
Maslova's Exorbitant Body

Harriet Murav

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Prostitution, is, to quote Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, "a life of chronic crime . . . led by hundreds and hundreds of thousands of women not only with the permission, but under the protection of the government authorities, out of concern for the well-being of their citizens . . . which ends with agonizing illness, premature senility and death for 9 out of 10 women" (*PSS* 32: 11).¹ The government bureaucracy created for the regulation of prostitution is part and parcel of the crime, according to Tolstoy. The weekly examination conducted by the "bureaucrats and doctors in government service" perpetuates the women's crime, not only because the prostitutes receive official permission to carry on their "fornication," but also because the examination itself "destroys the sense of shame" that in Tolstoy's words "protects against crime," the modesty "innate not only in people, but even in animals" (*PSS* 32: 11). What the government does to safeguard the well-being of its citizens is a crime against the laws of God, the laws created by human beings, and the laws of nature. The citizenry in the name of whom the government conducts its work of regulation are also guilty of crimes, according to Tolstoy. These crimes and immoralities include idleness, duplicity, coarseness, and depravity, particularly in women, as for example, in Nekhliudov's sudden realization that there is no difference between the beautiful, aristocratic Mariette and a well-dressed streetwalker. The crimes also include brutality, exploitation, and outright violence, especially among the high-ranking officials who determine administrative policy, and finally, the hypocrisy shown by the individuals and organizations who engage in philanthropy, as for example, the little episode involving Nekhliudov's aunt, the countess Charskaia, who describes her visit to a shelter established to reform prostitutes. The coun-

tess remarks that she kept washing and washing herself afterwards (*PSS* 32: 248).² Among the philanthropists must be included Nekhliudov himself, tarred with the same brush of class privilege as everyone else of his circle.

Resurrection targets all the elements of what Foucault calls an "apparatus," that is, a "heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions" (Foucault 194). Elements of this "ensemble" include, for example, the prostitutes' medical examinations, the prison architecture, with its panoptical peepholes in the doors of the cells, and the prosecutor's use of the theory of degeneration, satirically described as the "last word of scientific wisdom" (*PSS* 32: 72). Tolstoy's novel calls into question the entire apparatus of interconnected governmental, medico-scientific, social, and philanthropic activity with regard to prostitution and other crimes. The fundamental strategy of the novel's critique is to reveal the hidden connections among the seemingly disparate parts of this apparatus, including, significantly, the disparate elements of its social hierarchy. The hidden connection between the upper-class hero, Prince Dmitrii Ivanovich Nekhliudov, and the lower-class heroine, the prostitute who calls herself "Liubka," is one such link. In Tolstoy's earlier novels such linkages are the building blocks of the effect of reality, but here they pack a single moral punch, revealing that there is no difference between the guilty and those who judge and punish them. Richard Gustafson asserts: "*Resurrection* is more informed by Tolstoy's social, moral, and religious views than any other of his fictional works" (Gustafson ix). Or, as Vladimir Zhdanov more bombastically puts it, the novel is "an indictment of an exploitative social structure doomed to destruction" (Zhdanov 3).³

However, even as the novel exposes the harm done by this interlocking apparatus of state, society, and the professions, rejecting the social distinctions and the disciplinary apparatus that support them, it relies on and reinscribes its heroine in a similar set of distinctions, subjecting her to a disciplinary regime in the name of a utopian vision of purified and resurrected social body.⁴ Crucial to this vision is the work of Nikolai Fedorov, who

saw the interrelation between women, commerce, and sexual reproduction as the chief evil facing society at the turn of the century. In *Resurrection*, this triple evil is suggested by the image of the repulsive procuress, whose naked and puffy hands and arms are covered in rings and bracelets. In this paper I show how the interrelated themes of the body, gender, and sexuality play a central role in the ambiguities of Tolstoy's argument.

The well-established critical tradition that focuses exclusively on the moral, social, and political aspects of the work, supported by Tolstoy's own characterization of it as a "letter" to his readers, neglects a dimension of its language and structure that is no less important, but far more difficult to pin down, what I will call, using Helene Moglen's sense of the term, the fantastic. Moglen's analysis of the rise of the English novel offers a counter-argument to the standard view, according to which the novel's ascendancy is linked to the emergence of the middle class. Equally significant in her view is the emergence of the "sex-gender system" and an emotional-affective register not typically associated with the cogency and completeness of the realist tradition. According to Moglen, in the realist mode, novels create fictions about male autonomy, but in the fantastic mode, novels expose the shakiness of the boundaries that separate one subject from another. In the realist mode, novels show how sons gain agency through the acquisition of wealth, status, and authority, but in the fantastic mode, novels reveal the psychic cost of these acquisitions. The fantastic mode, exemplified, according to Moglen, in such works as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, reveals how the "psychic past haunts the social present" (Moglen 1-15). Moglen's analysis of the fantastic mode relies on the work of Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, who argue that the loss and separation upon which autonomous subjectivity depends are never acknowledged. Instead of mourning, subjects narcissistically incorporate lost objects within themselves thereby threatening even as they seek to preserve the boundaries of their own identities.

