THE MODERN SCHOLAR

GREAT PROFESSORS TEACHING YOU!

THE GIANTS OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE: TURGENEV, DOSTOEVSKY, TOLSTOY, AND CHEKHOV

COURSE GUIDE

Professor Liza Knapp
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

The Giants of Russian Literature

Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekhov

Professor Liza Knapp
Columbia University

The Giants of Russian Literature:
Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekhov

Professor Liza Knapp

Executive Producer
John J. Alexander

Executive Editor
Donna F. Carnahan

RECORDING

Producer - David Markowitz
Director - Matthew Cavnar

COURSE GUIDE

Editor - James Gallagher
Design - Ed White

Cover image: Leo Tolstoy plowing a field © Clipart.com
#UT084 ISBN: 978-1-4281-1294-0

Course Syllabus

The Giants of Russian Literature:
Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekhov

Photo courtesy of Thomas Timberlake

About Your Professor

Liza Knapp

Liza Knapp teaches and writes about the Russian classics, both within the Russian context and in relation to their counterparts in English, French, and American literature. Liza Knapp taught for many years at the University of California at Berkeley and now teaches at Columbia University. She wrote *The Annihilation of Inertia: Dostoevsky and Metaphysics,* edited a critical companion to Dostoevsky's *The Idiot,* and coedited *Approaches to Teaching* Anna Karenina. She is finishing *Dostoevsky and the Novel of the Accidental Family,* a study of Dostoevsky's unique approach to the form of the novel. She is also at work on a study about Virginia Woolf's "Russian point of view," which examines the impact of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Turgenev, and Chekhov on Woolf's work.

A central focus of her work has been presenting the works of classic Russian writers to different audiences, from specialists in Russian literature, to undergraduate English majors at Berkeley, to readers outside of academia. In the summer of 2004, when Oprah Winfrey's book club selection was *Anna Karenina,* Liza Knapp served as "literary expert" and responded to readers' questions about the novel on the Oprah website.

Liza Knapp was born in New York City. She graduated from Harvard College and received her Ph.D. in Russian literature from Columbia University.

Introduction

Russian literature of the nineteenth century is among the richest, most profound, and most human traditions in the world. This course explores this tradition by focusing on four giants: Ivan Turgenev, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Leo Tolstoy, and Anton Chekhov. Their works had an enormous impact on Russian understanding of the human condition. And, just as importantly, these works have been one of Russia's most significant exports: Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekhov have become part of our literary heritage. And our understanding of the novel is based in large part on the masterpieces of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, while Chekhov has defined modern notions of the short story.

In this course, Liza Knapp acquaints you with the authors, their lives and their times, and their most important works. For each of the four authors covered, she begins with an overview of their life and works and then guides you through a critical reading of representative major works.

In the case of Turgenev, the focus is on *Fathers and Sons,* a tale of generational conflict—and continuity. Liza Knapp treats two seminal works of Dostoevsky: his philosophical novella "Notes from the Underground" and *Crime and Punishment,* in which a psychological study of a murderer becomes an inquiry into the nature of love. Three lectures are devoted to *Anna Karenina,* Tolstoy's exploration of the pursuit of happiness within and beyond the boundaries of marriage. The final works explored in the course are "Peasants" and "Lady with a Dog," two powerful expressions of the Chekhovian compassion that has become his literary signature.

Throughout the course, Professor Knapp aims to show the reader strategies for understanding and appreciating the works of these authors. She explains how they emerge from the Russian context of the nineteenth century and how, at the same time, these works wrestle with the universal and timeless questions of the human condition, above all, love and death.

Lecture 1:
Introduction: Fiction, Love, and Death in the Russian Context

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Gregory L. Freeze's (ed.) *Russia: A History* (chapters 6–8) and Geoffrey Hosking's *Russia and the Russians: A History* (chapters 6–8).

Love and Death: The Facts of Life in Russian Fiction

Consider this . . .

In addition to exploring universals such as love and death, novels refer to social issues, and their plots grow out of social issues. Analogous issues were discussed in France, England, and America: the status of slaves or serfs, status of the landed gentry, emancipation of women, and centralization of government. Yet the discussion takes unique forms in Russia.

What is it about the works that we are reading that makes them special? On the one hand they seem exotic—they're set in Russia, the characters have complicated Russian names, they go hunting, have servants, murder pawnbrokers, and gather mushrooms. And yet what attracts readers is the way in which these works (the novels of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Turgenev and the stories of Chekhov) represent the basics of life that we all partake in. Thus, we read them more for these basics than for anything else. Reading these novels becomes part of our existential education, part of our moral education (see Kovarsky on this), and, at the same time, part of our artistic education, because how they represent these basics, the artistic form they give to them, is essential to the message.

One way to approach this question is demonstrated by E.M. Forster in *Aspects of the Novel,* in which he observes the following: "The main facts in human life are five: birth, food, sleep, love, and death. One could increase the number—add breathing, for instance—but these five are the most obvious." How do these five main facts of human life figure in fiction? Forster notes that the first three (birth, food, and sleep) don't figure prominently in the life of what he calls "Homo Fictus." That leaves love and death—the two most congenial to fiction, according to Forster.

Love and Death is also the title of Woody Allen's spoof of the world of the nineteenth-century Russian novel. Judging by the title, for Woody Allen, Russian fiction boils down to these two basics. To be sure, Russian writers did not have a monopoly on these topics, which are universal to all novels, but love and death appear in a form that is more concentrated, or perhaps rawer, in the nineteenth-century Russian classics.

It is often assumed that romantic or sexual love is the stuff of literature. When love occurs in the context of courtship, it traditionally points to the goal

of marriage. Or romantic love can go awry, and you get a novel of adultery. But Russian writers also showcase other forms of love—and perhaps have had to develop other kinds of plots as a result: family love, love of self, love of one's fellow man (neighbors, compatriots, strangers, enemies, others), and love of God. These last two, love of neighbor and love of God, are particularly important. When you think of "love and death" in the Russian novel, the love in question is likely to be for God and neighbor as well as for an object of sexual desire. While romantic love points to an obvious goal and defines familiar plots, it is harder to predict how these other, more mysterious, forms of love will behave when they are unleashed in Russian novels.

In the nineteenth-century British novel, the trend was novels of courtship ending in marriage: As Trollope once put it, marriage may be "the proper ending" for a novel or "the only ending . . . which is not discordant." (Think of Jane Austen novels ending in weddings.) In the time of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy in Russia, at least, the French novel was known for its "dangerous liaisons" and adultery. The (North) American novel, according to Leslie Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel,* is shy about adult sexuality—this means that the "love" of Fiedler's title is pretty much absent, with its place taken up by masculine friendship (think of Huck Finn and Jim or Melville's male friendships at sea). However, notes Fiedler, sex may be absent, but death is ever-present in the American novel. Of course, the above characterizations—or stereotypes—don't always hold. But, as Woody Allen suggests, the Russian novel is about love and death, with both ever-present. The love in question is many-faceted, with love of God and love of neighbor figuring in, along with that staple of the novel, romantic love. The result, then, is that the Russian novel tends to favor a form that has struck many stylists as being rather unkempt.

How does death figure in? Usually, it's thought of as an ending. But what's remarkable about the Russian novel is that it insists on reminding readers of death at various points along the way. In *War and Peace,* even before the War of 1812 hits and starts to take its toll, we are introduced to the Countess Rostov, the matriarch of the novel. She "was a woman of about forty-five, with a thin Oriental type of face, evidently worn out with childbearing—she had had twelve." At this point in the novel, only four of those twelve children are living. Here we have both birth and death in high concentration. Tolstoy means for this fact of the Rostovs' family life (all the children they have grieved for) to explain some of the mystery that surrounds this family: They love each other beyond measure, know how precious life really is, and have the capacity for abandoning themselves in the moment.

Russian literature is mined with reminders of death, as well as scenes that describe death and dying. Whatever their beliefs about what happens after death—and Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Chekhov all had different views—each made death a fact of his fiction. In these works of fiction, death is described from the point of view of those who witness it—or even perpetrate it. (*Crime and Punishment* takes you right into the mind of an axe-murderer.) And our authors describe what dying is like even for the dying man or the dying woman. This may be the ultimate narrative challenge: writing about something that no writing man has experienced (completely).

Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekhov all ask what meaning life has in the face of death. In their fiction, they depict human beings in various stages of awareness of death and dying. How does being aware of death alter our perceptions? Or, rather, are our efforts spent avoiding even thinking about death? Here's where love and death intertwine. Sometimes we will see characters facing their mortality and trying to love accordingly. At other times, they love in other ways to divert themselves from mortality and to avoid facing death. Either way, these authors seem to be asking one essential question: How should one love in the face of death?

The Context of Russian Fiction

The classics of Russian literature are generally associated with the literary movement called "realism." This term refers to a mode of literature or art that attempts to represent life "as it is" (Brooks, 2005). It gives the impression of representing real life. The works that we will be reading all create fictional worlds that give the illusion of being a reproduction of nineteenth-century (second half) Russian life. This is important to the works and to their authors' purpose. They were commenting not just on the universals of the human condition—on love and death—but on the human condition as it is illuminated under certain contingencies and conditions.

