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From Pacifist to Patriot: The Manipulation of Tolstoy's Legacy in Russian Culture and Society

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Honors Thesis

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From Pacifist to Patriot: The Manipulation of Tolstoy's Legacy in Russian Culture and Society

From the late nineteenth century— Leo Tolstoy's time, when the seeds of the Revolution were being sown—to glasnost, the fall of the USSR, and the tumultuous years of transition into a post-Communist Russian state, the role of Tolstoy has been shaped and reshaped, questioned and debated. Ultimately, the ideological needs of the state have guided the treatment of Tolstoy and his works; as these needs have changed, so has the author's role in society. The relevance of Tolstoy's writings and his status as an embodiment of "Russianness" persist to this day. In particular, *Anna Karenina* reflects an ongoing theme in Russian history whose origins far predate Tolstoy: the conflict between the forces of nationalism and westernization.

The pre-revolutionary Russia of Tolstoy's lifetime (1828-1910) provided a hostile environment for literature—a legacy which would continue, with few exceptions, throughout most of the Soviet era. In the nineteenth century, openly discussing politics was likely to lead to confrontation with the state; therefore, literature served as a more subtle means to communicate political ideas (Parthé 6). Even so, politically-minded writers had to be cautious. Under the rule of Nicholas I (1825-55), in an effort to protect fundamental values such as loyalty to the tsar from threats which could undermine the regime, censorship was formally established (Parthé 31). The system essentially continued until 1905, when the February Revolution ensured that monitoring literary output was the least of the government's concerns (Parthé 42). This first mass outburst of revolution was presaged by a shift in the Russian political atmosphere

throughout the nineteenth century, marked by significant forces like the Slavophile-Westernizer debates originating in the 1840s, the abolition of serfdom in 1861, and the industrialization of the country (Wilson 273).

Some of the responses to a changing Russia surfaced in the areas of religion, politics, and philosophy. The twentieth-century Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev considered the nineteenth century to be “especially illustrative of the character of the Russian ideal and the Russian vocation,” which was particularly divided between the pull of tradition and the pull of westernization (20-1). Additionally, socialistic thought became more widespread, changing the landscape of Russian intellectual culture (Berdyaev 116). It was in this fertile atmosphere that Tolstoy was to work out his own religious and political philosophies. In fact, Berdyaev argues that the most influential religious minds of the nineteenth century were not theologians, but authors such as Tolstoy (194-5). The Russian people, many of whom had neglected or rejected their Christian faith, nonetheless responded to his teachings with a nearly religious fervor (194-5).

Though Tolstoy was born into a wealthy, aristocratic family, in his young adulthood he became interested in questions about the interactions and moral obligations between peasants and landowners. He soon faced the reality of these musings when, two years into his education at Kazan University, he dropped out and inherited the family estate, Yasnaya Polyana (Bartlett 81-2). Tolstoy was deeply inspired by Tsar Alexander II’s March 1856 speech on the necessity of taking action to end serfdom. He began to work toward freeing his serfs, thus joining “the distinguished ranks of the gentry whose awakened social conscience caused them to become ‘repentant noblemen’” in the style of Alexander Radishchev, an eighteenth-century writer known for his exposé of serfdom, *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* (Bartlett 127). In addition,

Tolstoy planned to start a school for the peasant children of Yasnaya Polyana (Bartlett 144). He had come to believe, as had many Russian socialists of the late nineteenth century, that peasants were “bearers of a collectivist and essentially Russian identity” (Lieven 258). For Tolstoy, the peasant, and not the wealthy landowner, was the real righteous man: connected to nature, God, and family (Berdyayev 137-9).

Tolstoy’s social and religious views developed more fully during his “spiritual crisis” of the late 1870s, in which he became “the most devout he had ever been in his life” (Bartlett 252). He visited the Optina Pustyn monastery, and was attracted to the idea of the “elders” there—strictly self-disciplined monks who were viewed as spiritual leaders within the monastery and figures of wisdom and even healing in the broader community (Bartlett 253-4). By 1880, Tolstoy had begun to write scathing criticisms of the Russian Orthodox Church—including attacks on fundamental beliefs such as the trinity and the sacraments, and wrote his own translation of the Gospels, focusing on the moral teachings of Jesus while ignoring supernatural and miraculous events (Bartlett 285-6). By 1883, Tolstoy was consistently wearing peasant clothing and trying to disown his aristocratic background, and in April 1891, he began to live a simple lifestyle, finally giving up all of his property and dividing his estate among his children and his wife, Sonya (Bartlett 302, 331).

Anna Karenina, published serially from 1873-77, was born out of Tolstoy’s spiritual crisis and the current social climate in Russia. In contrast to Tolstoy’s great historical novel, *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina* is set in the Russia in which it was written, a Russia that was increasingly looking toward modernization and the West (Wilson 268). As in the literature of Victorian England, the railroad in Russian literature was symbolic of industrialism encroaching on the purity of nature (Wilson 273). Berdyayev suggests that Tolstoy always preferred “nature”

to “culture,” and thus “[t]he railroad comes to [Tolstoy] ready-made with foreboding” (147, Wilson 274). It is significant that the railroad, this symbol of modernization, is an integral part of the beginning of Anna’s story, and involved in her tragic end.

Anna Karenina also addresses the degradation of morals as Tolstoy saw them—particularly the weakening state of marriage and family. Tolstoy’s first draft of *Anna Karenina* did not include the Levin/Kitty storyline and therefore provided no moral counterpoint to Anna’s story (Wilson 269). As Tolstoy biographer A.N. Wilson notes, as Tolstoy reworked the novel, “he was apostasising from his view that the purpose of a novel was to make people laugh and cry over it,” instead focusing on addressing the social problems of his time and laying out his moral vision (269, Orwin 169). He does this by essentially inserting himself into the novel in the form of Konstantin Levin. Though the character is not completely autobiographical, Levin’s life bears a striking resemblance to Tolstoy’s in many ways— their maids share the same names, their brothers die similar deaths, and Levin proposes to Kitty in the same manner that Tolstoy proposed to his wife (Wilson 279). Perhaps most importantly, they both manifest a strong interest in the nature of the relationship between landowners and peasants and undergo deep spiritual and existential struggles. In fact, Wilson argues that Tolstoy was simply working out his own problems through Levin (279-80). Because Levin’s struggle to form a meaningful identity is an explicit reflection of Tolstoy’s own journey, *Anna Karenina* is Tolstoy’s most personal work of fiction and thus provides a pertinent case study for analyzing the government’s treatment of the author and his works over time.

As a strong critic of the cozy relationship between church and state in tsarist Russia, Tolstoy distinguished himself as someone who was willing to go to great lengths to “[strive] after social truth and justice” as he saw it (Berdyayev 137). Tolstoy was thus a threat to an

establishment seeking through censorship to protect fundamental beliefs and values (e.g. militarism, patriarchy, and elitism) (Parthé 45). Polish Marxist theorist Rosa Luxemburg's summary of Tolstoy's beliefs clearly demonstrates why Russia's state apparatus was wary of Tolstoy's seemingly revolutionary claims:

The criticism to which Tolstoy has submitted the existing order is radical; it knows no limits, no retrospective glances, no compromises... The ultimate destruction of private property and the state, universal obligation to work, full economic and social equality, a complete abolition of militarism, brotherhood of nations, universal peace and equality of everything that bears the human image—this is the ideal which Tolstoy had been tirelessly preaching with the stubbornness of a great and vehement prophet. (qtd. in Bartlett 345-6)

Tolstoy's seemingly radical political beliefs had much in common with the socialist undercurrent of the late nineteenth century which was mobilizing for revolution. In fact, Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1893) literally shared the illegal printing press with revolutionary propaganda (Bartlett 345).

