Round Table

Richard F. Gustafson. Leo Tolstoy, Resident and Stranger: A Study in Fiction and Theology. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986. 480 pp.

Five Critiques and a Reply

Victor Terras, Brown University

Much about Gustafson's remarkable book is contingent upon his phenomenological approach which, to an extent rarely seen in so ambitious a scholarly undertaking, factors out the literaturnost' of Tolstoy's works, their historical context, their intertextual connections with the literature of the times, and immediate critical reactions to Tolstoy's fiction. Consistently with this approach, the leitmotif, "resident and stranger," is not, or at least not explicitly, defined in relation to analogous dichotomies perceived in Tolstoy by Apollon Grigor'ev, Nikolay Mikhaylovsky, Dimitry Merezhkovsky, and Isaiah Berlin. Tolstoy's metaphysical searchings are seen, to a significant extent, in context with the theology of the Eastern Church, but even this is done in a rather general way only. In fact, at one point Gustafson makes the somewhat surprising statement that Tolstoy's theology "was not derived from scripture or any other books"(190).

It is therefore understandable that analogies which can be established between Tolstoy's thought and German idealist philosophy(Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel in particular) which was widely current in Tolstoy's Russia are not pursued, even when they are obvious. For instance, having stated that "Tolstoy's God of Life and Love is an Eastern Christian God," Gustafson points out that such theology is contingent upon abandoning "the shackles of the Aristotelian excluded middle"(108). But the same is of course true of Hegelian dialectics. For another example, Tolstoy's view according to which "the knower is also the event," "the consciousness of the All is the life of God," and "separation of the subject and object is a fiction of the knowing mind"(274-6) is also Hegel's. In this connection, it is significant that even Schopenhauer, a major influence, is mentioned only once, in passing(220). Nor is Lukacs's Theory of the Novel consulted, although Lukacs's existential "homelessness" and search for "totality" mean essentially the same as Gustafson's "resident" and "stranger."

Also consistently with his basic method, Gustafson deals with

the whole of Tolstoy's oeuvre as if it were a unity, factoring out those traits that are peculiar to the writer's youth, maturity, and old age. It ought to be noted that this diversity is as essential to an understanding of Tolstoy as is the unity perceived by Gustafson. Childhood is the work of a very young man, Resurrection the work of an old man.

Gustafson's conception of "resident" and "stranger" is certainly fruitful, though it takes the reader some time to absorb the broad meaning given to "resident," as in "a failed resident" (47). In common usage, "stranger" covers a broader semantic area than "resident." For example, Gustafson's analysis of Napoleon as the "stranger" and Kutuzov as the "resident"(224) is illuminating, and so is the application of these terms to the experience of war: some are "at home" in a battle, they are with it, while others perceive it as outsiders(244-52).

But then Gustafson takes his "resident: stranger" model beyond the existential and psychological into the epistomological dimension, Thus, he extends it to Tolstoy's theory of art, where "infection" transforms "strangers" into "residents." Elsewhere, he observes that the narrator may be a "resident," that is, merge his consciousness with his subject, or remain a detached "stranger"(250). Perhaps this metabasis eis allo genos should have been marked more clearly.

Gustafson presents Tolstoy's ontology, theology, moral philosophy, and epistomology better than any study I am aware of. The latter offers the most interesting material since it is linked to Tolstoy's aesthetics and poetics and Gustafson presents excellent examples of "recollective," "conventional," and "intoxicated" consciousness, "ecstasy," "infection," and "self-consciousness" as dealt with by Tolstoy and makes important observations on Tolstoy's treatment of point-of-view and the different ways in which Tolstoy's reader gains his knowledge.

Though concerned primarily with the paradigmatic aspect of Tolstoy's texts, Gustafson gives lengthy plot summaries of some of Tolstoy's works, as well as a maze of direct quotations, which lead to some good observations but make it difficult to follow Gustafson's main argument. His recognition of the paradigmatic quality of Tolstoy's fiction(290) does not induce him to use the familiar terminology of structural analysis. In his effort to avoid the familiar clichés of Tolstoy criticism, Gustafson uses terms, such as "relatedness"(162), "clarification of guilt"(175), and "restorative deification"(228), as well as formulations such as: "The rhythm moves from the hopeful possibilities of a new residency to the actuality of isolation(44), all of which the reader finds hard to digest. This is a good, but not particularly well written book. For a final thought, I

hope that Gustafson is wrong when he sees in "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" Tolstoy's art "in its most typical form"(160). I rather hope that the wonderful randomness and uniqueness of an individual human being's life as presented, say, in "Hadji Murat" is.

