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### Leo Tolstoy's Use of Lucy Mallory's Moralistic Writing in *the Circle of Reading*

Though Tolstoy made use of material from Lucy A. Rose Mallory's *The World's Advance-Thought* (1886–1918)—most extensively in *Circle of Reading* (1906)—he did not agree with all of her views. This essay will explore the areas of agreement in Tolstoy and Mallory's philosophy, and try to reconcile some of their most obvious differences. It will provide some background on American metaphysical organizations to help understand Mallory's religious and philosophical beliefs and context.

*The World's Advance-Thought* had an international readership. Alongside wide-ranging discussions of American metaphysical thought, it carried articles about political, economic, and

social issues of the day. Mallory criticized organized religion and government, spoke out forcefully for women's suffrage, advocated temperance, and denounced meat eating with a ferocity that attracted Tolstoy's attention. He quoted her views on vegetarianism in *Circle of Reading* (PSS 41: 119, 42: 19).

With the exception of a few newspaper articles and encyclopedia entries, most of the information about Lucy Mallory's life and views can be found in her journal. Mallory (1843–1920) did not start her life in Oregon.<sup>1</sup> Lowenstein reports that her father, Aaron Rose (1813–1899), came from Ulster County, New York. His German-Jewish farming family decided to go west in 1838 and put down roots in Coldwater, Michigan (30–31). Records show his marriage to a Minerva Kellogg, age seventeen, by a justice of the peace, and the birth of two daughters. Minerva died giving birth to the second child, Lucy A. Rose, on September 15, 1843 (Rose 9). The 1850 census indicates Lucy's age as seven (U.S. Census 1850, Branch county, Michigan 97/97: 303). Her father remarried and traveled by wagon train to the Oregon territory, where in 1854 he founded Roseburg. Rose became a leading businessman and served a term in the territorial legislature (1855–1856) (McKinley 212).

Lucy received a rudimentary education in a log-cabin school on the Oregon frontier (Booth 4–5). In 1860, she married her schoolteacher, Rufus Mallory (1831–1914); he became a successful lawyer, judge and member of Congress (McKinley 156).

Mallory's belief in "the Communion of spirits," which she discusses in *The World's Advance-Thought*, stemmed from her childhood contact with an Umpqua Indian boy, who appears to have introduced her to shamanistic rituals (Mallory, Vol. 27 Feb. 1917: 78). As to Mallory's mature influences, a reading of the *World's Advance-Thought* showed her to be a Spiritualist, interested in Swedenborgianism, Transcendentalism, and Quakerism, all of which looked toward the "inner

light.” Mallory admired and quoted Andrew Jackson Davis (1826–1910) (Mallory Vol. 14 Dec. 1900: 4). Davis, referred to by American Spiritualists as “the father” of the movement, preferred the title seer, rather than Spiritualist, and called himself a clairvoyant rather than a medium (Judah 52). The author of the *Great Harmonia* (1850–1859) considered Jesus to be a divine person in the same way that the inner being of each individual is divine, and called Jesus the most important religious teacher and medium (Judah 66).

Spiritualism, whose members sought to communicate with the dead through mediums, underwent a transition during the 1870s. Mallory, however, retained her earlier beliefs. As her journal discloses, she nonetheless found attractive certain aspects of the “new growths—reformations and reconstitutions of mid-century and later spiritualism” (Albanese 253).

Mallory’s references to New Thought, Christian Science, Theosophy, and Asian religious-philosophical systems reflect shifts in her own beliefs. These organizations were all part of an umbrella of metaphysical systems, whose members, as allies of the transcendentalist “revolted against the creedal authority of organized Protestant churches to find their solace in a new freedom of individualism exemplified by Emersonian self-reliance.” Rejecting Calvinism with its doctrine of predestination, each individual sought his or her “own salvation without needing the Christian church” (Judah 12–13).

Tolstoy called Mallory a spiritualist, but he identified her with Theosophy, as well. Theosophy, a synthesis of Eastern and Western philosophy, leaned more towards the Eastern (Albanese, 276–277), contained Hermetic and Kabbalistic elements, and had a more occult aspect (Judah 12).

Dushan Makovitski wrote in a 1904 diary entry that Tolstoy, while working on the *Circle of Reading*, mentioned Channing, Emerson, and “the theosophical journal *The World’s Advance thoughts*

[sic.], whose editor was the woman Lucy Mallory” (1: 110). In 1905 Makovitski recorded Tolstoy’s observation about the ability of Theosophists to comprehend and make pronouncements about “deep truths” (1: 297–298).