I will show how the process of unmoored loss and psychic incorporation that can be traced in Nekhliudov results in the creation of the nightmarish,

"exorbitant" female body and the subsequent work of disciplining and containing its dangers. Nekhliudov's shocking reunion with Maslova at the occasion of her trial provokes a profound rupture in his valuation of the social hierarchy, his sense of his own identity, and even his bodily self-image. Maslova's body is "exorbitant" not only because it both provokes and repels desire in Tolstoy's hero, but because it sets in motion a process whereby boundaries collapse.⁵ As Moglen argues with regard to the English novel, in Tolstoy's work, "ideology, subjectivity, and narrative structure" interact (11). A nightmare version of Maslova's body haunts not only Nekhliudov, but bleeds into the narrator's discourse, permeating the entire text of the novel.⁶

Central to *Resurrection* in its fantastic mode is the image of the body found in the opening trial scene in the form of the medical report on the victim's corpse. The text itself, like what it describes, is excessive:

For four pages and in twenty-seven points continued the description of all the details of the external examination of the terrible, enormous, fat, swollen, and rotting corpse of the merchant who enjoyed himself in the city. The feeling of vague disgust experienced by Nekhliudov intensified during this reading of the description of the corpse. Katiusha's life, and the pus that seeped out of the [victim's] nostrils, and the eyes extruding from their sockets, and his [Nekhliudov's] act with her, all of this, it seemed to him, were objects that belonged to one and the same order and he was surrounded from all sides and swallowed by these objects.

Na chetyrekh stranitsakh po 27 punktam shlo takim obrazom opisanie vseh podrobnosti naru-zhnogo osmotra strashnogo, ogromnogo, tolstogo i eshche raspukhshego, razlagaiushchegosia trupa veselivshegosia v gorode kuptsa. Chuvstvo neopredelennoi gadlivosti, kotoroe ispytival Nekhliudov, eshche usililos' pri chtenii etogo opisaniia trupa. Zhizn' Katiushi, i vytekavshaia iz nozdrei sukrovitsa, i vyshedshie iz orbit glaza, i ego postupok s neiu,— vse eto, kazalos' emu, byl predmety odnogo i togo zhe poriadka, i on so vseh storon byl okruzen i pogloshchen etimi predmetami. (*PSS* 32: 69)

John Bayley, describing the significance of this image, writes that in *Resurrection* "all physical being is now not of the body but the corpse," and moreover, a corpse that Tolstoy never gives "a decent burial," but allows instead to remain among the living where it "poisons the air of the novel" (250). I am arguing that reading the novel in its fantastic mode enables us to see that the merchant's corpse, Maslova's body, Nekhliudov's body, the body of his mother, the social body, and the body of the text—the discourse of the narrator and the characters—merge into one another in a terrifying way (Moglen 132). Bayley's image of the unburied but dead body that determines the actions of the living suggests the psychic structure of incorporation which colours the novel as a whole. In *Resurrection* the body is not primarily a site of joy but instead, its links to sex and birth are more ambivalent; its relation to the suspension of hierarchical difference more threatening, and its dominant association is with death and decay.⁷ The rotting corpse, the graphic detail of the excesses of the body in death, and the breach of boundaries in the enumeration and display of the viscera are connected in Nekhliudov's mind not only with the prostitute's life, but also with his own relations to Maslova, and finally, with his image of himself.

The sight of Maslova at the trial reminds him of "that terrible night" when the moon illuminated "something black and terrible." The phrase repeats three times in two sentences, underscoring a horror that seems disproportionate to the event that causes it (*PSS* 32: 67). But Nekhliudov's shame over his abandonment of Katiusha only goes so far in accounting for his intense emotion and disgust. It is not only his past relations with her that provoke this feeling, but women generally. For example, even before the trial and the memories it awakens, his hesitation over whether he ought to marry Korchagina stems in part from his "unconscious terror before a woman's secret being" (*bessoznatel'nyi strakh pered tainstvennym sushchestvom zhenshchiny*; *PSS* 32: 18). The potential for "disgust" and "horror" was always a part of Nekhliudov's relation to Katiusha, even before he commits what he later comes to see as his crime against her. On Easter eve, Maslova exchanges the

ritually prescribed three kisses with a beggar "who had a red scab instead of a nose" (*PSS* 32: 56). Her encounter with this grotesque Gogolian figure takes place under the approving gaze of Nekhliudov himself, and is a prelude to their own Easter kiss. The mutilated beggar, acting as a substitute for Nekhliudov, foreshadows the Prince's own image of himself at the trial and afterwards as "disgusting."

After the trial, Nekhliudov's disgust at everything and everyone around him increases, and, like the merchant's body, knows no limits, culminating finally in the realization that he feels disgust "for himself" (*PSS* 32: 102). His acknowledgment of his own role in the downward turn of Katiusha's life, culminating in her trial for murder, produces overwhelming feelings, yet the image used to describe these feelings is disconcertingly innocent. He feels like a "puppy who did his business in the house and whose master takes him by the scruff of his neck and thrusts his nose into the pile [*gadost*'] which he made" (*PSS* 32: 77). Nekhliudov feels that he is at once the perpetrator of a great and terrible crime, and at the same time finds himself in the position of an ill-trained puppy. This incongruous image contrasts sharply with the horrific medical report. However, the puppy image and the medical report, both of which emphasize bodily wastes, reduce Nekhliudov to the position of an infant. The difference between the two is the difference between comedy and horror.