Despite the fact that, in 1897, about three-quarters of the Russian population were illiterate, Tolstoy became a symbol of national consciousness, amassing thousands of loyal followers—Tolstoyans—who looked to imitate his moral and ascetic example (Bartlett 424). Tolstoy's death in 1910 was a national time of mourning, and, to the great chagrin of the government, Tolstoy's funeral was a highly politicized event featuring strikes, marches, and demonstrations. The state was at a loss; it could not suppress the Russian people's collective outpouring of grief (Bartlett 415). In addition, after the upheaval of the 1905 February Revolution, literary censorship was the last item on the government's agenda, and it had become

much easier to access and disseminate the works of Tolstoy and his contemporaries (Parthé 42). After the 1917 October Revolution, all of Tolstoy's previously banned works could be published openly and without censorship (Bartlett 422-3). Aylmer Maude, a contemporary of Tolstoy as well as his biographer and English translator, along with other observers, believed strongly that the example of Tolstoy's life and the availability of his works helped to spark the 1917 revolution (Bartlett 424).

Tolstoy's ideas spread rapidly across the nation. The Tolstoyans had grown to encompass five to six thousand Russians, many of them peasants and some of them professionals. Supporters of the aims of the February Revolution, they sympathized with the Bolsheviks' anti-militarism and confiscation of Church and private land. The violence of the October Revolution and ensuing civil war drew the groups into disagreement, however, and in 1919 the Tolstoyans had to actively resist being drafted into the Red Army despite the fact that their conscientious objector status had been previously respected in 1917 (Bartlett 424-5). Changing attitudes toward Tolstoyans were a reflection of the post-Revolution ambivalence to Tolstoy himself, which would soon bring about a debate about the place of Tolstoy's legacy in a new Russian context.

Much discussion of Tolstoy centered around Vladimir Lenin's published commentary on the author; specifically, "Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution" (*Proletary* No. 35, 1908), "L.N. Tolstoy" (*Sotsial-Demokrat* No. 18, 1910), and "L.N. Tolstoy and The Modern Labour Movement" (*Nash Put'* No. 7, 1910). He also addresses the role of literature more broadly in "Party Organisation and Party Literature" (*Novaya Zhizn*, No. 12, 1905). In "Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution," Lenin first acknowledges that his goal for the article, "[t]o identify the great artist [Tolstoy] with the revolution which he has obviously failed

to understand, and from which he obviously stands aloof, may at first sight seem strange and artificial” (par. 1). He nonetheless begins to probe Tolstoy’s “glaring contradictions”—he is an artistic genius, yet he is a “landlord obsessed with Christ”; he is a keen critic of capitalism and the social order, yet he is a pacifist and a preacher of “one of the most odious things on earth, namely, religion” (par. 3). Yet Lenin makes allowances for Tolstoy and sees him as a product of a contradictory time in Russian history, where the post-emancipation peasants were in opposition to the onslaught of exploitative capitalism, yet at the same time “had a very crude, patriarchal, semi-religious idea” of what the destruction of that system entailed— hence, why so many peasants did not participate in the February Revolution (par. 4). Rather, they “wept and prayed, moralised and dreamed, wrote petitions and sent ‘pleaders’—quite in the vein of Leo Tolstoy” (par. 5). In essence, Lenin argues that Tolstoy is a mirror of the Revolution in that he mirrors its weaknesses; he uses this as an opportunity to call for action to avoid the “historical sin of Tolstoyism” (par. 5, 8).

With all his criticisms, however, Lenin does not ignore Tolstoy’s literary contributions; in “L.N. Tolstoy,” written to commemorate the author’s death and reinforce his claims in “Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution,” he praises Tolstoy’s works as “a step forward in the artistic development of humanity as a whole” (par. 2). One paragraph later, Lenin turns this praise into politics, referencing the rampant illiteracy of the time and calling for rebellion against the existing order which keeps Tolstoy’s art from being “made the possession of *all*” (par. 3). He exhorts readers to take Tolstoy’s ideas further—that is, to “weld themselves into a united army of millions of socialist fighters who will overthrow capitalism and create a new society in which the people will not be doomed to poverty, in which there will be no exploitation of man by man” (par. 12). Lenin thus establishes his willingness to overlook some of Tolstoy’s

flaws, as he perceives them, in the service of a socialist revolution—a theme which would continue throughout Soviet history.

Lenin was not a literary critic, and despite the importance assigned to his comments, they are not particularly useful when discussing literary criticism of the time. The major Russian literary movement of the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth century was Symbolism, which provided a more comprehensive framework by which to assess literature than Lenin's commentary. The proponents of the movement responded to the dominant school of realism through their efforts to transcend the mundane by making art a spiritual experience (Wellek 32). Symbolism exalts the use of symbols as a method of "[revealing] a higher reality" (Wellek 31). One member of the early Symbolist movement, Dmitry Merezhovsky (1865-1941), had a fairly clear evaluation of Tolstoy. His literary philosophy was focused on antithesis—that is, a belief that "[e]verything has its polar opposite" (Henry 110). In Merezhovsky's *Tolstoy and Dostoevsky* (1901-2), for example, he characterizes Dostoevsky as a "seer of the spirit," and Tolstoy as the opposite—a "seer of the flesh" (111). Furthermore, he argues that Tolstoy's characters, from peasant to nobleman, all have the same "voice," whereas Dostoevsky's characters are more linguistically varied (113). Merezhovsky's overly polarized remarks discredit him to some extent, however, and it is clear that they are borne out of a personal preference for Dostoevsky over Tolstoy, mostly on the basis of what he sees as the purity of Dostoevsky's spiritual beliefs (112).

A second wave of symbolism, which R.H. Henry calls "Russian 'religious' Symbolism," was promoted by Vyacheslav Ivanov (1866-1949), Alexander Blok (1880-1921), and Boris Bugaev (1880-1934, best known by his pseudonym, Andrey Bely) (Henry 132). Even more so than Merezhovsky's variant, these second-wave Symbolists were, as their name suggests,

“deeply involved, as men, poets, and critics, with religion or mysticism” (Henry 132). In Blok’s case, this manifested in his quasi-religious belief that “Russia, free of the humanistic and individualistic traditions of the West, would eventually bring about a new man and a new society,” which presages the eventual Marxist-Leninist belief in the immanence of societal transformation (134). Additionally, Bely’s interests in the nature of Russian poetic form would serve as a precursor to the development of the influential Formalist movement, as we shall see (Henry 136-7).

