BOOK REVIEWS:

Michael R. Katz, ed. Tolstoy's Short Fiction. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991. 503 pp.

Like Homer, Tolstoy is homo duorum librorum. But if the hazards of transmission prevented even the Roman world from knowing more of Homer's creation, except by wistful hypothesis, Tolstoy's legacy beyond the two epics is bounteous and diverse, disengaged from the shadow of the major works while yet offering, as Homer's lost Margites apparently did, a commentary on them. Outside the novels, Tolstoy's stories comprise the amplest and the most influencial body of fiction he produced. Like his admired predecessor, Tolstoy gave us a long work about society in the moment of finding its heroes, and a comparable study of society disconnected from heroism and the means of achieving it. The stories, in contrast, tend to deemphasize the dialectic between polis and person. Characters more often observe themselves than others, and the intense moments of bearing witness from which characters in the novels profit--Levin seeing his brother die, Pierre watching the downfall of his wife--are presented to the reader undigested by a second textual consciousness which the narrator esteems. This lack of a significant internal audience to action creates a fiction very different from War and Peace and Anna Karenina. The connection which Tolstoy believed art must demonstrate between people is demonstrated between reader and text.

Michael Katz's Norton Critical Edition brings together much of Tolstoy's best short fiction: "Sevastopol" (December, May), "Three Deaths," "Family Happiness," "God Sees the Truth, But Waits," "The Death of Ivan Ilych," "The Three Hermits," "The Kreutzer Sonata," "Master and Man," and "Alyosha the Pot." Except for the last story, translated by S.A. Carmack, Katz relies on the Maude versions, revising lightly and annotating some passages. The edition is armed with a formidable body of articles on Tolstoy. In a separate section, entitled "Backgrounds and Sources," Katz republishes "A History of Yesterday," "The Memoirs of a Madman," a very brief selection of letters written between 1858 and 1895, and some diary entries from 1855.

Editors of anthologies exercise their powers largely through selection. Norton editors also play the matchmaker, bringing to town a troupe of essays to wed to their chosen texts. Katz's "Criticism" section is almost entirely the work of Slavists from the English-speaking world. Eikhenbaum, Chernyshevsky, Bakhtin, Nabokov, and Mikhaylovsky alone represent Russian letters, and their contributions are among the slimmest in the volume. But since the marriages of text and essay that Katz arranges are nearly always happy (each in its own way) one cannot fault his relative neglect of Russian criticism. Literature on Tolstoy is infinite in volume and

the good literature nearly so. While any reader of the Norton Edition is likely to find a favorite work missing, the essays which Katz offers produce a dazzling reward for the student.

Gary Saul Morson twice inspects the pressure which Tolstoy's gnomic language exerts on storytelling: first upon style ("Tolstoy's Absolute Language") and then upon the disposition of speaker and addressee, including the reader ("The Reader as Voyeur"). Caryl Emerson studies Bakhtin's failure to accommodate this sententious language in his reading of Tolstoy, and Boris Eikhenbaum (in a discussion of "Sevastopol" not distinguished for its focus), characterizes--or rather "narrates"--the way in which sermon-like language and certain mannerisms of description carry Tolstoy's writing into the realm of anti-literature. These essayists are all intrigued by the explosive energy with which Tolstoy sunders the bonds of conventional literary form. A sport among them, Chernyshevsky is represented by his famous lines on Tolstoy's mastery of "the mysterious movements of psychological life." Reading Tolstoy not for his violation of literary norms but for his rich manipulation of them, Renato Poggioli takes the critical commonplace about Tolstoy's beginnings in European sentimentalism to show how "Family Happiness" effectively converts a bucolic universe into a georgic one, but his casual insertion of War and Peace into the pastoral schema does not successfully forestall the question: does an "aeneid" logically follow from the "georgic" sensibility, and did Tolstoy write such a work?