Central to Russian cultural identity was the question of where Russia stood in relation to Western Europe. Is Russia a realm apart, poised as it is on the boundary of Europe and Asia? Or is it part of Europe? Aside from geography, one feature of Russian life that separated it from much of Europe was religion: The official religion of the Russian Empire was Russian Orthodoxy.

As is well known, a critical time in Russian history was the reign of Peter the Great (1689–1725). Peter took radical measures to modernize Russia, through imitation and importation of Western models of technology, institutions, and customs. One of Peter's major acts was to move the capital of his empire from Moscow, a village-like, family-oriented city, a city of churches, to St. Petersburg, a more Western European city made-to-order for Peter to carve what Pushkin dubbed a "window to Europe." Moscow was a maternal city, known among Russians as the "mother of Russia," while Petersburg had the aura of a capriciously authoritarian father.

Throughout subsequent Russian history ran a tension relating to the question of what path Russia should follow. Westernizers advocated further development of Western-style institutions, especially political ones, called for rights and laws to protect them, and saw benefit in industrialization; they tended to want religion to play less of a role in political and social life and many were critical of the Russian Orthodox Church. The other camp was known as the Slavophiles (lovers of the Slavs). Their program was a Russian-style version of "romantic nationalism." What was unique to them and worth preserving about the Russian people was their religious spirit; they were suspicious of new institutions, industrialization, and change in general. Turgenev is usually assigned to the Westernizer camp, though he was not as progressive as many. Dostoevsky and Tolstoy were each *sui generis*; they had anxieties about Westernization that often made them seem almost Slavophile, though they did not embrace this movement.

Chekhov lived a bit later, when these labels were less current, but his inclinations were Westernizing. As the descendant of serfs, he was attuned to peasant and religious culture, but he adamantly refused to romanticize it and declared his belief in material progress.

The nineteenth century in Russia was a time of ideological ferment. Everyone talked ideas. The Tsarist regime attempted to protect its interests and promote its platform of "Autocracy, Orthodoxy [the state religion], and Nationalism" by exerting tight control over the bodies and minds of its subjects. Government service (civil service, diplomatic corps, military) was a major source of employment and social advancement. Our Russian authors tend to present a negative view of service: Either it's soul-killing or for social climbers.

In the public sphere, freedom of expression was limited. Intellectuals looked to newspapers and journals, especially the so-called "fat journals," for ideological stimulation. Here debates were carried out, new theories aired, and knowledge disseminated. These journals were also a source of foreign ideas. Many of the major works of literature appeared in them, and it is significant that Russians read their novels between the same covers as their popular science or political commentary.

Social Groups: Serfs, Intelligentsia, Women

A dominant social-political issue of the mid-nineteenth century was serfdom. The Russian system of serfdom, which crystallized in its modern form in the seventeenth century, basically made slaves out of the Russian peasantry. Serfs were owned by the state, by the Church, or by private landowners who were members of the nobility (also called gentry). Serfs could be bought and sold. By the middle of the nineteenth century, it was clear that the institution would have to be abolished. In the wake of defeat in the Crimean War in 1856, Tsar Alexander II decided that it would be better to abolish serfdom "from above" (by imperial decree) than to wait for the serfs to do it themselves "from below" (by insurrection). Newly freed serfs received plots of land for which they were supposed to pay the government in installments. But the plots were small, and the peasants could not make a living. In fact, the plight of the peasant seemed to deteriorate as time went by.

The nineteenth century also marked a new prominence on the intellectual (and literary) scene of a social group known as the *raznochintsy.* The Russian word means "of varied rank." This term was usually applied to those who were not from the landed gentry class—they were often sons of village priests—but who had entered the intelligentsia, thanks to their education, merit, and hard work. The *raznochintsy* introduced a new edginess into the cultural and literary world. Not surprisingly, they were more radical and less wedded to tradition and privilege.

Another focal point of public discussion was the "woman question," in reality, a number of interlocking questions concerning the structure of the family, marriage, sexual freedom, the education of women, women working outside the home, and the role of women in the public sphere. The woman question was on everyone's mind, and it wasn't something that only entered the bobbed heads of the young women associated with the nihilist movement.

"What Is in a [Russian] Name?"

The names of the heroes and heroines often cause first-time readers of Russian literature some difficulty. To read these novels, it helps to have an understanding of how Russians are named. "Arkady Nikolaevich Kirsanov" is the young man whose homecoming from university sets *Fathers and Sons* in motion. Arkady is his full, given name. Nikolaevich is his patronymic: It is formed by taking his father's first name, Nikolai, and adding a suffix that denotes possession. His patronymic thus conveys that he is "son of Nikolai." Kirsanov is his last name (or surname, family name).

In formal circumstances, Arkady would be referred to by first name and patronymic: Arkady Nikolaevich. But speaking among friends of the same age—with Bazarov, for example—only first names are used: Bazarov calls him Arkady. In the family and other familiar settings, Russian first names usually give way to nicknames. Thus, Arkady's father, running to embrace his son, calls out "Arkasha! Arkasha!"

Turgenev, like the rest of our authors, uses the system in subtle ways. For example, if one character uses a more formal form of someone's name, addressing him by first name and patronymic, this could signal deference because of an age or class difference. In certain cases, two characters will be on equal footing and both use the same forms of address, whereas in other cases social inequalities are signaled and perpetuated in forms of address. Thus, for example, Fenechka, the peasant mistress of Arkady's father, is usually referred to by this name, a very familiar nickname, because of her anomalous social position. But at the end of the novel, when her relations with Nikolai Petrovich have finally been legitimized, the narrator, rather self-consciously, starts to say "Fenechka . . .," and then corrects himself and goes on, "Fedosya Nikolaevna . . .," using her formal first name "Fedosya" and her patronymic "Nikolaevna." At this point Fenechka has become a social equal.

The sudden use of a formal form could signal distancing in certain circumstances, whereas a lavishly suffixed nickname can signal intimacy, usually affection. Bazarov is one of those characters who doesn't invite intimacy—in fact, he's phobic in this regard. Thus, people (including the narrator!) refer to him and call him by his last name, Bazarov, or address him by his full first name Evgeny (in the case of his friend Arkady) or by his first name and patronymic (as does Arkady's father). When, however, his own mother talks about him to her husband, she uses a very familiar nickname, Enyusha.

When it comes to reproducing Russian names in English translations of Russian literature, not all translators choose to preserve these effects. Some, probably in an effort to make it easier for the reader, tend to pick one standard form of a character's name and use that fairly consistently. As a result, a reader misses out on many of the signals about intimacy, mood, and power relations that these modulations of the names convey.

Women, like men, have first names, patronymics—signaling who their father is—and last names, linking them to their father's family, until marriage, and to their husband's family afterward. (A married woman still maintains a link to her father through her patronymic.) To be sure, the Russian naming system ratifies the patriarchal structures and perpetuates the name of the father.

Many Russian last names, when used for a woman, have a suffix, the vowel *a,* added to them. Translators tend not to reproduce this effect, the one exception being Anna Karenina. The last name of the heroine of *Fathers and Sons,* Anna Sergeevna Odintsova, is sometimes Odintsov and sometimes Odintsova, depending on which translation is used. In reference to this character, whose identity in the novel is that of an independent woman (her last name has a root that means "one"), the narrator and the men who talk about her tend to refer to her simply by last name: "Odintsova arrived . . ." or "Odintsov[a] put her hands out before her, but Bazarov was leaning on the window pane . . ." This use of the last name only for a woman is definitely more marked (as unusual) in English, whereas in Russian it's a bit more normal, but it still has the definite and noticeable effect of signaling distance from her and perhaps even granting her some kind of gender equality. The woman caricatured as an emancipated nihilist also is referred to by last name alone. She is just Kukshina, without a first name or patronymic.

Russian Classics in English Translation

The Russian classics read in this course exist in a number of excellent English translations. A pioneer in making these works available to English-language readers was Constance Garnett, who, starting at the very end of the nineteenth century and continuing through the early twentieth century, single-handedly translated most of the Russian classics. Garnett's superb translations of the classics have been revised periodically by scholars and are still in print. A number of them are used in these lectures.

Since Garnett's time, new generations of translators have provided excellent new translations. Extremely popular have been the translations of Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. Their translation of *Crime and Punishment* is used in lectures 6 and 7. In lecture 12, citations are from their translation of "Rothschild's Fiddle."

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Why do love and death make such good subject matter for novels and stories?
2. What social changes were afoot in Russia in the middle of the nineteenth century?
3. How can the use of different forms of a character's name signal different attitudes?

Suggested Readings

Freeze, Gregory L., ed. *Russia: A History.* Chapters 7 and 8. Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Hosking, Geoffrey. *Russia and the Russians: A History.* Chapters 6, 7, and 8. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Brooks, Peter. *Realist Vision.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005.

Fiedler, Leslie A. *Love and Death in the American Novel.* Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1997.

Forster, Edward M. *Aspects of the Novel.* Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc., 2000 (1927).