At the trial, the associations produced by the description of the victim's corpse, and Nekhliudov's impressions of the prostitute's life, together with his memory of his liaison with Maslova merge into an image of himself inside a terrifying, *unheimlich* female/maternal body: "Katiusha's life, and the pus that seeped out of the [victim's] nostrils, and the eyes extruding from their sockets, and his [Nekhliudov's] act with her, all of this, it seemed to him, were objects that belonged to the one and the same order and he was surrounded from all sides and swallowed by these objects" (*PSS* 32: 69). The loss of the sense of a boundary between the inside and the outside of the body, and between his own and another's body, the processes of intermingling and exchange that are part of birth and sex, terrify and disgust him.⁸ In a nightmarish

moment, the snobbish Prince Nekhliudov, who cannot bear to be touched by his social inferiors, is surrounded and engulfed by a set of unnameable "objects." Associating the maternal body as a devouring, horrific image of the body in death, identifying himself with his bodily wastes (the image of himself as a puppy), and finally, sensing himself without boundaries, Nekhliudov's image of himself corresponds to Kristeva's model of abjection, a horrifying borderline condition in which identities collapse.⁹

The Mummy/Mother

Maslova's trial thrusts Nekhliudov back to the past in a double sense, both to his previous relation to her (a relation that includes a falsely idyllic and a "terrifying," phase), and to the more remote, unknowable, and terrifying past of his relation to the body of his mother. The dominant motifs of Nekhliudov's relation to his mother are disgust and shame.¹⁰ "He remembered the final phase of his relationship with his mother, and this relationship seemed unnatural and objectionable" (PSS 32: 99). Nekhliudov feels disgust looking at the expensive portrait which emphasizes his mother's naked bosom and shoulders, and his discomfort is heightened by the thought that the portrait hangs in the very same room where she died, "withered like a mummy" [*ssokhshaiasia, kak mumiiia*], but nonetheless filling the room with an oppressive, heavy smell (PSS 32: 99-100). In a scene that could come from a gothic novel, this mummy/Mother takes his "strong, white hand" into her own blackening, bony one and asks his forgiveness, as if she were already dead and reaching him from the grave. In a sense, she does reach him from the grave, not directly, and not in this scene, but obliquely, in Nekhliudov's reaction to Maslova. Her "black eyes" remind him of something "black and terrible"—not only his night with her, as I have already discussed—but also, the "blackening" hand of the mother. Elena Ivanovna Nekhliudova was opposed to Katiusha as a marriage partner for her son; the thought filled her with "horror" (PSS 32: 48). Katiusha's indeterminate social status somewhere

between a servant and a ward, and the blurring of social boundaries that would result from marriage with her, produces the strikingly intense response of "horror" in the mother. Nekhliudov ventriloquizes this "horror" in his own inchoate sensation of disgust, which erupts so forcefully at Maslova's trial in response to the medical report. The mother's horror and the son's horror at the mother mirror and intensify each other, even though the threat of and the desire for the loss of differentiation conflict with one another.

These inchoate and conflicting desires can be seen in the framework of the "encrypted self," developed by the psychoanalysts Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok. I will rely on Helene Moglen for a brief discussion of their model. As Moglen puts it, Abraham and Torok "write compelling fictions of multiple and 'encrypted selves'" (Moglen 124-25). A loss "which cannot be acknowledged" results in the loss of language and the creation "of a secret tomb inside the subject" (Abraham and Torok 131). Abraham and Torok distinguish between the positive process of introjection, which allows the ego to grow outward, and the pathological counterpart of incorporation, a narcissistic, regressive process, in which desires not yet formed come back to haunt the present.

Using Abraham and Torok as a model, what appears most significant in Nekhliudov's prior history is the absence of his father and the presence of his sexualized mother (the exposed shoulders and bosom in her portrait). The father, the keeper of order, the one who threatens castration, is not present to enforce his law. The son fantasizes that he has what the mother lacks, that he is whole and integral, but her sexuality threatens his narcissistic illusion of completion. The mother's death intensifies the ambivalence of the son's narcissistic fantasy of fulfillment. She takes his phallus to the grave with him: in the passage from Tolstoy I discussed earlier, the mother's gesture of asking Nekhliudov's forgiveness by taking his strong hand into her blackened bony suggests her death grip on his desire.

Abraham and Torok describe a phase in the illness of mourning, triggered by a secondary loss, in which the crypt begins to crumble, and the

subject stages in his own behaviour the feelings he would attribute to the love-object. In *Resurrection*, Nekhliudov suffers multiple losses: he loses his mother, he loses Katiusha only to rediscover her as "Liubka" Maslova, who seems "dead" to him, he loses a son whom he never knew he had, and he loses his awareness of his own innocence and goodness. Maslova is the walking image of his most shameful secret. Nekhliudov's journey into the world of the prison is a journey into the crypt, both literally and figuratively, and indeed, in a remarkable scene near the end of the novel, Nekhliudov enters the prison mortuary. Having transformed Maslova back into someone resembling Katiusha (according to his image of her), he loses her again, because at the novel's conclusion, she rejects Nekhliudov's offer of marriage, choosing to remain instead with Simonson, an acolyte of Fedorov. The murderous guilt that Nekhliudov assumes, his displays of shame and self-accusation, and his grief—are all feelings he would like to attribute to Katiusha, who lost him and his child.