Tolstoy’s own religious and philosophical views must have resonated strongly with Theosophy: For instance, in the introduction to his translation of *On Life*, Aylmer Maude observes that after reading *On Life*, Madame Blavatsky, the principal founder of Theosophy had called Tolstoy “a true Theosophist” (Maude, *Centenary*, 12: xxiv). A copy of Madame Blavatsky’s *The Voice of the Silence* is in Tolstoy’s library (*Библиотека ЛНТ*, 3: 152–153). Elena E. Pisareva, who wrote Blavatsky’s (*née* Elena Petrovna Blavatskaia’s) biography, helped to edit the Russian journal *Theosophical Herald*, and knew Tolstoy personally. In her memoir, Pisareva notes that Tolstoy was sympathetic to the movement, but was not formally affiliated with it (Pisareva 32–33).

It is not surprising that Tolstoy detected a Theosophical component in Mallory’s philosophy, since American metaphysical groups were syncretic in nature (Judah 12). Mallory, however, in fact embraced New Thought, among the most individualist of the various spiritualist groups.

Ahlstrom describes New Thought as rooted in the mental healing tradition of Phineas P. Quimby; the movement became more formally organized in the 1880s, after a rift developed among a “strident group of Quimbyites,” and another of Quimby’s disciples, Mary Baker Eddy, the founder and head of the Christian Science movement. While critics called Eddy “dogmatic,” she remained steadfast in her opposition to any outside interference, and her organization survives to this day.

Two of Quimby’s other pupils, Warren F. Evans and Julius Dresser wrote books that defined New Thought philosophy and delved into some esoteric aspects of mental healing (1026–27). New Thought doctrine contained Neoplatonic features (Judah 44), and showed the influence of Swedenborg, Charles Poyden, the French

mesmerist, and Andrew Jackson Davis (Ahlstrom, 1026). Horatio W. Dresser, the son of Julius Dresser and the historian of the movement (Dresser 192), called Mallory's journal the "pioneer mental-healing" publication in the Northwest (239). According to Dresser, the many New Thought organizations that sprang up across the United States by the end of the nineteenth century varied, but contained a core set of beliefs (182). The Metaphysical Club of Boston issued an optimistic proclamation in 1895 expressing

an active interest in a more spiritual philosophy and its practical application to human life. Its spirit [being] broad, tolerant and constructive, and its object an impartial search for truth... (Dresser 184–185)

The 1899 International Metaphysical League meeting in New York City provided a more elaborate mission statement promising to teach about

the universal Fatherhood and Motherhood of God and the all-inclusive Brotherhood of man—that One Life is immanent in the universe...and that the Intelligence is above all and in all; and that from this infinite Life and Intelligence proceed all Life, Love and Truth. (197)

Mallory's journal was replete with such New Thought language, and she referred to the trinity of "Life, Love, and Truth," in every issue.

Some New Thought adherents buttressed their doctrines with Theosophical principals, while others retained Spiritualistic components (Dresser 302–303). Mallory was comfortable with all three groups since Spiritualism, Theosophy, and New Thought systems shared a belief in universal brotherhood, explored man's relationship with nature or God, emphasized the spiritual over the material, and adhered to some form of mental healing or mediumistic activity.

Regarding Tolstoy's attitude towards these movements, Milivojevic maintains that Tolstoy's own interest in Eastern philosophies made him receptive to metaphysical world-views (iv), but there were limits.

### The Afterlife

A careful reading of Mallory's journal reveals the underpinnings of the philosophy that caught Tolstoy's attention. Four themes emerge. The first three—self-perfection, morality and brotherhood—greatly resonated with Tolstoy; the last, resurrection, he rejected.

Mallory's own views regarding resurrection were complicated because of her adherence to metaphysical philosophy. Along with religious and ethical components, New Thought contained mental-healing and mediumistic elements. Mallory produced a considerable amount of moralistic writing while retaining a strong interest in mental-healing and mediumship. This became the sticking point for Tolstoy, whose thoughts about life and death had undergone considerable change by the time he came to know about Mallory's journal in 1888 (Толстой *Перепуска* 327).

Donna Tussing Orwin writes in *Tolstoy's Art and Thought* that by 1870, Tolstoy "no longer believed in personal immortality of any sort, and this no doubt influenced the evolution of his thought" (212). As Tolstoy began to write *On Life*, Orwin suggests Kant's view that reason is an internal rather than an external characteristic of the mind attracted Tolstoy's attention and stimulated his own thinking. He developed his own philosophy, "reasonable consciousness," and in *On Life* stated that in order to become a rational being, an individual, must relinquish his animal nature (194).

Mallory expressed a similar idea in her writing early on. An 1889 *World's Advance Thought* essay referred to the "external consciousness... the animal man" contrasting it with the "higher

consciousness of the spirit,” which to her was the true life (Mallory Vol.4 n.m.1889: 10).