A cluster of pieces are devoted to Tolstoy's stories about death. Katz offers articles by Kathleen Parthé and Y.J. Dayananda, and excepts from John Bayley, Vladimir Nabokov, Nikolai Mikhaylovsky, Richard Gustafson, and Elizabeth Trahan--not an unreasonably long list, given the fiction housed in this edition. Dorothy Green's essay on "Kreutzer Sonata" takes Beethoven's sonata for two instruments as a prototype for the "movement" structure of the story, the dialogic aspect of the conflict between man and woman, and the use of music as an emblem of lust. Departing from the last point, Stephen Baehr designates Pozdnyshev, the narrator, as Tolstoy's ideal artist, reborn chaste from the fleshly dens of standard nineteenth-century art. Gary Jahn's essay looks at Tolstoy's paradoxical use of imagery based on a variety of experience he rejected, the miracle. Finally, obeying a happy impulse of editorial whimsy, Katz gives us the impious "At the Tolstoy Museum" by Donald Barthelme, a cross-eyed story told by a hermeneutic yahoo and attended by tastefully gloomy graphics. The story contains one sentence, ostensibly devoted to Tolstoy's gaze, that sums up the experience of reading him: "It is like...committing a small crime and being discovered at it by your father."

Lists of alternatives to these splendid critical pieces are quickly thrown in the wastebasket. The essays Katz proffers cover all the stories and provide a powerful lens for reading. I have only a few reservations about the "Criticism" part: the Mikhaylovsky selection, brief as it is, could have been pared down even more; while of great value to Slavists, Emerson's article says more about Bakhtin than about Tolstoy, making it of questionable use for Norton's readers; and though Henry Gifford's "On Translating Tolstoy" sufficiently addresses Tolstoy's work to stand on its own, Katz includes it to justify his use of the Maude translations, and the essay does not clearly fill this function.

The mild inertia Katz betrays in letting Gifford speak for him is reflected in two omissions that reveal a more damaging editorial passivity. First, in this inaugural Norton presentation of Tolstoy the writer of stories, there is not a single essay on the story genre or how Tolstoy understood it. His stories are occasionally--briefly--compared to the work of others, notably Flaubert, but never with an eye to the generic space the story defines or the system of restraints it imposes upon the writer. Ernest Simmons and Kate Hambürger have toyed with this question, but Katz himself might have contributed the essay that addressed the problem in a sustained way. This volume includes five of Tolstoy's "long stories." No one in Russian letters besides Chekhov and Bunin has come near to matching his achievement in this form. Did Tolstoy distinguish between long and short narrative, and are the long stories "novelistic" in supporting "short stories" within them? The edition symptomatically asserts that "Sevastopol" is to be read as fiction without telling us why.

Second, there is no biography of Tolstoy in the volume. This presupposes that readers will come to it with prior knowledge of the writer. But Katz's edition will be assigned in courses on short fiction to audiences innocent of Tolstoy's major novels. The pages from Mirsky reprinted in the Norton edition of Anna Karenina would have come in handy here, and a precedent for repeating information on the author's life exists in the Norton editions of Chekhov's stories and plays, each of which contains its own biographical material. If Babaev's thesis is true--"More than the novels, the stories are linked with Tolstoy's own experiences"--it is all the more regretable that the Katz edition contains no comprehensive introductory essay about Tolstoy.

The letters published in "Backgrounds and Sources" dovetail handsomely with the stories. The 1855 diary selections chiefly report the Sevastopol adventure, but in passing graphically convey their author's life-long, Herculean struggle to harness his centrifugal curiosity to a table of rules. They sacrifice, however, some interesting details: the catechistic self-flagellation at the end of the first 31 May

entry, the demerit list Tolstoy wrote later that day, and an important pun appended to the author's 8, 9 June remark on reading Vanity Fair: "tshcheslavie." In the note on p.304, R.F. Christian's translation of the diaries is not given the correct publication date of 1985. These are cavils.