Jones, Malcolm V., and Robin Feuer Miller, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to the Classical Russian Novel.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Kovarsky, Gina. "The Moral Education of the Reader." *Approaches to Teaching* Anna Karenina. Pp. 166–172. Eds. Liza Knapp and Amy Mandelker. New York: MLA, 2003.

Nabokov, Vladimir. *Lectures on Russian Literature.* Ed. Fredson Bowers. Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc., 1981.

Terras, Victor. *A History of Russian Literature.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.

Films

Love and Death. Directed by Woody Allen. Produced by Charles H. Joffe. Santa Monica, CA: MGM Home Entertainment Inc., 1975.

Lecture 2:
Ivan Turgenev: A Russian Novelist at Home and Abroad; Relations in *Fathers and Sons*

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* (chapters 1–11).

Turgenev's Life

Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev was born in 1818 to a gentry family that owned a very large estate and many serfs in Oryol, not far from where Tolstoy was born a decade later. Until her death in 1852, Turgenev lived under the thumb of an imperious mother, known for her abuse of her serfs and her sons; his father died early. Turgenev himself died in France in 1883.

Turgenev spent much of his adult life abroad, where he cultivated friendships with European writers and artists and kept up on the cultural scene back home. Indeed, he was criticized in Russia for being too much a European, too little a Russian. But Europe suited his humanist outlook and his "Westernizer" orientation. Turgenev was also drawn to Europe because of his desire to be near the love of his life, Pauline Viardot, a Spanish opera singer married to a French writer twenty years her senior. Turgenev first heard her sing on stage in Petersburg in 1843. From that time, until his death, she was the emotional center of his world. He had to content himself living on the edge of her family nest. Scholars and Turgenev's contemporaries speculated on the nature of their attachment. Whether it ever included sexual relations can not be determined, but this was a lasting and deep emotional bond. That much is clear and all we need to go on. Turgenev never married. As a young man, he fathered a daughter out of wedlock with a serf on his mother's estate. His mother used to get perverse amusement from summoning the child from the servants' quarters and parading her before guests and asking them who she looked like. (She apparently looked quite a bit like her father.) Turgenev was distressed by the child's plight and decided to act. Liaisons between landowners and serfs were not unusual; some fathers felt more paternal responsibility than others for any offspring that resulted. (Turgenev's valet in his youth was said to be his father's son by a serf.) Turgenev attempted to better his daughter's condition by taking her to be reared by the Viardots. This act demonstrates Turgenev's sense of responsibility to his daughter and, in addition, his deep attachment to Madame Viardot. For the record, his daughter had a difficult time in her new life,

Consider this . . .

Turgenev lived his life pulled by opposing forces. What were the geographical and cultural forces that pulled on him? What were the personal, emotional, and familial forces?

although Turgenev did continue to provide for her. (Nor had her former life been easy.)

Turgenev's Work: Overview

Turgenev's writing is not transparently autobiographical; he did not use details of his life in an obvious fashion. Nevertheless, his writing is informed by his life in a deep and indirect way. A recurrent theme is unfulfilled or failed love. One of Turgenev's early novellas was called *The Diary of a Superfluous Man.* Much of the rest of Turgenev's fiction is associated with variations on this "superfluous" type, a hero who fails not simply at love, but in other arenas as well. Turgenev's plots often hang on anticipation without consummation. (Readers—and radical critics—saw in this feature negative commentary on the Russian character or at least on the Russian context that seemed to stifle action.) Turgenev's writing is also imbued with a liberal compassion: for serfs, for complexity in family life, for unorthodox love, for failure. Perhaps these themes are indirectly related to Turgenev's life experiences.

Turgenev began as a poet, but soon turned to prose, writing in addition to his novels and novellas, a play, sketches, essays, and, last but certainly not least, letters. (He wrote staggering numbers of letters, in Russian and in French.) He is universally recognized as a prose master, able to be lyrical while creating the aura of describing reality exactly. He wrote six novels: *Rudin* (1856), *Nest of the Gentry* (1859), *On the Eve* (1860), *Fathers and Sons* (1862), and later, *Smoke* (1867) and *Virgin Soil* (1877). Each novel is modest in length and circumspect in manner, especially when compared to those of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.

An early work deserves special attention: *A Sportman's Sketches* (1852). It is a series of short vignettes or stories, supposedly collected by a landowner as he hunted and came into contact with local people. Turgenev's *Sketches* caused a sensation and not just because he wrote so beautifully: His subject matter attracted attention. He provides sensitive portraits of serfs. To understand why this would have caused such a stir, one must realize that, in the context of Russia under Tsar Nicholas I, any kind of reference to the plight of the serfs or even a reminder that they, too, were human, could provoke disapproval from above. The legend is that the next tsar, Alexander, read and was moved by Turgenev's *Sketches.* When he came to power, he set about to emancipate the serfs. But here's an issue where the generation gap was real: Alexander's father, Nicholas, who was still in power when Turgenev wrote his *Sketches,* reacted differently. Turgenev was arrested, supposedly for an obituary about Gogol, but many suspected that it was retaliation for having stirred up sympathy for the abolitionist cause.

Aside from *Fathers and Sons,* to be discussed in the second half of this lecture and in the next, Turgenev's most memorable novel is *Nest of the Gentry,* which tells of a landowner who returns to his estate after a long absence in Paris and seems to fall in love with a spiritual young maiden with just the right patriotic sentiments. He is constrained from marrying his beloved because of a past marriage: A runaway wife presumed dead comes back to haunt him, and the maiden enters a nunnery. The promise of love is not fulfilled.

Fathers and Sons (Chapters 1–11): Elegy and Elegy Disrupted

Fathers and Sons, Turgenev's best-known work, is set in 1859, quite literally "on the eve" of the Emancipation of the Serfs, which took place by imperial decree in 1861. (People already knew the event was coming.)

The title, seemingly straightforward, nevertheless needs two comments. First, the Russian word for the younger generation is actually "children" rather than "sons." And indeed, "daughters" also figure into this novel (Fenechka, Odintsova, Katya, and the nihilist Snitkina). So as not to appear to exclude these daughters from their due, some critics have suggested the book should be called *Fathers and Children.* But English translations, including that of Constance Garnett, tend to be called *Fathers and Sons.*

This brings us to a second question concerning the title—and by extension concerning the meaning of the book. What kind of a relationship does the conjunction "and" imply? There are roughly two ways to look at it. One might say that the title *Fathers and Sons* evokes conflict between the generations, so that "and" really means "versus" or "against." Alternatively, one might think that the title signals an abiding love between fathers and children, the continuity that offers comfort in the face of death. Evidently Turgenev challenges us to think about what this relationship really is, to see the tension between conflict and continuity. (For more on this, see Feuer's "*Fathers and Sons*: Fathers and Children.") In seminars in the Columbia Slavic Department, Professor Cathy Popkin encourages students to appreciate the ambiguity of the conjunction that links the two parts of the title and she uses that as a key to discussing the novel. It may be helpful to follow her lead and ask yourself as you read whether at a given point in the plot the "and" seems to link or separate fathers and sons.

Conflict is certainly to be expected, because novels of the nineteenth century are often structured around generational conflict, even conflict to the point of parricide (as argued by Peter Brooks). The nineteenth century was all about challenging the authority of fathers and father figures—kings and gods, for example. Freud, of course, would later give a name to the potentially violent generational conflict—the Oedipal complex—and claim it was intrinsic and universal to the relations of father and son. It might be argued that there is likely to be conflict between any two generations, because it goes with the territory. Thus, it should come as no surprise that Turgenev gives a view of fathers and sons that includes conflict.

Still, Turgenev's novel is not only about the universal conflict of fathers and sons, nor about general nineteenth-century malaise about patriarchal authority. It has a certain specificity; it is rooted in a particular time in the history of Russia. The generation of these fathers who came of age in the 1840s and the generation of the sons who come of age in the 1860s are famous within the Russian context. Isaiah Berlin, one of the critics to promote the "fathers versus sons" reading of the novel, suggests that "the topic of the novel is the confrontation of the old and the young, of liberals and radicals, traditional civilization and the new, harsh positivism that has no use for anything except what is needed by a rational man" (see his essay "Fathers and Children: Turgenev and the Liberal Predicament"). In other words, this novel became an ideological novel rather than simply a family novel because it is set

in a particular time and space where ideological differences pitted fathers (progressive) against sons (aggressively radical).

The novel begins with the arrival home from the University in Petersburg of Arkady Nikolaevich Kirsanov and his friend Evgeny Vasilievich Bazarov—or rather it begins with Arkady's father, Nikolai Petrovich Kirsanov, waiting for their arrival—for five hours. As we wait with the father, Turgenev gives us a biographical sketch of Nikolai Kirsanov and the prehistory of the novel. In placing Nikolai Kirsanov, Turgenev tells us about his parents. (The emphasis is on patrimonial heritage.) We also learn that Nikolai himself, a generation ago, had finished the University in Petersburg; Arkady is following in his father's footsteps. We learn of Nikolai's marriage to a woman named Maria (called Masha), who, after showing "progressive" tendencies before marriage, became domestic after marriage and was happy in their family life until her death when Arkady was around ten.