At this time, I have no evidence that points to her having read Kant. From what my research shows, her contact with American metaphysical thought shaped her views from the very beginning, and she absorbed knowledge of formal philosophical systems through them.

In *Tolstoy and the Religious Culture of His Time*, Inessa Medzhibovskaya discusses Tolstoy’s grappling with the meaning of life and death in the 1880s. Medzhibovskaya notes Tolstoy’s appreciation for Nikolai Grot’s “idea of the soul’s liberation from matter and its striving toward goodness (333). She points to the description of Ivan Il’ich’s death as foreshadowing Tolstoy’s development of “reasonable consciousness” in *On Life*, and says Tolstoy’s construct

...neither vanishes with the physical cessation of being nor is dispelled by posthumous revelations or accidents already beyond all control... [it] is immortal and is not limited to the time frame of the physical life cycle. (334)

This philosophy acted as a substructure for Tolstoy’s future writing.

### **The Circle of Reading—the Selection Process**

In the early 1900s, when Tolstoy began organizing his calendars in earnest, he turned to a format similar to the one he used in *On Life*. The monthly and weekly headings in *Circle of Reading* (1906) contained Tolstoy’s dicta requiring man to renounce his animal existence in order to lead a life based on faith and what he considered to be the true Christian teachings. Tolstoy wrote in the preface to *Circle of Reading* that the material for the project came from “the works of numerous thinkers both ancient and modern” (PSS 41: 9); Mallory’s journal was listed among the sources (PSS 42: 586–589). Tolstoy admitted to revising many of the selections he chose, and cautioned his readers to keep this in mind (PSS 41: 9). However,

he preserved Mallory’s quotations almost exactly as she wrote them. So far, I have identified the sources of more than fifty nearly-verbatim quotations in *The World’s Advance-Thought*, mostly from issues published from 1900 to 1902. Approximately ninety-five found in the *Circle of Reading* are under her name, the remaining thirty bear the designation “from the *World’s Advance-Thought*.”

Tolstoy showed great admiration for Mallory, using almost as many of her sayings as he did for Kant. Makovitski recorded his diary that Tolstoy called Mallory “a spiritualist,” but added [she is] “such a good writer!” (1: 171). He spoke about the “remarkable sayings” found “in every issue of *World’s-Advance Thought*,” adding “how amazing that next to Kant and others in the *Circle of Reading*, there will often be Lucy Mallory, “an unknown person from Oregon” (1: 298).

A *Circle of Reading* entry for December 6 carries the title: “We are mistaken, not because we are unable to think properly, but because we live badly” (PSS, 42: 312; my translation). Tolstoy quoted Rousseau, Schopenhauer, Mallory, Kant, and Pascal in that order. The Mallory selection declares:

We view the world by means of our thoughts, we see it not as it is, but as our thoughts show it to us. Hate does this to us—as though we had on black glasses—foggy and gloomy. (PSS 42: 313)

### **Mallory and Tolstoy on Spiritualism**

In *Consequences of Consciousness*, Orwin describes Tolstoy as “a moralist and significantly... in some ways” a transcendentalist (28). Tolstoy and Mallory showed similar transcendental tendencies in their approach to religion: Both emphasized the individual’s direct spiritual connection to God or the Cosmos, and used similar language in their insistence that the individual renounce his or her animal self in order to find God. Furthermore, each one proclaimed that “love” was the ultimate means of attaining a “true life.”

However, once Tolstoy read Mallory's journal, he could not mistake her Spiritualist side, since she wrote many columns that describe "discarnate spirits on the earth plane," and spoke of her own experiences as a medium (e.g., Mallory, Vol. 13 July 1899: 132–133, Vol. 13 January 1900: 35, Vol. 12 June 1900: 122). Moreover, each edition of the *World's Advance-Thought* contained a "communion table" which listed cities from all over the world with a coordinating timetable. Mallory asked all of her readers to focus on saying a prayer at the exact same time in order to exert their collective thoughts for that one moment on a particular idea. Other New Thought groups participated in this type of activity as well (Braden 235).

A letter Tolstoy wrote to Mallory in 1904 explained his position. He said quite candidly that he highly valued her moral teachings, but at the same time he rejected her "occultism" and "mediumship" (PSS 75: 158). Tolstoy's criticisms did not deter Mallory from discussing the sensitive topic with him. In 1906, Mallory wrote him a long letter, where she told him about her background. Mallory assured Tolstoy that "Spirit Teachers" had guided and shaped her life since childhood, and she reminded him of a statement he made in an earlier letter expressing disbelief in "the Communion of Spirits." Mallory told Tolstoy that her childhood experiences could not help but made her a true believer in them (Толстой, *Переписка*: 333–334).

