing, began to row with all our might,

Volodya sat with arms folded; in a pose which bore no likeness to the pose of a fisherman. I pointed this out to him, but he answered that by waving our arms more or less we wouldn't gain anything, and that in any case we wouldn't go far. Against my will I agreed with him (29).

The similarities between the two excerpts are clear: the author's child-self moves in the atmosphere of a magical vanished world, which now exists only in the narrator's memory. But these scenes also point up important differences between the texts.

One way of understanding these differences is to look at genre features, an approach which in fact sheds some light on the problem. Both are autobiographical texts, both deal with childhood, but Anastasia has explicitly labelled her work as "memoirs."

Richard Coe, in his book When the Grass Was Taller: Autobiography and the Experience of Childhood, distinguishes memoirs from what he calls the Childhood (capital C), or true autobiography of childhood, by saying that "[in a memoir] the writer is, as a character, essentially negative, or at best neutral. It is not he himself (sic), considered as a unique and autonomous identity, who is important; it is...the other people—frequently greater or more conspicuous than himself—whom he meets, with whom he has dealings" (14). The author of the "true autobiography," by contrast, must possess "a dose of vanity so strong that never for one instant can [he] doubt that his own existence, in all its intimate and unmomentous detail, is supremely meaningful to the world at large" (15). Clearly this is an excellent description of Tolstoy's attitude to his "Detstvo"; in fact he went even further, writing an angry letter of complaint to his first editor, Nekrasov, who had titled the young writer's contribution to "Sovremennik" "Istoriia moego detstva." Tolstoy argues that this was by no means the story of his childhood but rather a valid depiction of human development. Coe's normative Childhood is essentially a description of Tolstoy's text. Yet he concludes after examining 600 such texts that there are no "revealing differences between men and women" authors (276).

By genre criteria like these, Tsvetaeva's memoirs have been excluded from consideration as a literary text. Yet as even this excerpt shows, Asya is far from being a neutral, detached and dispassionate observer of the family's life. Neither is she the central and entire psychological focus, as Tolstoy's male hero is. The critical tradition which has canonized Tolstoy's work as one of the "'great' Childhoods" (Coe xiv) has privileged genre over gender in reading these texts, when in fact these texts are also marked by a difference between the male and the female sense of self. These two "Childhoods" demand a gender-sensitive reading if we are to gain insight into the "Girlhood" as well as a better understanding of the "Boyhood."

These genre features which Coe describes strongly emphasize the

centrality of the narrator's self, particularly the autonomy of the developing child. But Sidonie Smith contends in A Poetics of Women's Autobiography that "the ideology of the individuality may, as Nancy Chodorow's revisionist psychoanalytic theory would suggest, derive from a decidedly male resolution of the tension between individuation and dependency." Chodorow links the development of male and female identity to the resolution of the Oedipal conflict, which may not be the most useful notion in dealing with literary texts. More importantly, she goes on to say that the young girl's "experience of self is characterized by 'more flexible and permeable ego boundaries.' ...And so the 'basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic masculine sense is separate'" (qtd. in Smith 12).

Smith extends this model to literary texts, saying, "Since the boy comes to speak with the authority of the father and all fathers before him, those figures of public power who control the discourse and its economy of selfhood, the male experience is identified as the normative human paradigm. From this ideological perspective the girl comes to speak tentatively from outside the prevailing framework of individuality: She brings a different kind of voice to her narrative" (12).

Nancy K. Miller had proposed the terms "arachnology" for the "theory of female textuality" (qtd. in Smith 18). In the Greek myth, the mortal woman Arachne offends the goddess Pallas Athena by her pride in her woven tapestries and as punishment is turned into a spider, doomed to spin her webs forever. The term connotes female skill at the craft of weaving separate strands of story into a close web, a tapestry which builds up a story for the reader. It is a story built on connection, not on individual separateness or strength. Yet the myth's themes also include the crippling of one female artisan by a jealous and more powerful rival. The term is doubly apt for Anastasia: the bonds which link her to her family at once support and confine her.

Tsvetaeva's text clearly reveals a lack of separation from the people around her, especially from the female members of her family. The opening lines of the book provide a telling example. Instead of reaching back into memory for her own first conscious recollection, a standard beginning in a reminiscence of childhood, she gropes for a first memory of Marina. More than that, she concludes that she has no such distinct first visual memory. She was surrounded instead by a sense of her sister's presence, a feeling she describes as "old as I am, plural, like breathing: our 'the-two-of-us,' full of her, Musya's, seniority, self-will, superiority, scorn for my babyhood, ignorance, and jealousy of our mother. Our 'together,' the three of us, full of our mother's pride in her first-born, strong in spirit, body and temperament, full of caresses and pity for the younger, who was often sick...in this hot stream," she concludes, "our childhood floated" (4). Autonomy is not a prominent characteristic of Anastasia's narrator, at any rate.