In offering a psychoanalytic reading of Nekhliudov, I am not claiming that Tolstoy anticipates Abraham and Torok, nor am I claiming special access to Tolstoy's own psyche by means of his fictitious creations. I am arguing that in Nekhliudov Tolstoy is describing aristocratic masculine subjectivity at a critical moment when difference and the breakdown of social hierarchy appear particularly threatening. Following Moglen's lead, I am using Abraham and Torok to help clarify a parallel between the subjective and the social world. The framework provided the "encrypted self" enables us to trace out the intersections between the structure of the backward looking, conservative model of subjectivity represented in Nekhliudov, the social critique reflected in the novel as a whole, with its contradictory attack on and reinscription of boundaries, and the ending, revealing parallels that might otherwise remain obscure. The threat to the system of social differentiation realized in the prostitute's body, which I will discuss in the next section, is the other side of the coin of the son's narcissistic fantasy of a world without difference.

Class

The issue of differentiation plays out both with regard to Nekhliudov as an individual and in relation to the larger social body. The grotesque, unrestrained, exorbitant body, represented in the medical report at Maslova's trial and associated with sex, appetite, and death, serves as an image of the undifferentiated social body. The prostitute figures significantly in this vision of the social bond gone amuck, because the prostitute not only violates the boundaries of family life, engaging in sex outside of marriage, but also undermines the elaborate social distinctions that serve to regulate life in society. Tolstoy enumerates the range of class, religion, ethnicity, age, character, and ability from which the prostitute's clients are drawn. "Young people, the middle-aged, half-children, decrepit old men, bachelors, married men, merchants, shop assistants, Armenians, Jews, Tartars, the rich, the poor, the healthy, the sick . . . soldiers, civilians," all engage in "fornication" with Maslova (*PSS* 32: 11). Groups that are normally distinct from one another merge together in their commerce with Maslova's body. The merchant's rotting corpse serves not only as an image of Nekhliudov's horror and shame, but also as a trope of social dissolution.¹¹ Tolstoy mocks the prosecutor's charge that Maslova acted on her accomplices by means of "hypnotism," but his closing speech to the jury, in which he calls upon them to "safeguard" [*ograde*] society from the "infection" caused by such individuals as Maslova is consonant with a hidden aspect of Tolstoy's social critique. There is a certain ambivalence about the loss of boundaries, not only, as I have just shown, with regard to the individual psyche of Nekhliudov, but also with regard to the social body as a whole.

This ambivalence reveals itself in the descriptions of the prison. In their book *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White argue that in early nineteenth-century reform discourse (including the work of Chadwick, Mayhew, and Dickens), "the slum, the laboring poor, the prostitute, the sewer, were recreated for the bourgeois study and drawing room . . . in the construction of a bourgeois Imaginary" (Stally-

brass and White 125-6). In *Resurrection*, in contrast, the opposition is not so much between the bourgeoisie and the poor as between the aristocracy and other classes; however, the emerging bourgeoisie is important in the historical context of the novel. The well-ordered, clean, and modestly dressed body—let us say of the female reader of *Niva*, the journal in which *Resurrection* was first published—has its counterpart in the threatening and grotesque undifferentiated body of the Other. As Beth Holmgren, quoting Jeffrey Brooks, argues, *Niva* “combined aspects of the informative, instructive, and entertaining elements of other media into a magazine format oriented toward developing a middle-class family audience” (Holmgren 325). The illustrated journal, edited by A. F. Marks, included sections on travel, hygiene, and women’s fashion in addition to literature, the court chronicle, and current events. As E. G. Babaev aptly observes, “Tolstoy’s novel was a strange guest in Marks’ family journal” (Babaev 15). However, the placement of the novel in the “family journal” reveals a certain logic: through the prism of the aristocratic Nekhliudov, who shows both fascination and disgust with the lower class, the middle class readers of *Niva* could fashion themselves as closer to the aristocracy than the lower classes. The excessive body depicted at Maslova’s trial and the body of Maslova the prostitute serve as a figure of an ambiguously dreaded and desired Other, threatening class boundaries both from the perspective of the emerging middle class and the aristocracy.

The image of the “lower bodily stratum” is metonymically associated with the lower class. As Stallybrass and White point out, the emphasis in early nineteenth-century English reform discourse on the bad smell and bad air associated with the poor enhances the slippage between the threat of physical and moral contamination that they were thought to pose. Bad smells were thought to “depress” the entire organism, leaving their victims vulnerable to moral and physical contamination. The opening pages of *Resurrection* take the reader into the prison corridor, where the “depressing typhoidal air, saturated with the smell of feces, tar and mold immediately lead each new arrival into depression and sorrow” (*v koridore byl udrucha-*

iushchii tifozyi vozdukh, propitannyi zapakhom isprazhnenii, degtia i gnili, kotoryi totchas zhe privodil v unynie i grust’ vskiakogo vnov’ prikhodivshego cheloveka; PSS 32: 4). The section of the prison reserved for ordinary criminals, that is, members of the lower class, stinks, and, like Maslova and her crime, is an object of disgust to Nekhliudov.

