

Hugh McLean, ed. In the Shade of the Giant, Essays on Tolstoy (Univ. of California: Berkeley, 1989).

The introduction to this book is a well-written tribute to Tolstoy's greatness and a nod to a few critics in the Russian and Western traditions. It is not, however, an introduction to the essays that follow; that is, there is no hint as to why these essays have been brought together and what principles guide their selection and presentation. This is not a collection of classic essays on Tolstoy, either Russian or Western; not a representative selection of work on Tolstoy over time; not a collection by major Tolstoyan scholars; and not a collection organized about some discernible theme or problem. And despite the cover blurb that "the contributors address a wide variety of problems" they do not. Four of the seven essays are on Anna Karenina, and almost all the essays have to do with some variation of the conflict in Tolstoy of flesh and spirit. This is an in-house volume. Five of the seven contributors are associated with Berkeley and three of the five are graduate students.

Those limitations noted, I found most of the essays rewarding reading. Hugh McLean's "Truth in Dying" and Ruth Rischin's "Allegro Tumultuosissimamente: Beethoven in Tolstoy's Fiction" are first rate, and John Weeks' "Love, Death, and Cricketson: Prince Andrei at Mytishchi" is engaging and original. John Kopper's "Tolstoy and Narrative Sex..." is by far the most provocative and different in method. Rischin brings together fascinating "Beethoven material" from Tolstoy's works, and though all of it is well known, no one has brought the material together. She has some trouble making the facts bear on some interpretative point, but it doesn't seem to matter because the material is suggestive and valuable in itself. I found myself wishing for more, for a book, indeed, on Tolstoy's use of musical and musical motifs in his work. McLean's piece is a clearly explicated rumination on the relationship between art and life, by way of a comparison between the fictional brother, Nikolay, in Anna Karenina and the real-life brother Dmitri. McLean suggests tentatively that Tolstoy may have used the portrait of Nikolay Levin in Anna Karenina as a way of re-working his feelings toward the real-life brother Dmitri. The thesis has a psychoanalytic flavor to it, and is reminiscent of Kenneth Burke's thesis that authors work out their neuroses in their fiction. Throughout it all, McLean's touch is sensitive and discriminating.

John Weeks' "Love, Death, and Cricketsong, Prince Andrei at Mytishchi" is an engrossing analysis of Andrei's dying moments, and the spiritual transformation he undergoes in the dying. Weeks' most daring and questionable suggestion is that the buzzing of the fly, the red halo of the candle and the noise of the cockroaches are a kind of synaesthesia of moral perception that chart the spiritual progression of Andrei. For example the piti-piti-piti he hears in his dying moments is, for Weeks, an echo of liubit', liubit', liubit' and by extension an echo of the divine love Andrei is beginning to perceive. Perhaps, but

one can account for the sense impressions in other ways. Nor is it clear to me that Andrei is undergoing such a progression. Still, I found myself fascinated by what he suggests, and eager to re-read the scene in the light of what he had said.

Plato is on the mind of two of the essays. Irina Gutkin's "The Dichotomy Between Flesh and Spirit" sees Plato's definition of two kinds of love in "The Symposium" as formative in Anna Karenina and Oblonsky and Levin as exemplars of fleshy and spiritual love. Her analysis of the luncheon that the two share early in the novel and the use of food as a defining trait of the two types of love is well done. But she is not convincing in asserting that the Platonic distinction will help us unify the novel. I find the reading of details helpful, but I'm not sure how much can be said with this kind of aproach. It consists of the use of a different vocabulary for what we already understand. I think we know that Oblonsky and Levin represent different attitudes to love, and that Kitty-Levin's love is spiritual and Christian, and Anna and Vronsky's love pagan and fleshy. Andrew Wachtel says pretty much the same thing in his "Death and Resurrection in Anna Karenina. According to him "The deaths and resurrection of Kitty and Levin take place in a context of Christianity, while those of Anna and Vronsky occur against a background of classical Greek and Roman idolatry." Well, no one is going to argue with that, and no one is going to fall off his chair, either.