Although they exchanged subsequent letters, Tolstoy did not acknowledge her passionate defense of spiritualism, nor did he choose anything from Mallory's writing for *Circle of Reading* that openly professed beliefs. However, occasionally a saying indicative of her mediumistic tendencies found a place in the calendar because of its reference to man's animal and spiritual being:

I can send my thoughts to all peoples: they can cross all oceans and dominate all continents, if they are backed by the Divine energy of Love

and Wisdom. My thoughts are the spiritual part of me, and therefore can be in ten thousand places at a time, while my body can only be in once [sic] place at a time. (PSS 41: 317)

Though Tolstoy's quotation ends there, Mallory's journal entry continues:

I am a God only through my spiritual being. Through my body alone, I am a mere animal man. (Mallory Vol. 14 (Dec. 1901): 164)

While Tolstoy ridiculed Spiritualism in *The Fruits of Enlightenment* (1889) and *The Living Corpse* (1900) and criticized Mallory for her spiritualist tendency, he found a way to accept it. Vinitsky's book, *Ghostly Paradoxes: Modern Spiritualism and Russian Culture in the Age of Realism (1850s-1880s)*, which discusses Russian society's reaction to spiritualism, helps to explain Tolstoy's ambivalence towards Mallory's views. Vinitsky refers to those individuals or groups who showed interest in various spiritualist activities using mediums, hypnosis and other paranormal techniques. Their involvement, he notes, was greeted with contempt in the press and among writers such as Tolstoy. However, upon closer examination, according to Vinitsky, such spiritualist groups had great impact on their society, and an important conversation grew up around questions regarding the body's existence and the possibility of life after death (140). Despite Tolstoy's contempt for spiritualists, Vinitsky finds their beliefs were not completely foreign to his views, and at the end of the 1870s, Tolstoy, like spiritualists, believed in a special "force" inherent in all individuals, but felt that some people showed more awareness of its meaning and made use of it.

Tolstoy, in Vinitsky's estimation, regarded the individuals employing this special ability—"Truth, Love, Light, or Life"—as exhibiting "a strong moral sense," rather than being occult practitioners (140).

### Mallory's appeal for Tolstoy

Mallory's moralistic writing appealed to Tolstoy for the very reasons Vinitsky enumerates. The force he describes is essentially the same one that guided Mallory. Her talk of prodigal sons and daughters, drifting away from true religion, feeding on "husks," resonated strongly with Tolstoy's own, as did her observation that those who looked in the external world to find answers to life's pressing problems would search in vain. The answer to all of an individual's questions about life, she thought, resided within each individual, and the only "path to wisdom" was in leading a good life (PSS 41: 324). Tolstoy observed in *On Life* that

no matter how narrow may be the sphere of a man's activity—be he a Christ, a Socrates, a good unknown... old man, a youth, or a woman," if he devoted himself exclusively to the "good of others," he would be a part, even in this life, of a world "for which there is no death. (PSS 26: 415; Maude, *Centenary*, 12: 134)

Tolstoy's *Circle of Reading* December 24 calendar page has a lengthy piece by Mallory, and it appears to be one of the rare examples where Tolstoy condensed the observations she made in her writings over the years into one long discourse (PSS 42: 376–377). In the calendar entry, Mallory talks about the individual's need to find a "silent place" when seeking an atmosphere leading to "harmonious growth." Quite often in her journal, Mallory would advise her readers to seek such a place, which she said could be a room or even a closet (Mallory Vol. 23 October 1909: 36). New Thought adherents and Quakers shared this practice (Braden 237). Mallory referred to it as a spiritual practice, but occasionally she invoked Christ's name. Tolstoy uses the word "cell" (клеть) in the text to describe this place. He quotes Mallory as saying "Christ himself" told his followers to go to such a place when praying, a place where an individual could hear "a silent voice communicate...the truth which will liberate,"

rather than listening to "a thousand voices" promising false spiritual salvation (PSS 42: 376–377).

Mallory was proud of Tolstoy's recognition, but she rarely mentioned it in *The World's Advance-Thought*. It was only in the letters exchanged by the two that the measure of respect they held for each other was evident. While many Americans traveled to Yasnaya Polyana to visit Tolstoy, Mallory did not make the trip. She spent most of her life in Oregon, rarely traveling far from home. Yet, she and Tolstoy shared a vision—to "establish a 'Universal republic,'" by living a life based on Love (PSS 75: 158; 76: 251; Толстой, *Переписка* 331).

### Notes

1. Mallory's journal will be cited by volume, date and page. The Jubilee Edition of Tolstoy's works will be cited as PSS with volume and page. Reference to English versions of those works cited in the PSS will be from Aylmer Maude translations indicated by Maude, *Centenary*, volume and page. Citations from Л. Н. Толстой и США—*Переписка* will be cited as Толстой, *Переписка* and page number.

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