The debate about how best to approach literature was significant not only in literary circles, but in the highest strata of the state apparatus. People in positions of ideological power were divided in their opinions of Tolstoy’s virtues— they had difficulty reconciling his inappropriate disdain for the state as a whole with his appropriate hatred of the tsarist regime and its institutions (Bartlett 434). Marxist literary critic Vladimir Friche (1870-1929), for instance, criticized his fellow Marxists for projecting heroic qualities upon Tolstoy as an author and philosopher; he “considered Tolstoy’s mentality to be as religious and authoritarian as that of any feudal lord, and to be totally alien to the Soviet spirit” (Fodor 67). In 1928, prominent Party member Mikhail Olminsky went so far as to call *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* “counterrevolutionary works” and actually suggested banning them; however, this was not the view of most Party members (Fodor 68-9). For example, Anatoly Lunacharsky, the People’s Commissar for Education and cultural minister in the 1920s, was a proponent of publishing Tolstoy’s “artistic” work, and saw Tolstoy as “a valuable adjunct to the country’s cultural life” (Fodor 55, 68). The Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) was also pro-Tolstoy and encouraged proletarians to engage with his work (Fodor 70). Ultimately, however, it was Lenin’s opinion which held the most sway over the Tolstoy question. Before his death in 1924,

Lenin had relentlessly pursued the project of publishing Tolstoy's collected work as "a matter of state importance" (Bartlett 425).

Throughout the civil war years, the Bolsheviks had prioritized the dissemination of Russian classic literature, developing a "People's Library" to get inexpensive or free books into the hands of citizens (Lovell 27). By the end of the war, the practice was financially unsustainable, but non-state publishers under Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP) were encouraged to continue publishing classics (Lovell 27). The NEP had a significant impact on Soviet literature as a whole—Natalia Kornienko refers to the period of 1921 to 1927 as "formative" in regard to "the very institution of Soviet criticism" (17). A 1925 resolution of the Central Committee, entitled "On Party Politics in the Area of Belles Lettres" promoted literary criticism as "one of the main educational institutions at the party's disposal" (qtd. in Kornienko 21). It became the intention of the Party to direct literary criticism so as to promote the proper view of a work of literature—in essence, to mediate between the reader and the text (Kornienko 21). The average Soviet reader was not impressed by contemporary literature, however, and the classics continued to be popular. Contributing to this lack of interest was the small but significant group of critics associated with the far-left journals *Lef* (1923-25) and *Noviy Lef* (1927-28), which included Vladimir Mayakovsky and Viktor Shklovsky (30). These critics took a very particular view of the purposes of literature: that it should "take upon itself the function of preparing man for work, practice, and invention—the revolutionary transformation of everyday life." The Russian classics did not satisfy these purposes; thus, they were of little merit. Readers and writers, however, were not interested in reading and publishing the kind of work the *Lef* critics promoted (33).

Perhaps the most prominent school of literary thought in 1920s Russia was Formalism; notable Formalists included Shklovsky, Boris Eikhenbaum, and Yuri Tynianov (Emerson 64, 67). Caryl Emerson summarizes the tenets of Formalism:

Formalism offered a scientific (or at least a systematic) methodology to replace the mysticism of fin-de-siècle thought. It argued for the cognitive structuredness of art against intuitivist and subjectivist theories. With its newly precise terminology, it promised to restore autonomy to the literary study of single works and of whole traditions... Unlike the two powerful, eclectic, visionary movements that flanked them (symbolist criticism before and socialist realism after), the formalists were militantly secular, passionate about the objective reality of the palpable world, and keen on literary “specificity” as well as empirical analysis.

(65)

The Formalists focused on the autonomy of words and literary works—external influences were largely cast aside in favor of examining texts with an eye for phonics, structure, and rhythm, especially in regard to poetry. For Formalists, an author is an “operator of the device” (Emerson 68, 71). Shklovsky in particular believed that art should “make the familiar unfamiliar,” causing us to notice the mundane in a new way; this was a notable reversal of the traditional view. Shklovsky thought Tolstoy was a good example of this defamiliarization (*ostranenie*) due to his “characteristic manner of debunking cherished romantic illusions” (Henry 166-7). This is certainly the case in works such as *Anna Karenina*, in which the glamorous life of the elite is revealed to be empty and tragic, whereas the simple life of the peasants is extolled as virtuous and fulfilling. As the state took control of literature, Formalism, and its refusal to apply Marxist-Leninist philosophy to the interpretation of literature, was met with hostility.

Official state policy on Tolstoy was not settled until 1928, when the occasion of Tolstoy's Jubilee made the issue a pressing one (Fodor 71; Bartlett 438). The Tolstoy Jubilee was meant to be a celebration of the hundred-year anniversary of Tolstoy's birth, and it would be the first Soviet event to commemorate a pre-revolutionary writer (Bartlett 438). In 1926, Tolstoy's daughter Alexandra secured an audience with Stalin, who had come to power after Lenin's death in 1924, to request one million rubles to renovate Yasnaya Polyana and the Tolstoy Museum in Moscow, but was rejected. She quickly learned that Stalin was only interested in the Jubilee insofar as it was "a felicitous opportunity for international propaganda" (Bartlett 436). Before this could occur, however, the state had to decide on its official position toward Tolstoy. This came in 1928 with a declaration that Tolstoy the writer would be separated from Tolstoyanism the movement (Bartlett 435). The anonymous *Pravda* article, which was very likely written or at least overseen by Stalin, proclaimed "[w]e do not refuse, and we do not think of refusing, Tolstoy's artistic heritage... One has to take Tolstoy as he is...with all his merits and faults. Tolstoy deserves this" (qtd. in Fodor 71). With this established, the Jubilee proceedings could be used as "an occasion to educate Soviet citizens on how to approach Tolstoy," who was the most popular author in Russia at the time (Bartlett 438).

One vital element of the Jubilee celebration was the planned release of the Jubilee Edition of Tolstoy's *Complete Collected Works*—a project that Lenin did not live to see completed. Editing and compiling Tolstoy's works was a huge state effort, and financial issues and bumbling bureaucracy prevented the *Complete Collected Works* from being published in time for the celebration (Bartlett 437-8). One obstacle was that Lenin had wanted the *Complete Collected Works* published in its entirety without censorship; however, upon further inspection of his more obscure writings, the editors learned that Tolstoy was a critic of the revolutionary movement in

his later years of staunch pacifism (441). This uncomfortable discovery added to the preexisting publishing difficulties. Volumes were published out of order and sporadically, then stopped from 1939 to 1949 (442). Publication resumed after Stalin's death in 1953 and the collection was finally completed in 1958, thirty years after the Jubilee. Tolstoy's religious works were thereafter banned from future publication (443). By the early 1930s, the state had exclusive rights to publishing—over fifty classic authors such as Tolstoy had been “nationalized,” thus giving the state the right to distribute or censor them as it saw fit (Lovell 36, 38; Bartlett 432). RAPP had pushed out all other competing literary movements; it became the only state-approved body dealing in literature (Dobrenko 45). RAPP, though it was disbanded in 1932 and replaced with the All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, was the birthplace of the basic tenets of Soviet criticism, which persisted throughout the existence of the Soviet Union (Dobrenko 49).