Nikolai is presented as a loving husband and devoted father. Just before the carriage arrives, we catch him musing: "My son . . . a graduate. . . . Arkasha." And then recalling his late wife and "whispering gloomily": "She didn't live to see it . . ." This draws attention to the poignancy of these family memories. Turgenev presents Nikolai as someone who is attuned to how precious life is. The mood is elegiac, that is, like the kind of poetry that remembers the dead and marvels at the passing of time. In addition to Arkady's father, the generation of the "fathers" includes Arkady's uncle (and Nikolai's brother), Pavel Petrovich Kirsanov. He is not an actual, biological father to any child. He is a bachelor and is depicted as something of a class snob and a dandy, with exaggeratedly long fingernails. His experience of human relations is limited to an ill-fated love affair with a certain society lady.

In the opening scene, then, Turgenev has passed along information about patrimony, but also created an elegiac mood, one of remembering the dead and marveling at the passing of time. When the carriage finally arrives (after Nikolai Kirsanov has been waiting five hours), the elegiac mood is broken, rather abruptly, as the young radical Bazarov takes over. He is clearly marked for Turgenev's contemporary reader as a representative of the *raznochintsy,* the group of educated men (and some women) not hailing from the privileged world of the gentry. And he has the exaggerated bad manners popularly associated with this group.

In the episode that unfolds as Arkady and his friend Bazarov settle in to life at Marino, the Kirsanov estate, Turgenev showcases the contrast between the generations and their values. At this point, the title would seem to suggest fathers—the Kirsanov brothers—*versus* sons—Arkady and his older mentor Bazarov. To distinguish the fathers from the sons, Turgenev uses various means to outline the opposing worldviews of the two generations. He shows us Bazarov dissecting frogs; he shows us Arkady proudly expounding on his friend's views to his father; we see Bazarov lecturing and hectoring Arkady; eventually we start to sense that the real ideological opponents may well be Bazarov and Pavel, who, we are told early on, "loathed Bazarov with all the strength of his spirit," in part out of a kind of class snobbery (Freeborn trans., chapter 10).

Bazarov, older than Arkady, has been studying natural science in the hope of becoming a doctor. He adheres to a materialist philosophy: Everything requires scientific or empirical proof. As Dmitry Pisarev, one of the Russian radicals who may himself have been a vague model for Bazarov, noted, "As an empiricist, Bazarov acknowledged only what can be felt with the hands, seen with the eyes, tasted by the tongue, in a word, only what can be examined with one of the five senses" ("Bazarov" in Katz, p. 187). Bazarov accepts nothing on faith.

Bazarov passes his time hunting for beetles and doing scientific experiments on frogs. As he informs the peasant boys who join him on a frog-hunting expedition in the marsh, "I dissect the frog and have a look at what's going on inside it. Because you and I are just like frogs, 'cept we walk about on legs, I'll be able to find out what's going on inside us as well" (chapter 5). In claiming that human beings are "just like frogs," Bazarov rejects the religious beliefs that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and the uniqueness of individuals and the immortality of the soul. (His claim about our relations to frogs may reflect awareness of Darwin's theories, which would have been hot off the presses in 1859, when the novel is set. In 1861, Turgenev certainly was aware.)

In keeping with his utilitarianism and belief in the primacy of science, Bazarov dismisses art as a waste of time. He declares a good chemist to be "twenty times more useful than a poet . . ." (chapter 6). Bazarov also ridicules Nikolai Kirsanov for playing the cello. This scene makes it clear that what Bazarov wants to eradicate, along with art, is feeling and emotion. Bazarov even dismisses and derides Alexander Pushkin, the father of Russian letters, beloved of all Russians, whose poetry on the passing of life Nikolai had quoted on the carriage ride home. Within the Russian context, rejecting Pushkin is cultural sacrilege.

Toward the end of chapters 1–11, the conflict between fathers and sons comes to a head. Why? Nikolai confides to his brother his disappointment that Bazarov has come between him and his son. Nikolai is nursing hurt feelings and starts to wonder whether, indeed, he is obsolete and "out of date" and "perhaps Bazarov's right." Nikolai is ready to give way to the next generation: "Yes, brother, the time's come to order our caskets and fold our hands across our breasts." Pavel, however, declares: "Well, I'm not giving in all that quickly . . . We've still got a battle to fight with that doctor fellow, I feel it in my bones" (Freeborn trans., chapter 10). The first round occurs immediately thereafter. Pavel Petrovich holds forth in defense of the fathers' principles, saying they stand up for the rights of their fellow man. Bazarov, countering that the fathers are all talk and no action, trashes all institutions. Nikolai comments, "You're condemning everything or, to be more precise, you're pulling everything down, but surely you've got to build something as well." To this Bazarov replies: "That's not for us to do. First we've got to clear the ground." When Bazarov challenges Pavel to name one institution that doesn't deserve to be condemned and dismantled, Pavel names "the family as it exists among our peasants" (Freeborn trans., chapter 10). But Bazarov counters by reminding Pavel that in Russian peasant families fathers-in-law had sexual privileges with their daughters-in-law, according to certain practices. What we

have here is a universal challenge to all institutions. It is at this point that Turgenev uses the term *nihilism*: the negation of everything—the word comes from Latin *nihil,* meaning "nothing."

The quarrel polarizes the generations. Here, in chapters 10 and 11, it definitely seems to be "fathers versus sons," with the first round going to the sons. After this discussion, Bazarov suggests he and Arkady take a trip to town, and the action of the novel follows them there. But before it does, Turgenev stages an important scene, which offers insight into Nikolai Petrovich and his world. Immediately after the quarrel, Nikolai and Pavel are left to lick their wounds. At this point, the thoughtful Nikolai recalls a conversation he had had in his youth with their late mother, actually, not just a conversation, but a "quarrel"! "She was shouting and didn't want to hear a thing from me . . . I finally told her: You can't understand me. I said: We belong to different generations. She was frightfully offended. But I thought, what can I do about it? It's a bitter pill but it's got to be swallowed. So now our turn's come, and our successors can say to us: You're not of our generation, you've got to swallow your pill." His brother tells him he's "far too magnanimous and modest" (Freeborn trans., chapter 10). Then we are privy to Nikolai's musing in the garden.

Nikolai's capacity for reverie is linked to his ability to contemplate the precious, fleeting nature of human experiences. He, unlike his brother, can cede his place to the younger generation, in part because he remembers what it was like to be a son. This makes him more empathetic to his own son . . . Moreover, figuring in Nikolai's willingness to let the sons carry the day is some recognition that the younger generation is, in fact, more evolved: "Doesn't their [the sons'] superiority consist in there being fewer traces of the slave-owner in them than in us [the fathers]?"—as Constance Garnett translated this line in dramatic fashion. Nikolai feels that his generation of fathers has been compromised by serfdom and their sense of class privilege, that owning serfs has become a moral blight on them. Arkady and Bazarov are not tainted in this way. Still, Nikolai is not won over by the beliefs of the sons, even if they are more democratic in mindset. What he can't understand is their rejection of art, nature, and poetry: "But to renounce poetry? . . . to have no feeling for art, for nature. . . ."

In contrast, while Nikolai is off daydreaming, Pavel Petrovich walked to the end of the garden, and also grew thoughtful and also raised his eyes to the sky. "But his beautiful dark eyes reflected nothing apart from the light of the stars. He was no born romantic and his dandified, dry and passionate, Frenchified, misanthropic nature did not know how to daydream" (Freeborn trans., chapter 11).

Thus, the first part of the novel sets up a conflict in generations—older, once liberal, but now outmoded, versus younger, now nihilist and cutting-edge. At the same time, Turgenev divides people according to another axis, the ability (or inability) to experience life, to appreciate art, to love, to feel sadness. This axis, as we will see, does not fall strictly along generational lines.

Translations

In the lectures on *Fathers and Sons,* I cite primarily from the Constance Garnett translation, revised by Ralph Matlaw, which appears in the Norton Critical Edition (1966). However, in key places, especially the quarrel between the “fathers” and the “sons” in chapter 10, I cite from Richard Freeborn’s excellent new translation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Also recommended is the revision of the Garnett translation by Elizabeth Cheresh Allen, available from Modern Library (2001).

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What are the cultural and ideological issues that separate the two generations? How does the approaching emancipation of serfs figure in?
2. *Fathers and Sons* seems to revolve around the overt tension between two generations. Yet there is also another alignment. In terms of values and approach to life, what do Nikolai Kirsanov and his son Arkady share as opposed to Petr Kirsanov and Bazarov?
3. How does Nikolai Kirsanov react to the flow of time, to mortality?

Suggested Reading

Turgenev, Ivan. *Fathers and Sons.* Norton Critical Ed. Trans. Constance Garnett, revised by Ralph Matlaw. New York: W.W. Norton, 1966.

———. *Fathers and Sons.* Trans. Richard Freeborn. Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1991.

Other Books of Interest

Berlin, Isaiah. *Russian Thinkers.* "Fathers and Children: Turgenev and the Liberal Predicament," pp. 261–305. New ed. New York: Penguin, 1995.

Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.

Dessaix, Robert. *Twilight of Love: Travels with Turgenev.* Emeryville, CA: Shoemaker & Hoard Publishers, 2005.