As the novel progresses, Nekhliudov comes to see the evils of class privilege, and is disgusted by members of his own class. In contrast, Maslova’s re-education involves a lesson on the value of the ruling class. Her transfer to the political prisoners’ section, the penultimate phase of her resurrection, “forces” her to change her mind about members of the upper classes. The narrator describes how the influence of the political prisoners, “who were themselves members of the ruling class and sacrificed their advantages, freedom, and lives for the people, forced her to value them especially” (PSS 32: 367). Class difference may be illusory, but the influence of the lower classes has a negative effect (the consumption of alcohol, the cursing and fights), whereas the influence of the upper class political prisoners has a positive effect on Maslova, as we have already seen. In the prison in Siberia, as in the opening description of the prison in Russia, the air of the ordinary section of the prison is bad, and even though one of the political prisoners is dying of tuberculosis, the air in that part of the prison is better: “the infected air of the political section seemed clean in comparison with the stinking suffocation” of the barracks of the common criminals. An especially vivid image of the filth of the lower class barracks is a scene from the Siberian prison that stands out in Nekhliudov’s mind: a young boy sleeps on the floor, right on top of the foul liquid seeping out of the night bucket. The image, a re-configuration of the description of the murder victim’s body in the opening of the novel, with its emphasis on bodily fluids escaping their containers, resonates with Nekhliudov’s belief that virtuous and innocent prisoners are contaminated by the vice of the malefactors with whom they are incarcerated.

Discipline

The ambivalence about the social "Other" and the anxiety about the female body are directly related in the story of Maslova's reform. Her dangerous, exorbitant body, with its threat to differentiation and proper boundaries, and her unrestrained sexuality are reduced and contained by the end of the novel. The regime of prison life and the personal regime to which Nekhliudov subjects Maslova, and to which she "involuntarily" [*nevol'no*] consents, become one unified discipline. She "involuntarily fulfilled everything that he demanded of her: she stopped drinking, smoking, abandoned her flirtatiousness and went to work in the hospital as a servant" (*PSS* 32: 309). The narrator characterizes the change in Maslova after her arrival in Siberia as a process of masculinization. Her prior life as a prostitute is characterized as "easy," or "soft": "After the depraved, luxurious, and easy life of the last six years in the city" her present life seemed "very good" [*Posle razvratnoi, roskoshnoi i iznuzhennoi zhizni poslednikh shesti let v gorode . . . zhizn' teper' . . . kazalas' Katiushke ochen' khoro-shei*; ellipsis added, *PSS* 32: 366-7]. The daily regimen of the march, the good food, and the rest "physically strengthened her." Her appearance changes. In his early encounters with Maslova after her trial, Nekhliudov sees her face as "puffy" and she seems "defiled" and "dead" (*PSS* 32: 149), but on arriving in Siberia, she is thinner, sunburned, seemingly older, she completely covers her hair, and there are no longer any signs in her appearance or behaviour of her previous flirtatiousness, all of which pleases Nekhliudov very much (*PSS* 32: 372). All the signs of her femininity—the softness of her body, her youth, the whiteness of her complexion, her unruly hair, and her previous general expression of readiness to please—disappear. The darkening of her skin, bandaging of her hair, and process of aging visible in the wrinkles on her face recall, in a modified form, the "horrificing" image of Nekhliudov's dying mummy/mother.

It is important to note here the slippage between the narrator's and Nekhliudov's point of view and Maslova's own point of view. Earlier in the novel, she was suspicious of his efforts to

reform her, seeing them as another kind of exploitation. According to Maslova, he was using her for his own spiritual gratification; just as earlier he had used her for physical gratification. But later in the novel, Nekhliudov's wishes and her own are the same. The renunciation of sexuality, a crucial aspect of Maslova's redemption, is also expressed in terms reminiscent of Nekhliudov's point of view. She and the political prisoner Mar'ia Pavlovna are united in their common "disgust for sexual love." (The narrator describes the "to otrashchenie, kotoroe obe oni ispytyvali k polovoii liubvi" [*PSS* 32: 368].) The description of sex as an object of horror and disgust recalls the opening trial scene and Nekhliudov's feeling of disgust. Maslova, pre- and post-Siberia, finds herself oriented toward two sides of the same male gaze, one that seeks pleasure and the one that imposes discipline.¹²