Robert C. Williams, Davidson College

In Leo Tolstoy: Resident and Stranger, Richard Gustafson has produced an elegant and definitive reinterpretation of Tolstoy's entire philosophy, theology, and writing. The book emphasizes his consistent and continuous religious world view within the culture of nineteenth-century Russian Orthodoxy, based upon two decades of reading and thinking about Tolstoy. A magisterial study, it illuminates the soul of an orphaned genius in unique and creative ways.

Gustafson interprets Tolstoy as both resident and stranger, a man desperate to belong to a loved community but estranged from others by his own self-centeredness. The resident achieves happiness by the soul's attraction to the good of others; the stranger believes in the primacy of the self. Following the Eastern Christian tradition, Tolstoy's imagined career of life seeks deification through an ultimate merging of the individual with God the All.

Both the lives of Tolstoy's characters and the structure of Gustafson's book elucidate this merging. In the beginning is the struggle for love, exemplified by Anna Karenina, Levin's search for faith, and the death of Ivan Ilich. The soul achieves wisdom through suffering. The way to love is redemptive and divine, a Christ-like love for all epitomized by Nekhliudov in Resurrection.

The second part of Gustafson's study illustrates Tolstoy's conception of evolving states of awareness through body, feeling, mind, and will. For Tolstoy, true self-consciousness means loving the other whose name is God, being conscious of God within us. Life is evolving consciousness from separateness to unity, from stranger to resident, from physical to spiritual egotism.

Recollective consciousness is central to Tolstoy's narrative technique. Both character and reader ascend by steps of prayer to moments of increasing consciousness of God. Recollection of self blocks awareness of the divine, which comes in moments of intoxification, ecstasy, and self-forgetting, epitomized by Pierre at Borodino in War and Peace. Likewise, political authority blocks the free self from achieving cooperation and community through love; the unnatural state coerces the natural community of free participation. Self-consciousness and knowledge of God produce a state of perfection and salvation possible to all who attempt to love.

Finally, Gustafson shows that Tolstoy's theology involves a transformation of consciousness where the self as "I" approaches the "non-I", the All, God. Paradoxically, this loss of self is a return to the self who knows God, the part rejoining the whole, eliminating personality and death.

Gustafson's brilliant, complex, and exhaustive rereading of Tolstoy places the writer squarely within the religious traditions of Eastern Christianity. Weaving together newly translated passages from all of Tolstoy's work, he is able to demonstrate clearly the lifelong unity and consistency of Tolstoy's philosophy of life. Tolstoy emerges impressively as both resident and stranger of the world of nineteenth-century Russia in which he strove to live.

Yet the historical dimension is somehow absent in this book, with its emphasis on continuity rather than change in Tolstoy's work. The chronological and the biographical vanish in a seamless web of religious seeking. Tolstoy's Christianity appears to be fully developed, rather than evolving, throughout his life.

Likewise, the historical traditions of Christianity in Russia are far more diverse than Gustafson's reading of Eastern Orthodoxy might suggest. Schismatic and sectarian interpretations, so crucial for Dostoevsky, are absent. So is the deep-seated Russian reading of Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic, with its three stages of history leading to a final Judgment Day of collective salvation and resurrection, central to Nikolai Fedorov and Andrei Bely. The gnostic tradition so important to Russian nationalism, and even to Bolshevism, is yet another strand of Russian Orthodoxy.

It is crucial to remember that the subject of Gustafson's book is Tolstoy's Christianity, not Russian Christianity. The personal vision is perhaps more unique to Tolstoy and his followers than Gustafson suggests. Yet this historian's quibbling should not obscure the significance of this book, which ranks with Martin Malia's biography of Alexander Herzen as one of the most erudite and imaginative interpretations of any Russian writer or thinker. Its richness and wisdom defy the brevity of a review.