Feuer, Kathryn. "*Fathers and Sons*: Fathers and Children." *The Russian Novel from Pushkin to Pasternak.* Ed. John Garrard. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.

Pritchett, V.S. *The Gentle Barbarian: The Work and Life of Turgenev.* New York: Vintage, 1978.

Roosevelt, Priscilla. *Life on the Russian Country Estate: A Social and Cultural History.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997.

Turgenev, I.S. *Fathers and Sons.* Norton Critical Ed. 2nd ed. Ed. and trans. Michael R. Katz. New York: W.W. Norton, 1993.

———. *Fathers and Sons.* Norton Critical Ed. Ed. Ralph E. Matlaw. Trans. Constance Garnett. New York: W.W. Norton, 1966.

Lecture 3:
Bridging the Generation Gap in Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*: Love and Death

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* (chapters 12–end).

After a lot of talk in the first eleven chapters, the action moves to town. As the plot develops, we see those constants of the Russian novel: love and death. What happens when a nihilist falls in love? And, in the face of death, is it possible to believe in nothing? In town Arkady and Bazarov attend a ball and make the acquaintance of a widow, Anna Sergeyevna Odintsova (Odintsov in some translations), and then visit her on the estate where she lives with her younger sister. It's here that Bazarov experiences the biggest challenge to his nihilism.

Fathers in Love

Before looking at what happens to this young nihilist when he is tempted by love, I want, by way of comparison, to look at what happens to old romantics, the fathers, when they love. Nikolai still nurtures love for his deceased wife and "long[s] to feel his Marya near him again, to have a sense of her warmth and breathing" (chapter 11). The memory of his dead wife Marya protects Marino, the estate named in her honor, in a maternal embrace. And now Nikolai has developed an attachment to a young woman named Fenechka, a free peasant (not a serf) in her early twenties, who has become his mistress and the mother of his young child. Arkady, true to the democratic ideals of his generation, accepts his new brother and is not disturbed by the social origins of Fenechka. (He does, however, see no reason why his father should not marry her.) Nikolai Petrovich loves contentedly.

Pavel Petrovich's romantic past, in contrast, is rather bizarre. He once met a certain Princess R. at a ball and "danced the *mazurka* with her, in the course of which she did not utter a single sensible word, and fell passionately in love with her" (chapter 7). Pavel Petrovich is obsessed with her, loses his head, and ruins his career. After she dies, around the time when Arkady's mother died, Pavel Petrovich is a broken man. Thus both brothers of the older generation have devoted themselves to these now-dead loves, but in very different ways: Nikolai's love was fruitful and life-affirming, Pavel's life seems quite arid.

Consider this . . .

Over the course of the rest of Turgenev's novel, Fathers and Sons, *the location of action shifts from the Kirsanov estate to town (what does the town imply, as opposed to the family estate?) and then to Odintsova's estate, and to Bazarov's own modest family estate—and then from there Bazarov makes the rounds again. What characterizes each locale and how does the locale affect behavior and action?*

A Nihilist on Love

The nihilist Bazarov has a different view of romantic love and marriage. He tells Arkady: "And what about all these mysterious relations between a man and woman? We physiologists know what these relations are. Study the anatomy of the eye a bit; where does the enigmatical glance you talk about come in there? That's all romanticism, nonsense, rot, artiness. We'd better go look at the beetle" (chapter 7). In repeated remarks of this nature, Bazarov attempts to reduce all romantic feeling, all sexual attraction, to the level of a physiological response. In declaring romantic love to be nonsense, in general, Bazarov reflects an extreme version of new attitudes toward relations between the sexes that were promulgated by some of the young radicals who inspired Turgenev's portraits in this novel. Part of their platform, in fact, was the emancipation of women: they explored ways of granting women greater autonomy and control over their lives and they questioned the institution of marriage, especially in its traditional, patriarchal form.

In town, Arkady and Bazarov meet just such an emancipated young woman, Avdotya Nikitishna Kukshina. The portrait of this woman is mixed: Turgenev makes her into a name-dropper, whose house is filled with books, papers, and so-called "thick journals," whose "pages were for the most part uncut": she hadn't read them—unlike Arkady's mother, who did read thick journals.

During the visit with Kukshina, Bazarov keeps asking whether there are "any pretty women" and learns of a certain Anna Sergeyevna Odintsova. She had been orphaned as a girl and had then married not for love but to secure her own future and provide for her sister Katya. When her husband Odintsov died, she was left a well-to-do widow with a fair amount of freedom and self-determination. Bazarov and Arkady meet her at the ball. Arkady declares her cold and reserved, but Bazarov makes lewd remarks intended to reduce Odintsova to her looks and her concomitant sexual desirability: "Well, you like ice cream, don't you?" he says to Arkady. Bazarov suggests that the cool beauty Odintsov is a dish . . . of ice cream.

At her invitation, Bazarov and Arkady set off to visit her on her estate. Bazarov exerts a fascination over Odintsova. She wants him to teach her the Latin names of plants: She and Bazarov are alike at least in this respect, that nature for them is a "workshop" rather than a "temple." (This is as it should be, according to Bazarov, who has no patience for those who are moved by the beauty of nature.) Bazarov spouts his nihilism. "I assure you, studying separate individuals is not worth the trouble. All people resemble each other, in soul as in body; each of us has brain, spleen, heart, and lungs made alike; and the so-called moral qualities are the same in all; the sight variations are of no importance. A single human specimen is sufficient to judge all the rest. People are like trees in a forest; no botanist would think of studying each individual birch tree" (chapter 16). By this time, it becomes clear that Bazarov and Odintsova are on the verge of falling in love. For Bazarov, this is blasphemy, for it is a violation of his principles. What about Odintsova? The narrator has told us that she had never known love (her marriage was by "calculation"); if she had not been "rich and independent, she would perhaps have thrown herself into the struggle, and have known passion." Here "passion" is meant to be passion for a cause, but it does not exclude sexual passion. In

one key passage, the narrator gives us insight into Odintsova's body and soul. For all her outward composure, she, too, has longings. And they surface in the bath. Turgenev's description is remarkably suggestive:

> . . . dreams sometimes danced in rainbow colors before her eyes even, but she breathed more freely when they died away, and did not regret them. Her imagination indeed overstepped the limits of what is reckoned permissible by conventional morality; but even then the blood flowed as quietly as ever in her fascinatingly graceful, tranquil body. Sometimes coming out of her fragrant bath all warm and languorous, she would fall to musing on the insignificance of life, the sorrow, the labor, the malice of it . . . Her soul would be filled with sudden daring, and would flow with generous ardor, but a draft would blow from a half-closed window, and Anna Sergeyevna would shrink into herself, and feel plaintive and almost angry, and there was only one thing she cared for at that instant—to get away from that horrid wind. (chapter 16)

That wind is symbolic of an alien, invasive force penetrating her inner world.

The relations between Odintsova and Bazarov reach a turning point. Bazarov, aware that his father and mother have been waiting to see him, announces his departure. As they begin their talk, she tells Bazarov that she feels "stifled" and asks him to open the window. (Here, Odintsova seems to overcome, if only for a moment, her usual impulse [described in the passage quoted above] to "get away from that horrid wind"!) When Bazarov does what she asks, the window flies open with a crash, perhaps simply because of the wind, or perhaps in part because his hands are trembling. Then the night enters the chamber: "The soft, dark night looked in to the room with its almost black sky, its faintly rustling trees, and the fresh fragrance of the pure open air" (chapter 17). To open the window suggests a willingness or openness on her part, which contrasts with her need to close the window after her bath.

Odintsova and Bazarov meet, talk, and trade barbed insults about each other's class. They almost declare love, but retreat. The next morning, there is another attempt, but this time she seems to force him to declare his love. He lunges at her and embraces her passionately. She reciprocates for a moment, and then pushes him away. It seems to be understood by both that they will not act on the passion that has erupted.

Why doesn't she carry through? Is she incapable of passion? Is the social divide too great? Would she be jeopardizing the control over her life that she has achieved? Does she see Bazarov's limitations? Here we have what has been seen as Turgenev's trademark: the politics and poetics of hesitation. She hesitates and the moment is lost.

After this scene, the action moves to a new location, the home of Bazarov's doting parents. Bazarov has changed. Although he expresses his relief at not being "crushed by a skirt," he seems to exude a new degree of nihilism and lack of concern for others, verging on hatred. The formerly arrogant Bazarov sounds defeated:

> The tiny space I occupy is so infinitely small in comparison with the rest of space, in which I am not, and which has nothing to do with me;

> and the period of time in which it is my lot to live is as petty beside the eternity in which I have not been, and shall not be. . . . Isn't it hideous? Isn't it petty? (chapter 21)

Bazarov witnesses an ant dragging off a half-dead fly and cheers on the ant: "It's your privilege as an animal to be free from the sentiment of pity." Bazarov is evidently commenting on what has taken place—or not taken place—between him and Odintsova. He envies the ant—the Russian word is masculine—for simply doing with the fly—the Russian word is feminine—what he will, regardless of "her" (the fly's) resistance . . . The implication is that creatures who are free of pity, like the ant, are enviable. And yet perhaps Bazarov is rethinking his previous platform: Maybe there really is a difference between human beings and frogs or ants. Is that what stopped Bazarov from taking advantage of Odintsova: his capacity for pity, for compassion, for empathy?