It was at the 1934 All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in which Maxim Gorky (1868-1936) first described the tenets of what was later called “Socialist realism”:

To invent means to extract from the totality of real existence its basic idea and to embody this in an image—thus we obtain realism. But if to the idea extracted from the real we add the desirable and the potential and if the image is thereby supplemented, we obtain that romanticism which lies at the basis of myth and which is very useful in that it facilitates the arousing of a revolutionary attitude towards reality. (qtd. in Henry 188)

Socialist realism did not simply arise out of nothing—the realist aspect was inspired by “the ‘great tradition’ of Russian realism” in which Tolstoy was a major player. Soviet realism was thus seen as a natural extension of the literary traditions which Tolstoy began (Henry 188). The Socialist aspect, of course, involves the addition of a certain romantic conception of Socialist

ideas coming to fruition in a work. Socialist realism, by which the contemporary Soviet literary scene was to be defined, involved a positivizing of Soviet experience. As Henry notes, a work of Socialist realism “is a simple world... of black and white” in which “intervening shades of gray are not only unaesthetic but they are politically suspect” (188). It would be anachronistic to judge Tolstoy’s work on the basis of the tenets of Socialist realism, but his contributions to realism could be used to cast him as a sort of distant patriarch of the state-sanctioned literary movement.

The development of official policies on literature was representative of larger changes taking place within the Soviet Union under Stalin. Educational policy had shifted from a pre-revolutionary focus on “classical literary culture and Orthodox doctrine” to a more technical curriculum that was appropriate for modernization (Lapidus 82). The Commissariat of Enlightenment sought to find a balance between the lofty intellectual pursuits of the old regime and an “excessive vocationalism and narrow specialization” which could be limiting in its scope (82-3). This led to the uncomfortable realization that students were “expected to foster cultural secularism and a critical scientific outlook...while simultaneously cultivating the development of a proper Communist world view” which was still in its formative stages (84-5). These goals changed during what Gail Warshofsky Lapidus sees as the second period of development in the educational system of the USSR from 1928 to 1931 (89). The Five-Year Plan necessitated that higher education be reorganized to quickly train students for technical and vocational skills. These priorities reverberated throughout the educational system—even elementary-aged students were exposed “to a campaign style in which productive labor replaced formal learning” (92-3). Naturally, traditional book-learning fell to the wayside in order to make way for the current needs of the state, and university faculty suspected to have “intelligentsia and bourgeois

origins”—ties to traditional education—were purged from their positions (91). These purges and the difficulty of creating a completely new educational system within a short period of time led to another shift in policy after 1931 (99-102). It returned much of the “formal and academic content” to schools and transferred technical training to outside programs which were better prepared to train students in vocational skills. General schools, then, became ideological, rather than technical, training grounds (102-3).

The impetus for this “great retreat,” a term coined by Russian sociologist Nikolai Timashev, was the realization that the Russian Revolution was not, as the Bolsheviks had originally hoped, going to lead to a global revolutionary movement that would eliminate the need for nation-states and therefore nationalism (Volkov 213; Fodor 136). By the late 1920s, under the leadership of Stalin, it was becoming clear that nationalism would not disappear; rather, “allegiance to Russia alone had become quite compatible with the official ideology” (Fodor 136). A growing sense of Russian nationalism and traditionalism was nurtured in schools, where “traditional Russian heroes—even some of the Tsars—returned to relative favor; in literature and art the Russian realists of the nineteenth century were extolled” (Hough 242). The Great Retreat was a reaction to the largely failed attempts of Stalin, through the First Five-Year Plan, to rapidly change cultural, educational, and social attitudes (Hough 244). Collectivization and industrialization could be forced; institutions and beliefs, less so.

The Great Break gave Party leadership permission to cultivate *kul'turnost'*, or “culturedness”—in part, “to assimilate many of the values of the old intelligentsia” (Hough 242). The Great Retreat thus began to manifest itself in the cultural sphere in addition to the educational sphere, paving the way for the creation of a new kind of Soviet citizen. The notion of *kul'turnost'*, in part, emerged in response to the migration of peasants to the cities as the

country industrialized. This migration led to crowded and harsh living conditions, as well as a feeling of displacement among the peasants, who were unaccustomed to urban life. A wave of social ills such as vulgarity in speech, alcoholism, crime, and poor hygiene overwhelmed the cities (Volkov 214). These changes were considered destabilizing to the regime and were thus denounced and heavily punished; nevertheless, nonviolent means were also used to discourage unruly behavior (Volkov 215). *Kul'turnost'* policies served to civilize the people—that is, to help them to conform to positive social norms—and “to justify inequalities by integrating the lower strata into a system of quasielitist consumption values” (Volkov 216). Accordingly, *kul'turnost'* touched on many aspects of life, including fashion and interior decorating, but policies towards language and literature are especially relevant here (Volkov 223).

Vadim Volkov explains the implications of *kul'turnost'* in the spheres of literacy and education:

The culture of speech derived from good literature; and reading was also directly connected with the acquisition of culturedness. Initially, the word ‘literate’ was a synonym of ‘cultured’, but as more people read more books, ‘educatedness’...superseded literacy in designating the main feature of the cultured individual. (223)

The Soviet people were encouraged to engage in intellectual and cultural pursuits in the vein of the old condemned lifestyle of the bourgeoisie, by attending movies, performances, and other artistic events, in addition to reading widely from permissible texts (Volkov 225). Because literacy rates had increased so rapidly, Soviet—and in particular, Russian—citizens “could absorb the rich traditions of pre-revolutionary literature, thereby acquiring access to a common Russian identity in a way denied to their ancestors” (Lieven 267). This sense of unity was

essential to a strong state and sense of nationalism, which would sustain the Soviet Union throughout WWII.

War provided an opportunity for the Soviet Union to fully embrace Tolstoy as a national symbol. Alexander Fodor considers *Leo Tolstoy* (1939), a study by various authors which was published in two issues of the journal *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, as the “first major Soviet contribution to research on Tolstoy,” which coincided with the beginning of WWII (Fodor 84). Unlike the uncertainty about Tolstoy’s acceptability in the late 1920s, the editors of the journal fully acknowledge in their introduction that Tolstoy was “an unassailable giant of Russian and world literature” (Fodor 85). This was the official state position going into the war, with a particular emphasis on Tolstoy’s patriotism as a means of boosting national spirit, despite the fact that he “could not be associated ideologically with the existing system of government” (Fodor 87-8). Because much of Tolstoy’s nonfiction had already been made unavailable to the general public, it was not difficult to turn the public’s attention to Tolstoy’s patriotism as reflected in his participation in the Crimean War and through *War and Peace*, his epic novel of Russia in the era of the Napoleonic Wars (Fodor 88).

Post-revolution criticism was aimed heavily at *War and Peace*, with its “glowing descriptions of the class enemies of the new order” who united with the lower classes to defend the nation and its tsarist government, a concept utterly ridiculous to the Bolsheviks (Fodor 135). However, by the 1940s, the cause of national unity and the importance of Tolstoy as a national figure were significant enough to overlook this, and during the war *War and Peace* became almost a sacred text. Alexander Fodor notes that there were cases in which Red Army soldiers had been killed and found with Tolstoy’s works on their person (91). Tolstoy’s writings were easily accessible; when Germany invaded the USSR in 1941, the state published massive reprints

of parts of Tolstoy's works in which Russians were fighting against their enemies—*War and Peace* was particularly popular (Fodor 90). In Leningrad, which was under siege on the anniversary of the October Revolution in 1941, Tolstoy's stories about the defense of Sevastopol were played over loudspeakers (Bartlett 444). It was in this period that Tolstoy became the most published author in Russia, but he transcended this simple statistic when "his name began to be used with the epithet 'the great' (*velikii*), which had been reserved for Stalin for some time" (Fodor 90). By being so closely associated with the Russian victory in the war, Tolstoy became the embodiment of Russian power and influence (Fodor 146).