Motherless Utopia

Maslova's relation to Simonson, who subscribes to the philosophy of Nikolai Fedorov, further develops the theme of a masculinist utopia, in which the shame and disgust of birth are overcome. In the draft of the novel, Simonson, a vegan, virgin, and ascetic, believes in the "necessity of the material resurrection of all the dead" (*PSS* 33: 24), sidestepping the role of women in human reproduction. The purpose of marriage, in this utopia, would not be the birth of children, but the resurrection of the parents and grandparents, whose "life" and "image" the present generation "expresses." Those individuals who take the task of self-knowledge seriously, discover in themselves "inclinations and tendencies that have no basis in their own lives," but come instead from their parents (Fedorov 318). Physical resurrection, as Fedorov puts it, only completes the psychological processes and the phenomenon of "inheritance" already known to human science. Torok and Abraham's theory of incorporation resonates with some aspects of Fedorov's melancholy obsession with the past, for example, his observation that we discover our parents' inclinations in ourselves. His desire to restore the actual physical bodies of previous generations in a scientifically enhanced resurrection

of the dead corresponds to Torok and Abraham's portrait of a regressive, narcissistic subjectivity, which would rather absorb than mourn a lost object. According to Fedorov, a conscious and deliberate process of the material resurrection of the dead could replace the blind and haphazard process of sexual selection. Human beings, the passive, and hence feminized instrument of nature, would in the future become the active and hence masculine artificers of their own transformation. Fedorov writes, "what the human being is at the present time *passively* he will remain, only *actively*" (Fedorov 318). In the final version of *Resurrection*, Simonson believes that the "propagation of people is only a lower function of the individual," and that the "higher function consists in the service of those who already exist" (*razmnozhenie liudei est' tol'ko nizshaia funktsiia cheloveka, vysshaia zhe sostoit v sluzhenii uzhe sushchestvuiushchemu zhivomu*; PSS 32: 370). According to Simonson, the earth is "one vast organic body" and human beings, as molecules contained by this organism, serve to support its life. He "finds confirmation for his idea in the existence of phagocytes in the blood." Phagocytes are cells that absorb waste material and other foreign bodies in the bloodstream and tissues.

Simonson's vision transforms and purifies the horrific image of the rotting corpse/maternal body in the opening trial scene. Instead of being engulfed by the products of the grotesque open body in death and sex, in Simonson's brave new world he and other "phagocytes" will patrol and purge the earth of its foreign bodies and waste products. The motherless, sexless, masculinist utopia envisioned by Fedorov translates and resolves Nekhludov's contradictory desires into more manageable terms, by setting aside what is to him "disgusting" female sexuality and maternity. His wish to return to a pure past can be fulfilled, literally. The younger generation returns to the past—Fedorov imagines that each succeeding generation will restore the previous one, permitting a return to origins, but without the *unheimlich* body of the mother and its terrifying loss of differentiation. The integrity of each individual will be preserved, because "the decaying particles will be returned to those to

whom they once belonged." This fantasmagoric, backward-looking utopia may be seen as a response to the increasing problem of social, ethnic, and national "others" within the boundaries of the Russian Empire, the rise of market forces, and the entry of women into the public sphere of culture and the arts. The approving allusions to Fedorov's theories come in mediated form through the secondary character of Simonson, Nekhludov's replacement as a partner for the reformed Katiusha Maslova. This indirect endorsement of Fedorov's belief in the resurrection of the fathers, a form of orientation toward the past, is another manifestation of the fantastic register in *Resurrection*.

At the novel's conclusion, Maslova is located in the imaginary future, as one of Simonson's "phagocytes," living in the utopia in which the excessive female body, the site of so many fears, desires, and projections about the social body, is already contained. Eric Naiman argues for a connection between Tolstoy's difficulties with the idea of maternity and the image of woman as "a limiting origin" in "the Soviet discourse of class identity and national survival" (Naiman 45). Nadezhda Azhgikhina and Helena Goscilo write about the confluence between Tolstoy and Soviet gender ideology, describing the use of the opposition in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* between the beautiful but evil Helene and the "spiritually" attractive Natasha Rostova as a model for the "binarism of Soviet gender ideology" (Azhgikhina and Goscilo 95). It is no wonder that in 1960 Vladimir Zhdanov saw in Maslova's resurrection the "apotheosis of the suffering people," perpetuating the equation between the disciplined female body and the purified and homogenous social body.

Before the Beginning

Nekhludov's journey into the world of the prison puts him into immediate contact with classes and groups he had previously avoided, the nether regions of the social body: political prisoners, religious sectarians, peasants, and common criminals, and affords him a new insight of his own common humanity with them. This contact, however, comes to an abrupt ending with the novel's

conclusion. Still obsessed by death, sex, and maternity, Nekhliudov discovers an image of beautiful motherhood in the daughter of the general who runs the Siberian transit prison. The daughter invites Nekhliudov to see her children sleeping, and Nekhliudov shamefully admits to himself that he wants this "refined, clean happiness" for himself, especially in contrast to the "chains, shaved heads, fights, depravity, and Katiusha and all her past" (*PSS* 32: 430). The high ceiling of the white room where the children sleep and their stillness anticipates the beautiful features of the corpse of Krylstov, a political prisoner who died of tuberculosis, a disease associated with spirituality and the upper body. Upon entering the prison mortuary in Siberia, Nekhliudov discovers the "terribly beautiful" corpse of Krylstov, who represents his untarnished, pure self.