Growing bored at home, Bazarov resolves to leave his parents and go back to Arkady's, where he has left his scientific equipment. His parents are heartbroken at his departure. Back at Marino, Arkady and Bazarov find the fathers having peasant problems. Bazarov engages in scientific work, while Arkady soon realizes that he is interested in Katya, Odintsova's sister. He finds a pretext for visiting her, leaving Bazarov behind. Then, while Arkady is off finding love and happiness with Katya, Bazarov continues his scientific work but manages, one day, in the lilac arbor, to steal a kiss from Fenechka. (She resists, but perhaps rather feebly.) We are told that Bazarov, during the kiss, remembers another such scene, with Odintsova, and feels "both shame and contemptuous annoyance. But he at once shook his head, ironically congratulated himself 'on his formal assumption of the part of the gay Lothario.'" Is Bazarov trying to purge all compassion for others and act more in keeping with the animal kingdom?

Pavel Petrovich witnessed this stolen kiss. He himself, it turns out, harbors romantic feelings for Fenechka, who oddly enough reminds him of his Princess R. Whether for this reason or simply because he has had it with Bazarov, he challenges Bazarov to a duel. He determines that, for all Bazarov's proper nihilist views that dueling is an absurd, aristocratic custom, he, Bazarov, would not be able to withstand a personal challenge. The two men go through the ritual, and, luckily, both men survive.

Bazarov goes home, and Pavel Petrovich gives his blessing to the marriage of Nikolai Petrovich and Fenechka. Although Pavel Petrovich won't change his stripes completely, this is still a major step. (Nikolai reveals that he would have married Fenechka sooner were it not for his fear that class prejudice and family pride would make Pavel Petrovich disapprove.) The novel suggests that the fathers, within limits, can adapt to the changing times.

Arkady, meanwhile, woos Odintsova's younger sister Katya. When Bazarov stops by to see them on his way home after the duel at Marino, Odintsova and Bazarov see the courtship and engagement of Katya and Arkady and comment, with resignation and even bitterness, on their own ineptitude at love, marriage, and happiness. They agree that love "is a purely imaginary feeling" (ch. 25).

From this point on, Turgenev suggests that Bazarov is a dead man walking. Life no longer seems to have a hold. Bazarov passes his time helping his father with his medical practice. But he makes a professional mistake: He gets himself infected during an autopsy of someone who had died of typhus. And he fails to take the proper precautions and allows too much time to elapse before asking his father for something to cauterize the cut. Apparently, Bazarov makes a pointless and stupid error, unless of course he does it on purpose. He is definitely not acting according to his scientific principles.

We have seen how Bazarov faces love; now we see him face death. Here, the consensus is, he behaves more honorably, and more in keeping with his principles, and even more kindly to others. The best of his nihilism shines through. Or maybe it's the inner grace and inbred humanity that he has inherited from his dear parents. Either way, Bazarov faces death nobly.

His dying request is for Odintsova to be summoned. Bazarov asks to be left alone with Odintsova, "'Anna Sergeyevna, you will allow it, I fancy, now?' With a motion of his head, he indicated his prostrate helpless frame" (chapter 27). The innuendo is that she need no longer fear his amorous advances. The exchange between them leads us to conclude that while love may bring out the worst (the lewdest and the most juvenile) in a nihilist like Bazarov, death brings out the generosity of spirit and nobility that were so lacking in his selfish response to disappointment at love.

In the last chapter, Turgenev provides us with an epilogue-like conclusion that brings us up to date on everyone: Pavel Petrovich has gone off to Europe; Odintsova has married one of the future leaders of Russia; the Kirsanovs, father and son, held a double wedding. The book ends on a sad and yet uplifting note: Bazarov's parents at his grave, mourning.

When *Fathers and Sons* appeared, Turgenev was barraged with criticism and questions. Especially in view of a lack of a clear winner in the implicit contest between the fathers and the sons, it is all the more relevant to ask again about the meaning of the title. Some of the most persuasive readings of the novel have been those that point out the extent to which the strict divisions along generational lines don't really hold. Still, the novel does convey a message about "fathers" and "sons": With the process of aging, revolutionary or radical fervor softens. In the face of death, love is what matters.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Can Bazarov be viewed as a tragic hero? If so, what is his fatal tragic flaw?
2. The interaction between Bazarov and Odintsova is one of the important dramatic moments of *Fathers and Sons* (arguably the most compact and powerful). What happens, in psychological terms, between the two? Who is to blame?
3. How do women fit into the conflict of generations in *Fathers and Sons*?

Suggested Reading

Turgenev, Ivan. *Fathers and Sons.* Norton Critical Ed. Trans. Constance Garnett. Revised by Ralph Matlaw. New York: W.W. Norton, 1966.

———. *Fathers and Sons.* Norton Critical Ed. 2nd ed. Ed. and trans. Michael R. Katz. New York: W.W. Norton, 1989.

(Ed. note: All the critical material in the two volumes listed above are valuable resources for Turgenev's works.)

Other Books of Interest

Costlow, Jane T. *Worlds Within Worlds: The Novels of Ivan Turgenev.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Lowe, David. *Turgenev's* Fathers and Sons. Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1983.

Lecture 4:
Fyodor Dostoevsky:
Writing for Life

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Joseph Frank's *Dostoevsky* (5 vols.) or Richard Freeborn's *Dostoevsky: Life and Times*.

Introduction to Dostoevsky's Life

Consider this . . .

Dostoevsky was brought "face-to-face with death" when he was sentenced to death for political activity. He received a reprieve at the last moment, but the experience changed him profoundly.

Dostoevsky is said to have remarked that Turgenev and Tolstoy wouldn't have been able to write a single line if they had lived under the conditions in which he lived his life and wrote his novels. Fyodor Dostoevsky's life, indeed, was full of drama, tragedy, hardship, poverty, sickness, addiction, love and death, and even some family happiness. It will always be a question how much of his life and experience found its way into his fiction, but the experience of poverty, violence, and compassion did inform both his life and his work.

Dostoevsky's life breaks conveniently into distinct periods, punctuated by dramatic (often tragic) events and changes of location.

Family Background and Childhood (1821–1837)

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky was born in 1821 into the family of Mikhail Dostoevsky, who had received medical training in the army, served as an army doctor, and then as a doctor in a hospital for the poor in Moscow. The family lived on the grounds of this hospital, in proximity to poverty, sickness, and death. Dostoevsky's father, in government service, had achieved a minimal rank for being considered part of the nobility or gentry, though it was a far cry from the inherited status and the vast estates of Turgenev and Tolstoy. His mother was from a merchant family. Dostoevsky's father was ever conscious of his family's modest standing and tried to improve their status. He was a firm believer in education as the means to success. Accordingly, Dostoevsky and his siblings, including his sisters, received the best education their parents could manage. Education began at home. They read Russian works and Western literature such as Sir Walter Scott and Ann Radcliffe (a trigger for nightmares!).

The Dostoevskys maintained a traditional and active attitude to religion. Family life revolved around the celebration of church holidays; pilgrimages were made in the summer to a famous monastery outside of Moscow; blessings were sought at church; there were daily devotions at home; signs of the cross were made over the children; lamps were lit in front of icons: spiritual life was integrated into daily life. Dostoevsky's mother taught him to read from a book of Bible stories for children. (And Dostoevsky's favorite was the story

of Job! This is enough to give us a sense of his taste in literature.)

During Dostoevsky's childhood, his father was able to purchase a small estate, with serfs, where Dostoevsky spent summers. Early on, a terrible fire destroyed peasants' houses. Dostoevsky would later remember how the family's servant—a free peasant, not a serf—offered charity from her own meager savings to help the serfs in their plight. This selfless act of charity in the face of suffering, from someone who herself was poor, became emblematic for Dostoevsky: in Dostoevsky's mythology, it was the peasant folk, not the rich, who were agents of selfless and redeeming love.

Dostoevsky often wrote about the seminal role of childhood memories. Another of his own such memories was recorded in a sketch called "The Peasant Marey." As a boy Dostoevsky was wandering the countryside at his family's estate when he thought he saw a wolf and was scared out of his wits. He ran to the peasant, Marey, who was plowing nearby. Marey stroked his cheek in a maternal way, told him "Christ be with you," and touched his earth-soiled finger to young Dostoevsky's trembling lips. Marey then watched over Dostoevsky as he returned home. For Dostoevsky, the story illustrates the possibility that people can act selflessly, just as they can, in the next moment, act with anger and violence. The ever-present choice between compassion and evil runs throughout Dostoevsky's fiction.

The First Decade of Adult Life (1837–1849)

As the family was preparing to send Dostoevsky and his older brother Mikhail to St. Petersburg to study military engineering, their mother died. After Dostoevsky's father took the brothers to St. Petersburg, Dostoevsky never saw his father again, though they did communicate through letters. Their father's bouts of anger, despair, and drinking intensified after the death of his wife. He moved permanently to the country, where he took a teenage serf as mistress and fathered a child who died as a baby. Dostoevsky's father was in poor health. He came to a violent end: the general suspicion is that he was savagely murdered by his serfs, who resented his cruelty; possibly involved were relatives of the young woman he had taken as mistress.