Nikolen'ka first appears in Tolstoy's "Detstvo," by contrast, not as a dependent infant, but after his tenth birthday, a fact the narrator brings out in the first line of the book. He is already physically independent of the women in his world; he awakens in the nursery, attended not by his mother, who is far away in another part of the house, but by his male tutor. Karl Ivanych, however, is a gentle, loving man, slightly ridiculous to the adult eye, and that very evening Nikolen'ka's father announces his intention to separate the boys not only from their mother, from their female playmates and servants, but also from Karl Ivanych. This whole first segment of Tolstoy's trilogy reads like an escalating scale of distance from the safe, pure, rural, female-dominated world of childhood: the boys must travel with their father to Moscow, and they return to the estate only when their mother is at the point of death. Soon afterward, their last tie to that earlier world is irrevocably broken by the death of the old servant Natal'ya Savishna, which brings "Detstvo" to a close, both in the literal sense and in the narrative structure.

The scenes quoted above describe the struggle for control waged by a younger child against an older, stronger, more subtle sibling, a struggle which has a very different outcome for Tolstoy than for Tsvetaeva. Although Nikolen'ka is wounded at the time, and swayed by Volodya's cool "adult" common sense, his mature self, the narrator, turns upon his adversary and carries the argument to new ground. He affirms his power to overcome his brother's ridicule with his own tools: "If you are to judge by reality, then there won't be any game. And if there isn't any game, then what is left?" (30). In hindsight, at least, he successfully establishes his autonomy from the older male.

Asya's fight with Musya moves in exactly the opposite direction. In fact she yields up her own point of view within the narration, speaking with Marina's voice and referring to herself in the third person: "Venice was already entirely hers, no Asya was fussing or interfering"; and a few lines later, "Asya's hateful head is pushing into the eyepiece again! With a sigh, shoving me covertly, Musya relinquishes her place to me" (55). The younger has won out for the moment, but only at the cost of her independence: she has invoked adult authority to get her way when her own strength and cunning are not enough. Her tactics serve to tighten the bonds of intimacy with their mother, that "hot stream" which she describes on the opening page of her book.

Into this female world, the father comes as an alien, intrusive figure. The Tsvetaevas, mother and daughters, had developed an afternoon ritual, a nap under the fur coverlet of their mother's bed shared also with the family cat, whose purring suggested the very Tsvetaevan neologism "delat' kurlyk" (roughly translated, 'to take a cat nap'). This cozy scene was "broken up, destroyed" Tsvetaeva says, by her father's daily return from work (34).

Tolstoy's father also stands at a considerable distance from both

his children and his wife. Nikolen'ka sees his mother as angelically pure, while he includes in a generally flattering list of his father's qualities the statement that "his two chief passions [were] cards and women" (Ch. IX; 31). Into this ambiguous and morally compromised world the young boy must travel, leaving his mother behind in the country and moving into his father's urban world. Although clearly still a child, even on the eve of his departure from the estate, his awakening sensuality leads him to twice kiss Katya's arms and shoulders (Ch. IX, Ch. XII); in Moscow he falls in love on an absolutely equal footing first with his playmate Serezha and then with the lovely Sonechka (Ch. XIX, Ch. XXIV).

In Nikolen'ka's household, his mother has a gift for music so great that the composer Field is named as "her teacher" (Ch. XI; 33). Yet she is entirely content to play for the family in the drawing room in the evenings. Her husband, for his part, has no career and no vocation other than his own pleasure.

The Tsvetaev parents, by contrast, are both devoted to their own work. It is important to the little girls that their mother has a writing desk, although she uses it largely for correspondence about her husband's museum, and also a piano, her own passion. Maria Aleksandrova's own ambition had by this time been largely stifled, however, and she channeled her energy and ambition into her two daughters instead. Both girls were made clearly aware of this, and both knew that their mother had in fact expected a son during each pregnancy, and had reconciled herself to their arrival with considerable difficulty (30). Marina seems to have drawn a bitter kind of strength from this half-hearted welcome, developing her artistic calling as a compensation for her mother's disappointment with their gender. She excelled (under protest) as a pianist as long as her mother was alive, and immediately after her mother's death transferred all her energy to the development of her greater poetic gift.

Anastasia too felt an early fascination with language, publishing her first prose works at the age of 20. Yet even now, at the age of 94, she remains bound exclusively to factive narrative. In January 1989, I interviewed her in Moscow, and in the course of listing several novels she had written during the 1920s and 1930s (all lost when she was arrested in 1937), she remarked that she never wrote anything non-autobiographical. Even if we grant with James Olney that "autobiography is not so much a mode of literature as literature is a mode of autobiography" (qtd. in Smith 3), this surely a remarkable statement of her bondedness, her willingness to abrogate autonomy and limit herself to the factual, to a form of family chronicle, even as she continues to pursue her vocation as a writer.

At the other extreme, Tolstoy has asserted his freedom to manipulate the material facts of his own life to achieve a general statement about human development, a poetic reality which is more real than the data of his biography. The death of Nikolen'ka's mother provides a dramatic example of this reconstructing of history to mirror psychological truths. He chooses to kill her off when his narrator is