Richard Gregg, Vassar College

Let it be said at the outset that this is a landmark in Tolstoy scholarship:encyclopedic in its grasp of the subject, original in its approach, bold in its conclusions. By defining Tolstoy's narrative genius in basically religious terms, by synthesizing his

multifarious fictions into a single quest(though with many and diverse way stations) for spiritual love, and by placing the Tolstoyan Weltanschauung in the context of Eastern Christian thought the author has in effect presented us with a new Tolstoy. This presence will, I predict, be among us for some time.

A dithyramb is not a critique. And no study of such scope about so great a writer can fail to elicit strictures of some kind. Minor quibbles aside--the Princeton University Press proofreader(Slavic Section) should be fired on the spot--my reservations, some of a quite subjective nature, boil down to four.

1) For readers who have strong theological interests and aptitudes this book, subtitled "A Study in Fiction and Theology" will offer in the literal sense of Dryden's famous phrase "God's plenty." For those who do not, this bounty will sometimes seem like a plethora. Important parts of the work deal with Tolstoy as an(amateur) theologian without any reference to his fiction at all. In these sections that abstract language endemic to the metaphysical mind(e.g., "God is in everything and everything is in God, but God is not everything and everything is not God. Rather, God is everything taken as 'one live whole'") will try the patience of some earthlings and make this study--if only rarely--a "page turner" in the bad sense. In registering this caveat I am, to be sure, committing one of the cardinal sins of reviewmanship, viz., complaining that the author has failed to produce exactly the kind of book which the reviewer hoped for. So be it. The fact remains that Professor Gustafson's skills as a literary critic are such that one admiring reader could not but regret these prolonged forays into alien and(for him) marginally rewarding fields.

2) These same extra-literary interests raise a problem of a quite different sort. The parallels which Professor Gustafson draws between Tolstoy's thought and that of the Eastern Church are many and striking. But, as the French say: "Comparaison n'est pas raison." And the crucial question remains: was Tolstoy(whose interest in the religions of the Far East is of course abundantly attested) actually acquainted with the writings of(say) Origen and Gregory of Nyssa? The distinction being made is between an intellectual debt and a spiritual affinity, between, if you will, a causal and an "accidental" relationship. It is not a small one, and in failing to deal with it explicitly Professor Gustafson leaves an interesting stone unturned.

3) While the author possesses a style which is for the most part lively, forthright, and mercifully free of jargon, at times his expository method suffers from the defects of overkill. Tracing the spiritual odyssey of one hero(or heroine) after another, he uses similar or identical terminology, repeatedly claiming for the episode in question "paradigmatic" or "emblematic" qualities.

This method has its advantages: we are never left in doubt about the nature of the spiritual crisis or its similarity to crises undergone by other Tolstoyan protagonists. But the danger of monotony is not always avoided, and there are stretches in this lengthy text(almost 500 pages) which ask for the blue pencil.

4) Like most determined systematizers Professor Gustafson sometimes succumbs to the temptation of making things a little too simple, of(in this case) cropping off some of Tolstoy's wonderfully ragged edges for the sake of neatness or symmetry. For example, in retailing the many and important flaws in Anna's character Professor Gustafson offers a welcome antidote to the widespread (and erroneous) view that she is little more(or less) than an innocent victim of a stifling puritanical code and a hypocritical society. When however he encapsulates the unhappy heroine's life story as a "parable of self-indulgence" he is doing less than justice to that "large, rich, generous, and delightful nature" of which Matthew Arnold rightly spoke. Or again: when he speaks of Prince Andrew's ultimate, deathbed reconciliation with "life and love" he fails, so it seems to me, to appreciate the full significance of a passage which he himself quotes, a passage which makes it clear that during his last conscious hours this all too cerebral hero is still unable to unlock the mystery of divine love. Or still again: it is not easy to reconcile the sweeping statement that "all deaths in Tolstoy[...] terminate in some form of illumination with the apparently meaningless death of Petia Rostov, to say nothing of the slaughter of tens of thousands of French and Russian soldiers at Borodino. And while it is true that the death of Nicholas Levin eventually acquires a posthumous significance in the eyes of his brother, for the frightened, bitter and despairing victim there is no light at all at the end of the tunnel.