Sigmund Freud, fascinated by this story and popular versions of Dostoevsky's biography, found in Dostoevsky's subsequent behavior what he took to be signs that Dostoevsky had secretly wanted his father dead and suffered from terrible guilt when his wish came true. Freud's intriguing (but refutable) theory was fed by Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov,* which shows brothers sharing the guilt for killing their father. (For balanced response to Freud, see Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt*.)

Dostoevsky finished his training and worked as a military engineer, but gave it up as soon as he received a modest inheritance from relatives. He wanted to devote himself to writing. His first published novel, *Poor Folk* (1846), brought immediate fame and adulation, in part because he demonstrated sympathy for the downtrodden, and such sociological themes dominated the literary scene at the time. In *Poor Folk,* a lonely resident of Petersburg exchanges letters with a young woman. Their relationship, which has no clear social form, has no scripted future; the heroine eventually goes off and gets married. In *Poor Folk,* Dostoevsky used an exchange of letters written by the

hero and heroine, thereby prefiguring the device of "polyphony" (as termed by Mikhail Bakhtin) of his later novels, in which the individual voices of characters are heard on their own terms, independent of the voice of the narrator. After this success, unfortunately for Dostoevsky, his next work, *The Double* (1846), was panned.

Around this time, Dostoevsky became involved with a group of young liberals who met regularly at the home of Mikhail Petrashevsky to discuss current events and new models of society. In 1849, in the wake of revolutionary activity in Europe in 1848, the government of Tsar Nicholas I cracked down on political activity. Petrashevsky and his guests were arrested, interrogated, imprisoned for months, then taken to a square in the city, blindfolded, and divided into groups of three to be executed. At the last moment, a messenger rode up to announce that the Tsar was merciful—and had decided to commute these death sentences to exile in Siberia. The lead-up to the execution, in other words, had been theater, staged by the authorities, to teach everyone a lesson. Looking death in the face under these cruel and dramatic circumstances changed Dostoevsky's understanding of love and death.

Dostoevsky was sent to prison camp in Siberia. He wrote a work of fiction inspired by this experience. Called *Notes from the House of the Dead,* this work, like Dante's *Inferno,* introduces readers to a hellish place of good and evil. Dostoevsky's *Notes from the House of the Dead* is often seen as inaugurating a new genre, prison camp literature, which would be followed in Russia by Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and his monumental work *Gulag Archipelago.* In exile in 1857, Dostoevsky married Maria Dmitrievna Isaeva, a recent widow. Their life together was complicated on several fronts. Maria Dmitrievna had consumption; her son by her first marriage lived with them.

Homecoming (1859–1866)

Once Alexander II—who became known as the Tsar Liberator—came into power in 1855, changes were afoot: the Emancipation of the Serfs was anticipated. (It occurred in 1861.) In 1859, Dostoevsky was allowed to return to the capital cities of Moscow and Petersburg. With his brother Mikhail, Dostoevsky began to edit a new journal, called *Time,* which published new Russian literature, translated works, and articles discussing current events and culture. The direction of this new journal was neither Slavophile nor Westernizing. Dubbing themselves the *pochvenniki,* roughly "soil-people," Dostoevsky and his collaborators called for the educated elite to return to their roots, to regenerate native Russian ways, but without denying progress. Dostoevsky traveled to Western Europe twice, where he gambled, took in the sights, and pursued a young writer, a firebrand and freethinker named Polina Suslova, while back at home Dostoevsky's wife was dying of consumption (1864). During this period, Dostoevsky wrote *Notes from the Underground,* an original novella-treatise on faith and science. The underground man, ever contrary, shows that adhering to the laws of science results in self-assertive behavior and a dog-eat-dog world, whereas true freedom is to be found in acts of selfless love. The underground man, however, is unable to love because he is unable to transcend his bitter self; the result is what he describes as a living death, as we will see in the next lecture.

After the deaths of his wife and his brother in 1864, Dostoevsky's life was at a low point. The epilepsy that Dostoevsky had been suffering from since the period of his exile made his life all the more difficult. And his financial problems were worse than ever, in part due to the financial burdens he took on from his brother after his death. During this period, Dostoevsky was writing *Crime and Punishment,* which was published in *The Russian Messenger,* one of the major journals of the period.

Desperate for money, Dostoevsky signed an outrageous contract with a publisher named Stellovsky in which he agreed to deliver another novella by a certain date. If he failed to meet his deadline, he would turn over the copyright to all his works to Stellovsky. Desperation set in. Dostoevsky heard about a new technique, stenography. With the help of the stenographer Anna Grigorievna Snitkina, Dostoevsky dictated *The Gambler* in time to keep his copyright (1867) and finished *Crime and Punishment* by the same method. Dostoevsky then married the stenographer. The marriage ended up being happy. Anna Grigorievna was devoted to her husband; she provided him the stability, support, comfort, and help that he needed.

European Hiatus (1867–1871)

In 1867, the couple, tormented by creditors and Dostoevsky's extended family, went abroad, intending to stay a few months, but they ended up not returning home to Russia until 1871. The four years were filled with major familial and professional events. After visits to art museums, compulsive gambling interspersed with errands at pawnshops, and a memorable afternoon feuding with Turgenev (then living in Baden-Baden), the couple settled in Geneva. Dostoevsky controlled his gambling, continued to be the victim of epileptic seizures, and got down to work on *The Idiot.* The Dostoevskys were expecting their first child. Dostoevsky's wife gave birth to a little girl, named Sophia and called Sonya. The couple was delighted. Dostoevsky's first letters to friends and relatives back home show him to be the proudest and happiest of fathers, taking joy in this child he had so long desired. *The Idiot* was under way. Then tragedy struck: when she was only a few months old, the child got sick and died. Both parents grieved deeply. Dostoevsky's letters describe a sense of despair in the face of death that worked itself into the end of *The Idiot.* The Dostoevskys moved on to Italy (settling in Florence), where Dostoevsky eventually finished *The Idiot.*

In *The Idiot,* Dostoevsky set out to write a novel featuring (what he called) a completely good, spiritually beautiful man, like Jesus. In *The Idiot,* Dostoevsky asks the following: What happens if you let loose in a novel a Christlike hero? Things are further complicated by the fact that *The Idiot* contains a high number of marriageable young people. The plot gets very messy; things go from bad to worse. In the presence of this Christlike figure, the dynamics of the courtship plot go awry, in part because he himself does not act as a proper suitor and in part because some disturbing truths about love and marriage come to the surface. The novel is disturbing because the novel ends in tragedy rather than heaven on earth or wedding bells.

The Dostoevskys left Italy to settle in Dresden, where Anna Dostoevsky gave birth in 1869 to a daughter, Liubov. (A son, Fyodor, was born in 1871,

shortly after their return to Russia.) In Dresden, Dostoevsky wrote *The Devils* (or *The Possessed* or *Demons*). In this novel, Dostoevsky, looking back with a trace of nostalgia at his own youth, was disturbed by the violent—terrorist—turn that Russian radicalism had taken, and painted a bleak portrait of a downward spiral of civilization, although he does allow some hope for salvation, the source of which would be Russia.

Novelist as Oracle (1871–1881)

On his return to Russia, back in Petersburg, Dostoevsky lived less on the edge than before. It was a period of stability. He enjoyed his family life. He became an important voice in the cultural life of his nation, first editing a newspaper and then writing his own one-man journal, *Diary of a Writer.*

His next novel, *The Adolescent* (also known as *The Raw Youth*) appeared in 1875, around the time of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina.* Dostoevsky, though he admired Tolstoy's novels, believed that Tolstoy's novels depicted an outmoded and elite way of life that did not speak to the reality and pain of whole segments of the contemporary reading public. Dostoevsky touted himself as the chronicler of "the accidental family"; his task was to create a new kind of family novel, representing families held together not simply by blood, genes, and patrimony, not simply by sacraments and contracts, but by love.

As he began to write *The Brothers Karamazov,* Dostoevsky's son Aleksei, born in 1875, died suddenly in 1878. The child's death, from epilepsy that appeared suddenly, left husband and wife devastated. Dostoevsky's wife's memoirs record how she was so desperate that she withdrew from her family, from domestic affairs, from her husband. At his wife's urging, Dostoevsky made a pilgrimage to the Optina Pustyn monastery to visit Father Amvrosii, a charismatic holy man. Dostoevsky returned, comforted by his experience, and wrote *The Brothers Karamazov,* a novel that in artistic form responds to the death of Alyosha, the second of Dostoevsky's children to die.

The Brothers Karamazov is, as the title suggests, about brotherhood: in many different shapes, forms, tones, and contexts. It asks whether we are our brother's keeper and who our brother is. (Does brotherhood transcend blood?) The plot hinges on a parricide, but there are, in fact, multiple suspects to this "whodunit." The novel is infused with a theological message—that all are guilty for all. Such a message can interfere with the dynamics of the "whodunit," which trains readers to look for clues and suspect everyone, even if it's only to find out that "the butler did it." This novel appeared serially in *The Russian Messenger* from 1879 to 1880. Dostoevsky was at the height of fame. He was regarded as something of an oracle about Russian life. He loved it.