Joan Delaney Grossman's "Words, Idle Words" is a surprisingly slight piece from a distinguished critic. The avowed theme of the article is Tolstoy's use of themes and plots from the society tale of the twenties and thirties. But the society tale is never defined or characterized, and what she has to say about it is so general and broad as to fit much of 19th century literature. The society tale is not so well-known or so defined a type that we can forego at least a cursory definition or characterization. Even at the cost of repetition, we ought to know what the author means by the society tale. She moves with some abruptness from this gender and historical theme, and without sufficient connection, to something much more interesting: Tolstoy's use of different kinds of discourses in Anna Karenina. What she has to say about the discourses, however, is slight and at best introductory.

John M. Kopper's "Tolstoy and the Narrative of Sex" is a fascinating reading of "Father Sergius," "The Kreutzer Sonata," and "The Devil." He runs these stories through the critical vocabularies of our time. An example is: "To conclude, in 'Father Sergius,' 'The Kreutzer Sonata,' and 'The Devil' Tolstoy takes a narrative situation that presents a rather infertile semiological field." According to Kopper, sex and writing are related for Tolstoy because sex is a form of passion and Tolstoy came to believe that art aroused the passions. The logic of this statement astounds me, and Kopper sails calmly over the non-sequitur. Or consider: "Pozdnyshv substitutes a traditional plot, the exposure of a woman's body (realized in his typically Tolstoyan obsession with low cut gowns and with male doctors examining a nude female patient) with his own discourse, the self-exposure of

confession." Metaphor apparently unites everything, and logic is only another kind of metaphor, and a restrictive one at that. Or so the reasoning of today seems to go. I don't know quite what to make of the Kopper piece. It contains some of the best analysis of the three tales I have read, and his insights as to how sex is connected with other matters (he calls this displacements) such as money, estate management, health is excellent. He has, too, by far the most sophisticated sense of critical method, and is doubtlessly trying to digest what is best in the critical languages of our time. I suspect we will hear a great deal more from him.

Edward Wasiolek, University of Chicago

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Alexander Fodor, A Quest for a Non-Violent Russia: The Partnership of Leo Tolstoy and Vladimir Chertkov. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989. 232 pp.

With the ambitious title, "In Quest for a Non-Violent Russia," this book sets out to rescue from oblivion the wealthy aristocrat Chertkov, Tolstoy's closest ally during the last years of his life. For twenty seven years Tolstoy and Chertkov were inseparable correspondents, who exchanged 928 letters and telegrams, the contents of which take up at least five impressive volumes of Tolstoy's Complete Works. A tireless advocate of Tolstoy's religious teachings, Chertkov engaged in a notorious feud with Tolstoy's wife over which one of them would be responsible for ensuring the writer's place in history. Influential and intimate as Chertkov was in Tolstoy's life, he has only once previously been considered important enough for a special study, and that was in a book by M. V. Muratov on the correspondence between Tolstoy and Chertkov, published in the Soviet Union in 1934. A. Fodor makes an important attempt to reconcile many unanswered questions and controversies about Chertkov. He deals with his subject in an intriguing historical framework, claiming, that Chertkov, a loyalist to the autocracy, sought an alliance with Tolstoy in order to prevent the coming upheaval of the revolution by advocating Tolstoy's doctrine of non-violence. As leader of the Tolstoyans, he aspired to make them "a meaningful force in the political arena of the country."

What is obviously more tempting and ultimately more absorbing for the author is the biography of Chertkov himself. The book is divided into five broadly titled chapters that pursue many convergent themes: "The Last Rally," "Chertkov Meets Tolstoy," "The Rise of Chertkov," "Tolstoy's Last Years" and "Chertkov After Tolstoy's Death." Regrettably, confined by a biographical approach, the author presents these topics as a collection of facts without substantial development of his main argument. Chertkov "inherited" the leadership of the Evangelical movement of the Russian aristocracy (regarded by the author as a precursor to the Tolstoyan movement) through his family ties: an