These are very small smudges on a very large and impressive canvas. By his imaginative analysis of the spiritual journeys of Tolstoy's greatest characters from "residency" to "strangerhood" and back to "residency"; by his seminal discussion of the crucial distinction in Tolstoyan thought between "love for" and "love of"; and by his brilliant demonstration of how from the beginning to the end, from the autobiogrpahical trilogy to Hadji Murad, Tolstoy's fiction may be seen to hang together as a whole, Professor Gustafson has put all Slavists in his debt. This is a study of permanent importance.

Donna Orwin, Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Toronto

Rereading Leo Tolstoy:Resident and Stranger, I experienced again the mixed feelings that had attended my first reading of it, respect and gratitude for the author's achievement and uneasiness about some

of his major arguments. One of the most valuable and original contributions of the book is Professor Gustafson's presentation of Tolstoyan theology. I question, however, whether it provides the ultimate key to interpreting even the early fiction. Certainly, as Professor Gustafson shows, Tolstoy's need for love -- obshchenie -- both underlies his aesthetics and leads to his religious philosophy. Tolstoy's works are expressions of a life-long search for a world view which would satisfy this need. Professor Gustafson believes that his final writings provide the "clearest articulations"(6-7) of this view and that therefore later works clarify the earlier ones.

If Tolstoy's religious development and his development as an artist had peaked at this time, then one might regard the religious thought of his old age as the perfect explanation of his fiction. In fact, however, the scope of Tolstoy's fiction declines after his religious crisis. The reason for this, I believe, is that while Tolstoy always remained constant in his search for obshchenie, his ideas about how to achieve it changed in ways which crucially affected his art. From the point of view of the biographer, or of the critic of Tolstoy's religious thought, each of Tolstoy's works of art may take its place in an ascending hierarchy culminating in Tolstoyan Christianity. The literary critic, however, must treat each work as Tolstoy himself did at the time he was writing it: as a coherent whole. The early works, at least through War and Peace, depend upon certain ideas(and ambiguities) that Tolstoy eventually left behind. His later ideas cannot be our sole guide to interpreting his earlier works.

Tolstoy's theology is more relevant to the works of his old age than to those of his youth. When applied to earlier works it tends to Christianize what Tolstoy himself considered their pagan flavor. Take, for instance, Professor Gustafson's treatment of Pierre's search for "identity and vocation"(73) in War and Peace and specifically the dream of the liquid globe, "the culmination of Pierre's metaphysical quest. . .[and]. . .also one of Tolstoy's most important fictional images of his metaphysics of life"(81). Professor Gustafson ultimately explains this globe -- and hence Pierre's identity -- with reference to Tolstoyan theology.

> Each particular thing is a process of expansion and merger in which the merger is the completion and end of the former particular thing and the creation of a new and greater particular thing. "A drop that merges with a larger drop, a puddle, stops being and starts to be"[53,231;1899]. God is the completion and perfection of this process: the living liquid sphere in Pierre's dream of the globe of life. . .There is no annihilation or meaningless return because "every

> being while living is achieving the good[dobreet], that is, is becoming more and more conscious of his unity with other beings, with the universe, with God"[55,9;1904]. Everything is becoming the all(107-08).

For Professor Gustafson, the globe celebrates the lover of all in man. He writes that it follows and illuminates Pierre's "spontaneous giving forth of self"(315: his rescue of the baby?). But Professor Gustafson has misunderstood the place of dream in the narrative. The event directly preceding it is the death of Platon Karataev, whose pitiful last summons Pierre has deliberately ignored. In order to preserve his own will to live, Pierre has refrained from giving himself. In so doing, he has experienced first-hand the necessity of natural selfishness and he is able to accept it in others. It is this selfishness, I would contend, that the globe celebrates.