In *Torok and Abraham*, the "exquisite corpse" signifies the pain and pleasure of the object and its loss. A loss of this type, which cannot be mourned, leads to the generation of symptoms of the encrypted self, including the loss of language. It is striking that the image of Nekhliudov's entry into the prison crypt comes at the end of the novel, when the words stop. This moment of the novel, the entry into the crypt, returns to the novel's opening, in which Katiusha and Nekhliudov celebrate Christ's rising with a kiss. The iconography of the resurrection depicts the empty tomb: the triumph over death is typically represented in Orthodox iconography by the absence of a body. Louis Marin's reading of the New Testament can illuminate the mortuary scene in Tolstoy's text. The women go to Christ's tomb expecting to find a corpse, and to preserve it, but discover its absence instead. The desire to preserve the corpse corresponds to Abraham and Torok's model of the illness of mourning. Marin argues that the burden of the meaning of resurrection is carried by the "blank space" in the text of the New Testament. According to Marin, the angel instructs the women how to "read the facts and events, like a text, where the spaces, absences, or blanks signify—forever—some fillings or presences." The women who come to anoint Christ's body find in its place an absence, and thus the possibility of words and the resur-

rected Word. There is a parallel between Marin and Torok and Abraham, which is indicative of Nekhliudov's problem. The empty cavity, whether the cave or the oral cavity, gives the possibility of language and community. Torok and Abraham describe how the absence of the mother gives rise to words: the "empty mouth" comes to be filled with words and a language shared with others. Unlike the women who come to Christ's tomb, Nekhliudov's journey through the world of the prison culminates in his discovery of the beautiful corpse of Krylstov, and his renunciation of the larger social world.

The moment in the crypt constitutes a preliminary ending for Nekhliudov; the novel, of course, does not end here, but continues with Nekhliudov's reading of the sermon on the mount. Here, it seems, there is a promise of resurrection: the flesh is returned back to the word. This transformation resonates both with the New Testament tradition of John's gospel, and also has implications with regard to Abraham and Torok's argument. In the healthy process of introjection, the empty mouth comes to be filled with words and shared with a language community, as I noted above. Incorporation, write the two authors, is the substitution of "one mouth-work in place of another" (Abraham and Torok). An example of the purely corporeal "mouth-work" of eating can be seen in Tolstoy's defamiliarizing description of the ceremony of communion in the prison church, in which the priest "eats up" the remaining bits and pieces of God's body. Nonetheless, the tension between the scene in the crypt and the scene of reading remains unresolved, and the promise of Nekhliudov's "resurrection" seems hollow.

At the end of the novel, Nekhliudov comes to see that his work in the prison can do little to mitigate the evil perpetrated by judges, juries, and jailers. The "Kingdom of God" can only be had from within, he concludes, beginning with the individual's refusal to judge others. He decides that a man may love only one woman in his life. It is significant that in his plans for a sequel to the novel, Tolstoy referred to his hero as a Russian "Robinson," highlighting the motif of isolation. Nekhliudov's newly discovered ascetic solipsism,

his "dying to the world" in the religious sense, cuts him off from the world of the prison with its "drunken fights, shaved heads, and depravity" and transports him to the clean, motionless, and hence, deathlike purity of the high-ceilinged children's nursery and the beautiful corpse of Kryltsov. Nekhliudov's isolation reinstates the distance that his always ambivalent social critique threatened to undermine. He recovers his autonomy and reverts back to the pre-social past, but without the terrifying loss of boundaries evoked by the exorbitant female body. The structure of the novel points back to a return before the beginning, leaving in its wake the disciplined body of Katiusha Maslova.

Notes

1. All citations from *PSS*; parenthetical citation in the text indicates volume and page number, and translations are my own unless otherwise noted.
2. Laurie Bernstein cites this episode in her book, *Sonia's Daughters*, in her discussion of the failure of various projects to "save fallen women" (Bernstein 191). For a discussion of women's legal status with regard to the regulation of prostitution, see Engelstein, 84-95, and for a discussion of Tolstoy on prostitution, see 223-224.
3. The novel was first characterized as an "indictment" in 1900. See Lomunov 12n4.
4. John Kopper makes a related argument, but without tracing the intersection between gender and discipline: "The Tolstoy subject is in fundamental conflict with a social totality and employs various strategies for removing himself from the diseased context. But precisely what the subject demands for his world is a code of discipline. In his fancied isolation, he seeks to create the law which his culture has failed to furnish" (Kopper 168). I am arguing, in contrast, that the hero imposes discipline on the female other.
5. See Kristeva 1, and generally 1-31.
6. While it is true that some aspects of Tolstoy's own subjectivity are reflected in *Resurrection*, Nekhliudov and *Resurrection* are not synonyms for Tolstoy.
7. It is important to note that the theme of birth is linked to death in Fedorov, who writes "the shame of birth, and the fear of death merge into a single feeling of criminality" (Fedorov 313). Eric Naiman comments on Fedorov's horrified description of birth, and I am indebted to his argument about Fedorov and other fin-de-siècle writers (Naiman 34-5).
8. Dragan Kunjundzic makes a related point about Levin's "horror of a fallen woman," finding that "Levin's words also betray a fear of his own castration, a 'horror,' 'a Medusa like effect' (Freud, Kofman), when facing feminine sexuality" (Kunjundzic 74). But Levin, unlike Nekhliudov, is not horrified by birth.
9. See Kristeva 1-31.
10. In *Resurrection* generally the predominant image of the mother is negative. Katiusha Maslova's own mother starved all her other infants to death. Maslova gives the baby she has with Nekhliudov up for adoption, but the woman who takes the baby into her care temporarily lets him, and, it is implied, all her other charges, die of hunger. This episode may have been based on a court case of the time. In 1890 Tolstoy began, but neither completed nor published, an article about the sensational court case of Mariana Skublinskaia, who was alleged to have murdered seventy-six infants in her care. Tolstoy's unfinished article, unlike most that appeared in the popular press of the time, did not dwell on Skublinskaia herself, but instead placed the blame on the entire 'apparatus' of the medical profession, the military, and the church (*PSS* 27: 536-540 and 740-743). The image of the horrific mother and the anxiety about the maternal body that it reveals can be found in *Resurrection*, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, and other works by Tolstoy, but also, as Eric Naiman argues, in such important fin-de-siècle writers as Berdiaev and Nikolai Fedorov.
11. In his "Literaturnye ocherki," published in 1899, V. V. Rozanov uses the image of the rotting corpse to describe the final stage in the collapse of a given social structure: "in a rotting corpse the boundaries of the organs mix together, the liquids merge throughout the whole body, everything becoming one uniform mass." Similarly, he continues, "a state that has died leaves in its place an unstructured ethnographic mass, which is