By the end of WWII, any pre-Soviet memories of Tolstoy's pacifism and resistance to the state had been practically extinguished, as Bartlett notes:

Tolstoy was firmly entrenched in the Soviet imagination as a symbol of Russia, and as her most ardent patriot. Generations of Russian schoolchildren now grew up with the officially approved novels and stories that had become a fixture on the national curriculum, completely unaware of Tolstoy's enormous legacy of religious and political writings. (444)

Critical opinion on Tolstoy in Russia, as a reflection of increasing nationalism brought about by the war, generally began to regard him as not just the greatest Russian writer, but the greatest writer in the world. This inflated view of Tolstoy led to unsupported claims such as the assertion that Tolstoy was the inspiration for the greatest of Western writers (Fodor 91-2). In the developing contest between the Soviet Union and the West, Tolstoy was a reminder of the greatness—and even the superiority—of the Russian people.

Tolstoy's importance to the Russian canon made him a fixture in Soviet school curriculums from the Stalin era until the fall of the Soviet Union. A culture of strict literary

controls had developed under Stalin, and many factors could lead a writer or a text to be considered “politically marked,” as Kathleen Parthé notes:

It could be any number of things, some intrinsic (genre, theme, character, setting, narrator, ethos, style, use of metaphor and influence, the work in its entirety, or even a very brief passage from it), others extrinsic (the writer’s background, including their ethnic identity, friendships, oppositional behavior outside of literature, the ideological profile of the literary movement with which the work was identified, events within the country or elsewhere that coincided with its appearance). (xii)

There was no single process for determining which works and authors were and were not acceptable—subjectivity reigned (Parthé xii). Because of his status of veneration in the Soviet Union, Tolstoy was largely exempt from these considerations—with the obvious exceptions of his religious and philosophical writings, which were politically dangerous, unavailable, and thus irrelevant (Fodor 102).

Soviet students were exposed to as much Tolstoy as the state deemed appropriate, and were instructed in the art of Soviet literary analysis so that they might see the forces at work within Tolstoy’s fiction. These methods of analysis had their basis in the Marxist criticism of the 1920s. The basic Marxist assumptions were that “human behavior... is socially determined, class conscious, material, and dialectical” (Emerson 77). Reality is concrete, knowable, and objective, and “[a]ll change is the result of conflict between opposing tendencies. Consciously or not, authors are a product of this struggle, as are their fictional heroes” (Emerson 77-8). Therefore, a good Soviet student was to focus on unpacking literary works with this set of beliefs in mind; the main goal is “unearth[ing] the ideological content” of a literary work, at which point

“his task is finished, and it is absolute” (Kramer 372). Karl Kramer notes that artistic and political value were bound up in each other to the extent that good art was inextricably linked to correct ideology, and vice versa (374). Thus, the basic principles of Soviet literary criticism were political.

A few specific criteria, most with overlapping qualities, were used to various degrees to analyze a work of literature: *klassovost*, *ideinost*, *narodnost*, and *partiinnost*. *Klassovost*, roughly meaning “class character,” has to do with the writer’s “express[ion] of class consciousness” (Shneidman, “Russia” 627). This method of analysis is particularly difficult to determine when discussing pre-revolutionary writers who had no conception of the Marxist class system. This criterion became too nebulous and difficult to apply to the Russian classics, and had fallen into disuse by the early 1970s (628). A similar issue arose with *ideinost*, or “moral substance” (627). The term was ill-defined; Shneidman characterizes it as “adopt[ing] the positions of the party by subscribing to its ideology,” which once again could not be applied to pre-revolutionary works in which Soviet ideology did not yet exist (629). The term thus had to be modified in these instances by referring to “a moral quality connected with the writer’s character and his personal philosophy of life, which expresses itself in his attitude toward the weak, humiliated, and downtrodden, and manifests itself in the positive deeds of the heroes in his works” (630).

Narodnost, a term which first appeared in the early nineteenth century, refers to a faithful representation of “national spirit” (Shneidman 627, 630). Because Russian classics do not predate the notion, it can be most easily applied:

[*Narodnost*] limits the need to tamper with the original texts. It remains only to put them in proper perspective by emphasizing what is important and overlooking

the rest... [it] makes it possible to retain the Russian classical heritage in the Soviet school curricula, and to emphasize the connection between socialist culture and the best that was written before the revolution. (632-3)

Despite the more natural relations between *narodnost'* and classic literature, Shneidman, writing in 1972, suggests *partiinnost'* is the most significant literary consideration (633). There is no one exact definition of *partiinnost'*; however, it generally translates to “partyiness, party principles and spirit”—in essence, toeing the party line in literature and using literature to defend and promote current political ideology (627, 635-6). After Stalin’s death, and its resulting slight increase in tolerance for dissent, some Soviet scholars opposed the view that authors who were not Party members had to write “party literature.” In Lenin’s manifesto, “Party Organization and Party Literature,” they claimed, it was Lenin’s intention for *partiinnost'* to apply only to the writings of Party members, not all citizens (634-5). Considering the importance of *partiinnost'* in the post-Stalin era, however, it is clear that the Stalin-era interpretation of *partiinnost'* persisted. Though methods of Soviet literary analysis are often vague and overlapping, Kramer does not see the Soviet methods of interpretation as inherently flawed; some interpretations are certainly legitimate, considering the fact that Marxist criticism is still relevant today. His problem is that Soviet criticism sees all other interpretations, and even discussions of textual and authorial context, as irrelevant (373; Shneidman, “Russia” 636). In a system where the Party dictates and dominates all aspects of cultural life, however, such an attitude is to be expected.

In addition to the anachronism of seeking Soviet ideals in pre-revolutionary works, there is a problematic subjectivity inherent in judging a work by purely political standards, which is perhaps why Soviet literary explorations of Tolstoy are so vague and stilted. Lenin’s writings on Tolstoy were held up as authoritative commentaries, but as Gleb Struve notes, the articles were

not intended to be used in such a way and are hardly specific enough to constitute guides for interpreting Tolstoy's works:

Lenin's articles are duly quoted in nearly everything that is written about Tolstoy, but often these quotations are in the nature of perfunctory lip-service, or perhaps one should say rather that Lenin's famous formulas have become part and parcel of the incantatory magic of Soviet critical and scholarly shamans... (177, 184)

With little substantial help from Lenin, then, teaching Tolstoy came down to a list of Party-approved discussion topics. N.N. Shneidman explores this further in his 1973 article, "Soviet Approaches to the Teaching of Literature: A Case Study: L. Tolstoy in Soviet Education," in which he notes that the Soviet program for teaching *Anna Karenina* in universities places little focus on the individual characters (343). Instead, educators are encouraged to focus more on societal issues, for instance:

the meaning of [Anna's] conflict with society. The critical depiction in the novel of the different strata of nobility and bureaucracy... The reflection in the novel of the social and public changes in the post-reform period. The consciousness of the injustice of the landowner-bourgeois order and the search for reconciliation between the interests of landowners and peasants. (Shneidman 343).