The Norton edition will have special impact because the other major compendium of Tolstoy's short fiction in print, John Bayley's Portable Tolstoy, aspires to be something quite different: Bayley includes a play and much of Tolstoy's critical writings, but like other available editions of Tolstoy's stories, no secondary literature. Since Norton editions are undoubtedly the most potent force in literary canon-making today, Katz's edition makes one ponder carefully the "Tolstoy" it helps to create. His decision to make "A History of Yesterday" and "Memoirs of a Madman" part of "Backgrounds and Sources" rather than the "foreground" of the primary texts itself exemplifies the process of canonization. It also divides product from process, thus discriminating between the "museum" and the "laboratory" of art. The penumbral territory which unites the two is lost in the glare of categorization. On the other hand, the inclusion of literary efforts like "Yesterday" and "Memoirs" does ensure that they will be read--albeit by a smaller circle than reads the stories printed above them. For the thoughtful student they may even acqiure the status of progenitors, a Saturn and Rhea marginalized by their more distinguished progeny. In contrast, the inclusion among the primary texts of "God Sees the Truth, But Waits" and "Three Hermits" silently integrates Tolstoy's story-fables into the larger corpus of his fiction, making it likely that the student will see in these parables a stage in Tolstoy's art, and not a prototype.

With the exception of "Three Hermits," the selected stories create a "Tolstoy" interested primarily in loss of control and the human subject's response to that loss. A proprietary sense of the terrain dominated by the ego and a scientific attention to the constant erosion of the terrain--this is the "Tolstoy" defined by these stories. In them Tolstoy is more interested in recording the individual sensation of circumscribed life than in retracing his way to the efficient cause. The stories thus differ from the novels. Yet they prepare one for episodes in the longer works, such as the terror beyong belief at the end of Anna Karenina when a character is finally unable to hold the last defensible precincts of her mind. Since "Kreutzer" is unaccompanied in the Katz volume by Tolstoy's other meditations on sexuality, a reader might conclude that sex, though an example of loss of control, was not a characteristic concern for the writer. The omission of the Caucasian tales may lead a student to assume that Tolstoy did not use the story form to historicize culture. On the other hand, in moving from the opening to the

closing story, from the young Tolstoy's exquisitely metaphorical journey toward the front lines at Sevastopol to Alyosha the Pot's sudden fall from the roof, the Norton edition dramatically shows that in the immense traverse of fifty years the author's mind never turned far from the pathos of human mortality.

The pattern of these stories is clear: submission means election. But writing itself, as "History of Yesterday," "Sevastopol in May," and "Kreutzer Sonata" show, is itself a form of submission, and the natural and human forces which require submission are vanquished not by God but by the sanctifying pen of the writer. Hence the anachronism that will startle any reader new to Tolstoy. Tolstoy's recognizable brand of nineteenth-century determinism is strangely untrammeled by the various activist philosophies like Marxism, reform Darwinism, and French naturalism with which his age sought to redirect it, but invested instead with the post-Symbolist, functionally agnostic consciousness of Proust and Joyce, in whose hands the immense engine of mind receives its own consecration by being "written." This Tolstoyan anachronism is less obscured in the stories than in the novels.

Katz's selection thus serves to magnify certain sides of Tolstoy's complex legacy. But though unavoidably a fragmentary vision of the author, it is a clear one, and in this reviewer's eyes convincing enough to establish itself as natural. The Norton volume offers an excellent embarcation point for any reader of Tolstoy's stories, and should provide a reliable standard for Tolstoy anthologies for many years.

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Gary Adelman, Anna Karenina: The Bitterness of Ecstasy. Twayne's Masterwork Series. Boston: J.K. Hall, 1990. xix + 151 pp.

In the maiden issue of the Tolstoy Studies Journal, Gary Saul Morson presented his Eleven Theses on Anna ("Prosaics and Anna Karenina," TSJ, v.I, 1988, 1-12). They comprise a startling departure from much conventional wisdom about the novel. Morson claims that the hero of the book ("hero" in the sense of exemplar of the book's governing values) is Dolly; that the villain is that incurable bon vivant and everyone's good friend Stiva Oblonsky; that the reason we sympathize with Anna (and assume that Tolstoy intends us to do so) is not because Tolstoy "falls in love with his heroine" but because his didactic strategy (quite ice-cold) is to tell the story