as simple and lacking in internal morphology as that which proceeded its appearance" (Rozanov 181-2).

12. Amy Mandelker argues that Tolstoy was more even-handed in his rejection of both male and female sexuality. Her point about the concept of radical chastity in Tolstoy's later works does not take into account the link between the female body and the problem of otherness, and the association between the maternal body and the image of bodily decay in *Resurrection*. See Mandelker, 21-33. For another discussion of sexual morality in *Resurrection*, see Moller 195-197.

Works cited

- Abraham, Nicholas, and Maria Torok. *The Shell and the Kernel*. Trans. Nicholas Rand. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Azhgikhina, Nadezhda, and Helena Goscilo. "Getting Under their Skin: the Beauty Salon in Russian Women's Lives." *Russia, Women, Culture*. Eds. Beth Holmgren and Helena Goscilo. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996. 94-121.
- Babaev, E. G. "Sud'ba 'Voskreseniia' (Pervye otkliki gazetnoi i zhurnal'noi kritiki v Rossii)." *Roman L. N. Tolstogo 'Voskresenie': Istoriko-Funktsional'noe issledovanie*. Ed. K. N. Lomunov. Moscow: Nauka, 1991. 13-50.
- Bayley, John. *Tolstoy and the Novel*. New York: Viking, 1966.
- Bernstein, Laurie. *Sonia's Daughters: Prostitutes and Their Regulation in Imperial Russia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- Engelstein, Laura. *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siecle Russia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- Fedorov, N. F. *Filosofia obshchogo dela: stat'i, mysli, i pis'ma*. 1913. Eds. V. A. Kozhevnikov and N. P. Peterson. Moscow: Gregg International Publishers, 1970.
- Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Trans. and ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.
- Gustafson, Richard F. "Introduction." *Resurrection*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. vii-xxvi.
- Holmgren, Beth. "Gendering the Icon: Marketing Women Writers in Fin-de-Siecle Russia." *Russia, Women, Culture*. Eds. Holmgren and Helena Goscilo. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996. 321-46.
- Kopper, John. "Tolstoy and the Narrative of Sex: A Reading of 'Father Sergius,' 'The Devil,' and 'The Kreutzer Sonata.'" *In the Shade of the Giant: Essays on Tolstoy*. Ed. Hugh Mclean. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989. 158-86.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.
- Kujundzic, Dragan. "Pardoning Woman in *Anna Karenina*." *Tolstoy Studies Journal* VI (1993): 65-85.
- Lomunov, K. N. "Lev Tolstoi o romane 'Voskresenie'." *Voskresenie': Istoriko-funktsional'noe issledovanie*. Ed. K. N. Lomunov. Moscow: Nauka, 1991. 8-12.
- Mandelker, Amy. *Framing Anna Karenina: Tolstoy, the Woman Question, and the Victorian Novel. The Theory and Interpretation of Narrative*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1993.
- Marin, Louis. "The Women at the Tomb: A Structural Analysis of a Gospel Text." Trans. Alfred M. Johnson. *The New Testament and Structuralism*. Ed. Alfred M. Johnson. Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series. Pittsburgh, PA: Pickwick Press, 1976. 73-96.
- Moglen, Helene. *The Trauma of Gender: A Feminist Theory of the English Novel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- Moller, Peter Ulf. *Postlude to the Kreutzer Sonata: Tolstoy and the Debate on Sexual Morality in Russian Literature in the 1890s*. Trans. John Kendal. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988.

Naiman, Eric. *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Rozanov, V. V. *Legenda o velikom inkvisitore F. M. Dostoevskogo*. Ed. A. N. Nikoliukin. Moscow: Respublika, 1996.

Stallybrass, Peter, and Allon White. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986.

Tolstoi, L. N. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*. [PSS] Ed. V. G. Chertkov. 90 vols. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1929-1958.

Zhdanov, Vladimir. *Tvorcheskaia istoriia romana L. N. Tolstogo 'Voskresenie': Materialy i nabludeniia*. Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1960.