These discussion topics are far from illegitimate. Aside from the more veiled critique of embracing westernization at the expense of maintaining tradition, as we will discuss, there are segments of overt political discussions throughout the novel. Levin's brother, Nikolai, is the source of much of this commentary. In our first encounter with him, he explains his reasoning for organizing a manufacturing association "in which all production and profit and, above all, the tools of production, will be common property":

You know that capital oppresses the worker... however much they work, they can never get out of their brutish situation. All the profits earned by their work, with which they might improve their situation, give themselves some leisure and, consequently, education, all surplus earnings are taken from them by the capitalists... And this order must be changed. (Tolstoy 88)

This sentiment is perfectly compatible with Soviet ideology, but there are caveats. It is important to note that Nikolai is a pitiable character, with a “sickly, consumptive face,” and Levin can hardly listen to him speak, recognizing that his brother’s interest in the metal-working association “was only an anchor saving him from despising himself” (Tolstoy 88). A simple focus on the above excerpt could give the impression that Nikolai is offering a totally positive statement, but context suggests that he is not a model of the ideal proto-Soviet citizen but is instead pathetic and miserable, using his ideology as a crutch.

What to make, then, of Levin, who is the closest analogue to Tolstoy in the novel? Like Tolstoy, Levin has ideas regarding the treatment of peasants that seem radical to his peers, and, according to his brother Nikolai, these ideas are essentially communistic. Levin denies this, but at the same time realizes that “in the depths of his soul he was afraid it was true—true that he wanted to balance between communism and the established forms and that this was hardly possible” (Tolstoy 350). Much of Levin’s story revolves around his search for meaning. In a Soviet novel, his story might end with a wholehearted embrace of communist ideology, leaving behind the vacillation between the old ways and unconventional thinking. In fact, the conclusion of Levin’s story is completely antithetical to Soviet thinking. He realizes through the life-altering death of his brother and the birth of his first child that life cannot be fully explained by science and reason, and that most Russians do not subscribe to this viewpoint:

[H]e had been mistaken in supposing, from memories of his youthful university circle, that religion had outlived its day and no longer existed. All the good people close to him were believers. The old prince, and Lvov, who he had come to love so much, and Sergei Ivanovich, and all the women were believers, and his wife believed as she had believed in early childhood, and ninety-nine hundredths of all the Russian people, that people whose life inspired the greatest respect in him, were believers. (Tolstoy 786-7)

By the end of the novel, Levin embraces God as revealed in the Christian faith and vows to live for the good (Tolstoy 816-7).

Levin's transformation is spiritual, not ideological or totally rational—it is completely at odds with Soviet state-sponsored atheism. Yet the strongly-ingrained cultural and educational phenomenon of Tolstoy during the Soviet period persisted in the face of these contradictions. Soviet literary criticism and pedagogy masterfully utilized selective attention in order “to use Tolstoy's criticism of the bourgeois [sic] society for the purpose of educating Soviet young people in the necessary spirit” while glossing over potentially uncomfortable elements of his work which are in stark contrast to Soviet ideology (Shneidman, “Soviet Approaches” 345). Though Tolstoy's religious writings were unavailable to Soviet citizens, Levin's spiritual journey is an essential part of *Anna Karenina* and offers some insight into Tolstoy's views. Parthé makes an important observation on this point: “[t]here is no way of knowing, let alone calculating, the power of individual readers to have their own powerful encounters with the classic texts, either during their school years or afterward” (185). Tolstoy's works had the capacity to resonate with readers outside of the classroom setting, in ways that were perhaps contrary to the goals of

Soviet literary pedagogy, and this cannot be discounted when considering the relationship of Tolstoy to the Soviet people.

This special relationship was rejuvenated in the late 1980s as a result of Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*'—openness in the public sphere. Restrictions on literature were loosened, and Soviet citizens were finally able to access and study Tolstoy's religious and philosophical writings, providing further context for his work (Bartlett 451). A now fully-literate public was encouraged to read quality literature, and books had become a symbol of a cultured home—the average household in the late 1980s contained five hundred books (Lovell 67, 72). Tolstoy remained popular; after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Tolstoy-inspired religious groups sprung up, and efforts were made to update Tolstoy's *Complete Collected Works* now that information was readily available and the political situation was more conducive to such a venture (Bartlett 452).

Increased freedom of information did not lead to a complete turn from traditional Soviet literary criticism, however—instead, there was a call to return to the purer days of criticism, to look to Lenin's example rather than Stalin's. Those in favor of Gorbachev's reforms tended to believe that Soviet socialism could be reformed “from above,” as Gorbachev was attempting to do, and sought to strip socialism of all the baggage it had accumulated since Lenin's time (Menzel and Dubin 257). At the same time, more “fundamentalist” critics like Aleksandr Kazin rejected liberalization in the literary realm. They reacted against the influx of new literary movements such as postmodernism, declaring them too Western and unappealing to the majority of Russian people. Rather, Kazin stressed the importance of retaining Russian values, including “collectivism, readiness for self-denial and self-sacrifice, [and] religious sentiment...discovered in the ancient culture of monasticism and iconography, the teachings of Tolstoy, [and] the

literature of socialist realism” (Menzel and Dubin 265). This debate between tradition and westernization would come to a head after the fall of Communism, as Russia struggled to define itself as an independent nation with a new place in the world.

The transition out of seventy years of Communist rule necessitated huge shifts in culture, economics, and political institutions. Navigating these changes, including an economic crisis in the early 1990s, left most Russians with little opportunity for leisure, including literature. Those who continued to read were inundated, thanks to capitalism, with more options than ever before, which turned some remaining readers to mass literature rather than the standard pre-revolutionary and Soviet classics (Menzel 43). The optimism of the intelligentsia who believed that new intellectual freedoms would bring about a literary revolution was soon dashed, which Menzel explains:

All the great hopes of the Russian intelligentsia that after the fall of censorship and political control the masses would joyfully turn to the hitherto suppressed legacy of Great Russian Literature, from Nabokov and Solzhenitsyn, as their preferred reading matter, had by 1991 turned out to be an illusion... The Great Writer had been the highest authority in Russian culture ever since the early nineteenth century for both the government and the people, whether in official or unofficial culture, and had helped to maintain a notion of literature as an institution of enlightenment and moral education, as the conscience of the nation. By the end of the 1990s, this key figure in literary life had been replaced by the publisher—the PR face of literature—in a radically more commercial environment. (39)

Menzel posits four changes in Russian society which may explain the turn away from literature: a decline in the membership of the intelligentsia, the advent of capitalism and thus commercialization, the advent of new media, and a lack of literary control and promotion from the state, which had more important matters to attend to and no longer had an ideological agenda to promulgate (39). Literature largely lost its role in the political sphere (Parthé 23).