As Professor Gustafson(392) mentions, the globe evolves from an image of each uncorrupted soul as a perfect sphere in a draft of the article "Who Should Teach Whom?"(8,433;1862). There Tolstoy attributes the idea of the original perfection of man to Rousseau, for whom it consisted in a natural moderation maintained by self-love (amour de soi) adequate to preserve life without unnecessarily harming others. Life for the Enlightenment philosopher Rousseau meant our particular animal existence, whose legitimacy the young Tolstoy was also concerned to establish. Tolstoy's love of law, or higher reason, was such, however, that he could establish it only by grounding our particularity in metaphysics. The liquid globe illustrates the metaphysical relation of each particular individual, each perfect sphere, to others and to God.

> Each drop was striving to expand, to capture the greatest expanse, but others, striving to do the same thing, were trying to compress it[and] sometimes destroyed it, sometimes merged with it.
>
> "This is life," said the old teacher. . ."In the center is God, and each drop strives to widen itself so as to reflect Him in the greatest dimensions."

There is no mention here of "everything becoming the all" with God as the "completion" of the process. And the liquid globe legitimizes more than just Rousseauist self-love in the service of self-preservation. In it God, the spring of life, continuously generates particular living beings who then "live," that is, expand, at the expanse of their neighbors when necessary. Expanding, capturing, compressing, destroying and merging are all deeds of war. As Professor Gustafson at one point seems himself to acknowledge(43), the human relations which the globe represents are those of the hunt, a warlike competition without warlike rancor. An equally vivid celebration of unfettered human vitality is the duet of Natasha and

Nikolai Rostov after Nikolai's loss at cards to Dolokhov. Yes, as Professor Gustafson says(368), Nikolai does share a moment of "harmonious gladness" with his sister, but this harmony includes Rostov's reflection that "one can kill and rob and be happy." Professor Gustafson(88) correctly observes that Pierre's discovery of "life" in the novel must be integrated with Andrei's discovery of "love." But it is significant that Andrei dies after finally achieving a love of everything. To love one's particular as opposed to one's divine self is to love one's own body, and it is precisely the acceptance of the body that distinguishes Pierre (and Platon Karataev) from Andrei. Andrei can become what Professor Gustafson calls a "resident"(someone who belongs[8]) only by shedding his body and moving to another and better world.

The later Tolstoy, in the treatise On Life, for instance, or in Resurrection, sides more with Andrei than with Pierre. In War and Peace, however, he defends as valuable in itself our natural vitality, the "crust of animality" whose manifestation in the soul is self-love. It is this portrayal of amoral vitality as good in itself that I think Professor Gustafson misses in his Christian interpretation of War and Peace and other works of Tolstoy.

Philip C. Rule, S.J., College of the Holy Cross

In an earlier review of Leo Tolstoy: Resident and Stranger (in Theological Studies) much of what I said was by way of summary for a general theological audience. Writing from the viewpoint of one who is an expert neither in Tolstoy nor Russian language and literature but rather British Romanticism and 19th century British religious thought, I concluded by stating that "it is possibly one of the very best pieces of 'theology and literature' this reviewer has yet encountered." I used the term "theology" by design, for much of what is passed off as "theology and literature" studies is in fact "religion and literature" studies, i.e. looking for religious themes in works of literature. The proper correlations for such studies should be "religion and literature" and "theology and literary criticism," pairing the concreteness of symbol(or image) and experience against the abstractness of two different kinds of critical reflection. Here, however, we really do seem to have the case of a writer who truly "theologizes" through literature, i.e., narration. I would like, then, to comment briefly on two aspects of Tolstoy's theology: the relationship between theology and narrative and his particular "theology of consciousness," as Gustafson labels it.

In talking about the relationship between theology and narrative I wish only to allude to the increasing number of interdisciplinary

studies that have appeared over the past ten to fifteen years in which theologians and literary theorists have explored the use of narrative in organizing religious experience. Early in his study Gustafson points out that "the pattern of articulation which governs Tolstoy's life in general, however, moves from experience to image to idea. It is significant in this respect, that while creating his most complex fictions, War and Peace and Anna Karenina Tolstoy virtually abandoned his diaries and wrote no essays"(7).