The upheaval caused by the end of communism and the democratizing reforms of the 1990s stirred up a new wave of anti-West sentiment. The Russian political scene saw pro-democratic liberals and conservative nationalist forces vying for control of the newly-established government (Marsh 491). *Glasnost*' had opened up new access to the West, and the fall of the Soviet Union had enabled the transfer of ideas and culture from the West to Russia, which, on the whole, imbibed it eagerly. Disillusionment took hold in the mid to late 1990s, however, when the results of the Western-backed reforms of the Yeltsin era either did not meet expectations or turned out to be ruinous (Marsh 490).

This disenchantment with the West fostered a growing sense of Russian nationalism and an understanding of Russia as inherently distinct from the West; these attitudes were soon reflected in the educational system (Lisovskaya and Karpov 522). In a study of Russian textbooks from the fall of the Soviet Union to the end of the 1990s, Elena Lisovskaya and Vyacheslav Karpov found that, “[t]o a great extent, the symbols of national and cultural identity have replaced the symbols of communist ideology” (533). Discussions of literature were particularly affected; the “Russianness” of works and the patriotism of Russian writers were emphasized (533). Nationalism and its correlation with anti-Western sentiment were more prominent than in the Soviet era (534). Religion was characterized more positively than in the past, and textbooks highlighted the religious views of authors and incorporated discussions of

religious themes in literature (534). Lisovskaya and Karpov also found evidence of an influx of Western theories of literary analysis, with emphases on individualism and personal liberty, which would have been unheard of in communist-era textbooks (538). How did Russian government-published textbooks reconcile this westernization of education with intensely nationalistic themes? According to Lisovskaya and Karpov, this cognitive dissonance was not a problem for most Russians, who were already confronting dichotomies in the political sphere. Pro-market and pro-West forces clashed throughout the 1990s with anti-West communist and nationalist groups (540-2). However disparate these ideas seem to be, the combination provided the necessary balance that Russia needed to survive its first post-Soviet decade (542).

Finding Russia's niche between intense nationalism and complete westernization has been a defining theme of the Putin era from 2000 to the present day. Russia must be westernized enough to survive in a global economy, but Putin has made it clear that Russia is a distinct entity that is not always willing to play by the rules of the West (Aron, par. 2-3). Nationalistic sentiment has not gone away; rather, it has been actively promoted by the state in recent years (Marsh 110). Putin has fostered close ties between the government and the Russian Orthodox Church, using religion as a nationalist symbol and a connection to the pre-revolutionary past (Marsh 111). This view of the continuity of Russian culture plays into the arguments of traditionalists, who "insist that the gulf separating Russia from the West is enormous and therefore favor [a path] that would affirm Russia's distinctive traditions." Conversely, Russian liberals favor greater engagement with and adaptation to the Western world (Sakwa 38). This tension between tradition and adaptation contributes to the cultural and political "dualism [which] characterizes most democratic institutions and processes in Russia" (Sakwa 39).

An examination of *Anna Karenina* reveals that Tolstoy's work has not lost its relevance in the context of Russia today. The novel offers significant parallels between Tolstoy's Russia and today's Russia—parallels which touch on questions that have plagued Russia for years. As Andrew Kaufman notes, “[during the writing of *Anna Karenina*,] Russia was making a transition to a capitalist economy, which resulted in the emergence of a new professional class—one that introduced Western materialism and individualism into a society formerly nourished, Tolstoy believed, on the ideals of community and compassion” (148). Both this transition and the Russian transition from communism to capitalism involve grappling with Western culture and deciding how, and to what extent, to adapt it to their lives (Kaufman 149). The two storylines of Anna and Levin provide a clear choice between two paths—the sensual, vacuous, modern “European” life of Anna and her set, which ends in tragedy, and Levin's rejection of such a lifestyle and his ultimately fulfilling embrace of tradition, family, and “Russianness.”

These two worlds come into stark contrast most notably when Dolly visits Vronsky and Anna and is jarred and unsettled by their estate:

[It] gave her an impression of opulence and display and that new European luxury she had only read about in English novels but had never seen in Russia, let alone in the country. Everything was new, from the new French wallpaper to the carpet that covered the entire floor... The marble washstand, the dressing table, the couch, the tables, the bronze clock on the mantelpiece, the curtains on the windows and doors—it was all expensive and new. (Tolstoy 616)

But it is the nursery made for Anna and Vronsky's daughter that most disturbs Dolly. The daughter is tended to in part by an English governess, and the room is filled with furniture and supplies “all of English make, of good quality, and obviously very expensive” (Tolstoy 618).

Yet the luxury of the room cannot mask the coldness of Anna's regard for her daughter—Dolly quickly understands that Anna's visits to the nursery are rare when she observes the relationship between Anna, the governess, and the nurse, and discovers that Anna knows little about her own child (Tolstoy 619).

Dolly feels not only awkward and out of place at Anna and Vronsky's home, but soon turns defensive at the dinner table when Anna and Vronsky's friends begin to discuss Levin's eccentricities—notably, his aversion to using machines in farming. Vronsky, who admits to having never met Levin, suggests that Levin “has probably never seen the machines he denounces. And if he has seen and tried one, it was not of foreign make but some Russian version” (Tolstoy 632). These derogatory comments associate Levin's backwardness with his Russianness and lead Sviyazhsky, another dinner guest, to propose that Levin's ways suggest that he is “*un petit peu toqué* [a bit cracked]” (Tolstoy 632). Dolly jumps to Levin's defense, but is ultimately left with an “unpleasant impression” of the “impersonal and strained character” of the evening, and resolves not to stay for two days but to instead leave the following day (Tolstoy 634-5).

Dolly's estrangement is further exacerbated by her conversation with Anna later that night, in which she reveals to Dolly that she uses contraceptives. Dolly is appalled, believing—as Tolstoy did—that such methods of preventing pregnancy are immoral and destructive to families (Bartlett 245, Tolstoy 637). As Andrew Kaufman notes, Tolstoy viewed the weakening of family ties as “both a catastrophe in its own right and as the embodiment of the larger processes of disintegration he saw all around him” (149). Anna's use of birth control is symptomatic of a larger problem: the intrusion of a foreign—that is, Western—culture, which values individual gratification over moral living and devotion to others (Orwin 181). Levin's

storyline is necessary to counteract Anna's and to provide an example of a life devoted to family, which he sees as the ultimate expression of love—not love as a “gratification of personal desire,” but a selfless, spiritual love, “[a] devotion to a community, a tradition, a set of ideals” (Kaufman 155, Orwin 179).

It is significant that it is a peasant who provides this turning point for Levin, opening his mind to the idea of living for God and for others rather than for himself:

“...people are different. One man just lives for his own needs...just stuffs his belly, but Fokanych [another peasant]—he's an upright old man. He lives for the soul. He remembers God.”

“How's that? Remembers God? Lives for the soul?” Levin almost shouted.

“Everybody knows how—by the truth, by God's way”...