One finds a striking parallel in the life of the Romantic poet John Keats. Reading his letters chronologically and paralleling them to the composition of the poems, one sees clearly that Keats struggled unsuccessfully to think out ideas in what he called "consequitive reasoning" and such abstract thought gives way to the imaginative process of writing a poem. What was previously talked about confusedly appears in letters written after a particular poem with stunning clarity. The famous example is the writing of Endymion, a mediocre poem, and the subsequent articulation of his doctrine of "Negative Capability." What examples like this have forced theologians to do is reconsider the role of imagination as a cognitive activity in mediating between experience and idea. All too often, in western Christian theology at least, the legacy of the Enlightenment has been to enthrone reason rather than imagination as the primary tool in theologizing. Gustafson's study brilliantly documents the process of imaginative theology, the rendering of image from experience, and then of idea from image. This in turn suggests another theological reflection upon which I am not qualified to comment: the formative influence of the religious icon in Russian culture. Speaking more generally, however, it is clear that literary criticism is an essential tool in approaching Sacred Scriptures which are not dogmatic texts for theological mining but rather the narrated experience of a chosen people.

Of particular interest to me, since I am currently engaged in a major study of consciousness and conscience in the writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and John Henry Newman, is Gustafson's treatment of Tolstoy's theory and psychology of knowledge which constitutes the second half of the book. While the first part is more properly literary analysis, the second focuses on what, by comparison, is the abstract structure of Tolstoy's metaphysics, epistomology, ethics, and theology of prayer. This section should be of particular interest to theologians, for it is clear that Tolstoy relied little if at all on western philosophical tradition and much more, if not exclusively, on the Eastern Orthodox religious tradition which has its roots in the Greek Fathers of the Church. Here he found the basis for his theory of human consciousness, a theory that anticipates the tradition of Catholic thinkers such as Joseph Maréchal, Karl Rahner, and Bernard Lonergan. Gustafson, in fact, uses Rahner to provide a more sophisticated articulation of Tolstoy's "theology of consciousness." My own studies in Coleridge and Newman have focused on the same point. What Gustafson says of

Tolstoy applies equally well to these two thinkers: "The consciousness of self as willing, living, loving, striving toward the other whose term is God is a primary mode of self-knowledge which precedes all objectification and hence not reducible to any words about it"(265). The awareness of the self as a moral being(in earlier English usage "consciousness" and "conscience" were interchangeable as they still are in modern Romance languages where one word often covers both concepts) is both the beginning of true self-knowledge and the knowledge of God. Coleridge derived most of his teaching from his own introspective powers and from the Greman transcendental philosophers. While Newman was equally skilled at introspection, it has never been clear to me what his theoretical sources were and I wonder now, after reading Gustafson, if he might not have derived them from the same source as Tolstoy: the Greek Fathers with whom he was intimately familiar. My own ongoing research in British religious thought has been enormously stimulated by this brilliant book.

Richard F. Gustafson, Barnard College and Columbia University

These five critiques plus the substantial published reviews by McLean(Russian Review), Silbajoris(Slavic and East European Journal), and Lock(St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly) raise four major issues about my book Leo Tolstoy, Resident and Stranger, all of which are related to the methodological procedures I chose to follow. The first issue is the lack of attention to the diachronic flow of Tolstoy's life and the various changes in his art and thought. To many, I am aware, this seems a flaw, but I felt, and still do, that in order to demonstrate the remarkable consistency within the variety I had to narrow the focus. Had I chosen a chronological structure and paid attention to the many tributaries and brooks through which Tolstoy swam, I would have lost sight of the main stream of his thought and experience. One unfortunate result of this methodology, I now see, is that readings of some early works, in which I tried to show an embryonic version of later and clearer positions, have been disturbing because they seem to preclude other possible readings. Let me say that I am well aware that the psyche and its creations are overdetermined and can draw the conclusion from this that multiple readings of a text are inevitable. If I have been able to help people see a new aspect of Tolstoy—certainly not the only one—I shall be happy indeed.

The second main issue is related to the first. Many readers are disturbed by my failure to relate Tolstoy's ideas to thinkers who are considered to have been influential on him in one way or another at particular periods in his life. There are two reasons why I chose such an approach. First, I felt that continual asides