A new, joyful feeling came over [Levin]. At the muzhik's words about Fokanych living for the soul, by the truth, by God's way, it was as if a host of vague but important thoughts burst from some locked-up place and, all rushing towards the same goal, whirled through his head, blinding him with their light. (Tolstoy 794)

Donna Tussing Orwin attaches great significance to the peasantry in *Anna Karenina* as a representation of moral purity. Their work is “a manifestation of their essence, of the God in their souls” (145, 148). It is no wonder, then, that Levin, in his quest for meaning, is drawn to the peasantry. By uniting himself with the peasants through labor, he experiences a kind of moral cleansing, which he first discovered when he once “[got] angry with the steward” and used mowing as “his remedy for calming down” (Tolstoy 247). This purifying ritual is significant enough to Levin to justify any embarrassment or inconvenience it may cause, even during his brother's visit:

But having walked through the meadow, recalling his impressions of mowing, he was now almost decided that he would mow. And after the vexing conversation with his brother, he again recalled this intention.

“I need physical movement, otherwise my character definitely deteriorates,” he thought, and he decided to mow no matter how awkward it was in front of his brother and the peasants. (Tolstoy 248).

Levin’s involvement with the peasants is decidedly real, spiritual, and communal—the embodiment of Russianness. This path is life-giving: literally, in the birth of Levin and Kitty’s first child, and figuratively in Levin’s new understanding of a simple life lived for God and others. In contrast, Anna’s pursuit of decadence and individual pleasure at the expense of her family and friends leads to her death and the suffering of those close to her. Tolstoy offers more than just moral advice—he offers a choice between life and death.

How, then, in Putin’s Russia, is Tolstoy’s moral message received? It is first worth considering whether it is received at all. Reading is less popular than in the past—the advent of digital media has provided Russians with alternative outlets for leisure time. Libraries are disappearing as well—as of 2003, 85% of libraries in use during the Soviet era were no longer in operation (Menzel 44-5). The government has structured policy around these changing circumstances, as Rosalind March has noted:

Putin’s government considers the press and electronic media far more politically influential than “high culture” which now appeals only to a minority audience and appears to pose no threat to the President’s levels of support among the population or to the regime’s ultimate survival. Putin is more interested in encouraging certain aspects of Russian culture which enhance the Russian state,

especially those which are most visible to foreign visitors, such as sculpture, the visual arts and architecture, or which export well, such as opera, ballet, film and television series based on classical literary texts, in order to revive Russian national pride in the country's great cultural traditions and to further his ambition that Russia should again be perceived abroad as a "Great Power." (34)

The 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi provided a glimpse into how Russia wishes to be perceived by the rest of the world. The Opening Ceremony featured, among other things, a short dramatized video of the history of Russia, beginning with the earliest inhabitants who engage in hard physical labor such as chopping down trees and battling snowy winters in order to create settlements (International Olympic Committee). A moment during the construction of St. Petersburg is briefly shown, and then the focus shifts to the industrialization and modernization of the late nineteenth century and into the Soviet era. The whole display is decidedly masculine, revolving around hard labor and showcasing the toughness of the Russian people—only in the final scene, the construction of the Fisht Olympic Stadium, is a woman featured in a position of power, presumably as one of the engineers of the building. These themes are repeated to some extent in the live show, which further explores more cultural elements—such as a *War and Peace*-esque ballroom scene and a whitewashed representation of Soviet work culture. The message of the Opening Ceremony is clear—Russia is, and continues to be, a great power.

Of particular interest is the alphabet sequence of the Opening Ceremony—the video follows a Russian girl who falls asleep with an alphabet book on a dreamlike journey through the Cyrillic alphabet, where each letter stands for a famous Russian or a cultural, scientific, or technological achievement. Unsurprisingly, along with other writers such as Chekhov and Dostoevsky, Tolstoy is included, though "T" is the only letter accompanied by two words—

interestingly, Tolstoy shares the moment with “television” (IOC). This segment, though only a small part of the Opening Ceremony, is notable in that it is the first segment and sends a clear message of Russia’s accomplishments that is further substantiated by the subsequent displays.

Tolstoy is still used as a powerful symbol of the greatness of Russia and Russian culture, and his legacy of inspiring patriotic fervor persists. In 2012, Tolstoy’s great-great-grandson, Vladimir Tolstoy, became a cultural adviser to Putin, who “continues to strike notes of national pride” by “enlisting the support of a member of an illustrious family” (Donadio, par. 3). Vladimir Tolstoy, before his appointment, was actively involved in the Tolstoy museum at Yasnaya Polyana, and though he adopts a more favorable attitude towards the West than Vladimir Medinsky, Russia’s Minister of Culture, he still supports recent Russian actions in Crimea, even using Tolstoy to justify his position:

“Leo Tolstoy was a Russian officer who defended Russia in the Fourth Bastion in Sevastopol,” he said, speaking through a translator over tea in a cafe near the museum. “For us, in our mind, [Crimea] has always been Russia.”

He was referring to the siege of Sevastopol in 1854-55 in the Crimean War, in which Russia fought the allied forces of France, Britain, Sardinia and the Ottoman Empire and ultimately lost control of the city. “Of course, as a descendant of the Russian officer Leo Tolstoy, I cannot have any other attitude toward that,” he added. (Donadio, par. 6-7)

Vladimir Tolstoy’s association of Tolstoy with his stint in the Crimean War is reminiscent of WWII-era conceptions of Tolstoy as first and foremost a patriot and defender of the motherland. Apparently, this idea has never completely disappeared, considering that Vladimir Tolstoy privileges this nationalistic Tolstoy over the Tolstoy whose pacifism led him to become ashamed

of his involvement in the Crimean War (Fodor 88). Vladimir Tolstoy's attitude "reflects a growing tendency since Mr. Putin's re-election in 2012 to see Russia as somehow purer than the West," which does not appear to be abating (Donadio, par. 18).

Anna Karenina remains a relevant work in Russian culture, as evidenced by a popular online "live reading" of the novel which took place over the course of 30 hours in October 2014 and set the world record for number of viewers watching an "online reading aloud marathon" (Russia Beyond the Headlines, par. 1-4). The event was sponsored by both Google and the Tolstoy museum at Yasnaya Polyana (par. 3). Participants included numerous famous Russians, from actors and writers to government figures like Vladimir Medinsky and Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich. The support and participation of high-ranking members of the government suggest that they viewed the exercise as worthwhile, and the favorable response to the live reading reflects the fact that Tolstoy remains important to Russian culture.

Russia is still in the process of forming its post-Soviet identity, providing fertile ground for a resurgence of cultural nationalism. Just as the Soviet government molded Tolstoy and his works to promote state ideology, so too may today's Russia utilize Tolstoy for its own ends; reviving the legacy of Tolstoy as a god-like symbol of Russian greatness would be appropriate as Putin works to restore Russia to its former position of prestige and power. History suggests the effectiveness of this strategy in the promotion of a state-sponsored ideology. Despite the marked decline in reading among Russians over the past thirty years, Tolstoy remains, at the very least, one of the most significant cultural figures in Russia. He speaks to a primal sense of Russianness— as Fodor suggests, "[o]ne has to be a Russian to know that Tolstoy was much more than just a writer, and an American to know that 'Old Glory' is more than just a piece of cloth" (15). What Russians believe about Tolstoy is more significant than who Tolstoy actually

was, and perception of Tolstoy and his works can be shaped, whether for good or ill, by those with the power and motivation to do so.

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