In May of 1880, in the midst of publishing *The Brothers Karamazov,* Dostoevsky joined Turgenev, back from Europe for the festivities, and countless glitterati for the unveiling of a monument to Pushkin, the father of Russian literature. Dostoevsky gave a speech in which he spoke in messianic terms about the role of Russia in the history of the world and about the capacity of the Russian people to draw from all cultures while remaining true to their own identity. Less than a year later, early in 1881, at the pinnacle of his fame, Dostoevsky died of emphysema.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What features of Dostoevsky's childhood left an imprint on his outlook?
2. How did Dostoevsky see his mission as a novelist?

Suggested Reading

Frank, Joseph. *Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821–1849.* Vol. 1. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979.

———. *Dostoevsky: The Years of Ordeal, 1850–1859.* Vol. 2. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983.

———. *Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation, 1860–1865.* Vol. 3. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986.

———. *Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years, 1865–1871.* Vol. 4. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

———. *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet, 1871–1881.* Vol. 5. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Freeborn, Richard. *Dostoevsky: Life and Times.* London: Haus, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The House of the Dead and Poor Folks*. Trans. Constance Garnett. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2004.

Leatherbarrow, W.J., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevskii.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Lecture 5:
In and Out of the Underground
(A Reading of Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground*)

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground, The Double, and Other Stories.*

Consider this . . .

As a former liberal of the 1840s, Dostoevsky found himself at odds with the new radicals of the 1860s, with their belief in the absolute validity in scientific principles governing human behavior. Why did Dostoevsky reject this view?

Dostoevsky wrote *Notes from the Underground* at what, by all accounts, was one of the most difficult periods of his life. He returned from a trip abroad to find his wife Marya Dmitrievna dying of consumption. Dostoevsky, suffering from epilepsy and other ailments, continued to work on *Notes from the Underground,* which was to appear in *Epoch* in 1864. The *Epoch* was the Dostoevsky brothers' replacement for their first journal *Time,* which was banned by the government. During this period, with serfdom no longer the issue, Russians were asking what could be done about the grave social and political problems that were facing them. Dostoevsky, a progressive of the generation of the forties, was at odds with the more militant radicals of the new generation. They had not only a different mindset, but different methods for enacting change.

A major spokesman for this new group was Nikolai Chernyshevsky, whose novel of ideas, *What Is to Be Done?*, describes a radical new platform for a new life for "new people" in accordance with utilitarian ethics. Right living will follow when people recognize the truth of scientific laws and apply them. Even love—Bazarov's Achilles' heel—can be dealt with in a rational manner.

Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?* caused a sensation. *Notes from the Underground* is in part a reaction against this work. Dostoevsky rebels against the notion that human life should be subject to the laws of science and ruled by reason: Human beings are far more complex in his view. Dostoevsky did not believe that man would simply start to behave if he actually knew what was in his best interests. Evil, for Dostoevsky, was far too complex, far more complicated.

Notes from the Underground has a somewhat puzzling form. For the record, the first-person narrator is a fiction; he is not Dostoevsky. Also, part 1 is set in the present of the 1860s, while part 2 steps back in time to the 1840s.

In part 1 of his "confession," the underground man outlines, in his own colorful way, a number of new ideas, which seemed a threat to conventional faith-based understandings of human responsibility:

> When, for instance, it is proved to you that you are descended from a monkey, then it's no use pulling a long face about it: you have to

> accept it. When they prove to you that one drop of your own fat must, as a matter of course, be dearer to you than a hundred thousand of your fellow-men and that all the so-called virtues and duties and other vain fancies and prejudices are, as a result of that consideration, of no importance whatever, then you have to accept it whether you like it or not, because twice-two is mathematics. Just try to refute that. (part 1, chapter 3)

The reference to being descended from a monkey or ape is a dig at Darwin (whose *On the Origin of Species,* published in 1859, was discussed in Russia from 1860 and translated in 1864). The underground man is noting that people can conveniently rely on Darwin's theories to absolve themselves from responsibility for how they behave: If we are descended from monkeys, then who can blame us if we live according to the laws of the jungle rather than striving to follow the laws of the Bible?

What the underground man in fact objects to is the very idea that human beings behave according to predetermined laws. This is why he finds "twice two makes four" so threatening. In one of his most dramatic moments, he argues that if or when the laws of reason and science or formulae for the welfare of all are discovered, he's not interested, because this kind of determinism would eliminate human freedom. It would deny free will—and, one might add, moral responsibility, the divine soul.

The underground man singles out "twice two makes four" as the ultimate expression of the stranglehold of the laws of mathematics, reason, and science on free will. Once you surrender to these principles and admit that there is nothing more to life, you become nothing more than matter, subject to decay and annihilation, with no soul, no eternal life, no resurrection of the body, because all of this runs counter to the laws of mathematics and reason. Hence, the underground man refuses to surrender.

Ironically, the greatest rebellion against the rule of reason and science that he can muster, is feeble and ultimately self-defeating, and no real alternative to what he rails against. What's the best he can do? The best rebellion against the soul-killing tyranny of "twice two makes four" that the underground man can muster is "twice two makes five."

> But yet mathematical certainty is after all, something insufferable. Twice two makes four seems to me simply a piece of insolence. Twice two makes four is a pert coxcomb who stands with arms akimbo barring your path and spitting. I admit that twice two makes four is an excellent thing, but if we are to give everything its due, twice two makes five is sometimes a very charming thing too. (chapter 9)

Has the underground man escaped deterministic thinking? All he has really done is alter the answer to the mathematical formula, so that he maintains the power of mathematical formulae. A more profound form of rebellion against "twice two makes four" would be to challenge the very principles involved rather than simply the result.

As he reveals in his notebooks, Dostoevsky considered faith in Christ as the ultimate challenge to the laws of nature and science. Christlike selfless love,

compassion that involves loving another as oneself, deviates from what is natural, rational, and scientific. Dostoevsky also expresses the view that this kind of love and the faith in God that inspires it amount to a triumph over death: They carry with them the promise of heaven and eternal life.

None of this is spelled out in part 1 of *Notes from the Underground.* Rather, part 1 suggests that the underground man is aware that there is some other way, which he seeks but won't find.

Part 2 provides an indirect, dramatic suggestion of the alternative. The underground man narrates two episodes from his earlier life, when he was twenty-four (he is forty when he writes part 1). The first involves a cocky officer who, playing pool, picked the underground man up and moved him out of his way, as if he were a piece of furniture rather than a human being. Our underground man takes great offense and plots his revenge. This same officer, apparently, when walking down the main drag of Petersburg, similarly walks right through him "as though there was nothing but empty space before him." But when this officer meets "generals and persons of high rank," he gives way for them. What the underground man observes, then, is that the equivalent of Newton's laws of matter that govern how matter behaves in space, hold on Nevsky Prospect. Two bodies cannot occupy the same space; each body on Nevsky (like Newton's bodies in space) refuses to yield unless it is acted on by another body with greater force. Force, on Nevsky, is not just physical mass, but social mass, stature, rank, and fancy dress. The social hierarchy thus determines behavior.

The underground man seeks revenge. He decides that rather than give way to this officer, he will bump right into him. He plots this encounter and they bump, but the officer doesn't notice him!

The emblem of this self-assertive officer standing with arms akimbo on Nevsky harks back to part 1, where the underground man describes "twice two makes four" as a "pert coxcomb who stands with his arms akimbo." This seems like a strange description of "twice two makes four," but his point is to suggest that both have the effect of a bully, self-assertively blocking the way. All the underground man does in his "bumping duel" with the officer is to wage, perhaps, some protest against these rules, but without overthrowing their tyranny.

The next episode similarly shows the underground man out in the world and reacting to the laws of social intercourse that seem to determine human relations. He describes a meeting with some former schoolmates. The underground man attempts to assert himself by getting invited to one of their parties. They escape from him by going off to a brothel. They assume that he won't follow. He is enraged and sets off by horse-drawn cab. He is so furious at their having snubbed him that he ends up beating the cab driver, who in turn beats the horse: hierarchical society breeds abuse, such that everyone gets abused from above and takes it out on someone lower on the social scale.

The underground man does not find his friends at the brothel. He does spend the night with a prostitute, Liza, chosen because she looks the most downtrodden: he calculates that he will be able to subjugate her. When they wake up, however, he engages her in conversation and begins a speech

about her plight, God, family, love, and how what they have just done is a violation of something that should have meaning.

Instead of being obsessed with bumping into the officer, he is talking about sexual love, about another form of coming into contact with a human being. Although of course the situations seem different—passing someone on the sidewalk versus sexual relations—the underground man suggests that, on some primal spiritual level, the choices are the same: One can simply assert oneself, abuse the other, act selfishly or one can love the other as oneself, be compassionate, give way. The underground man may even dimly understand all of this. The message is that even if he doesn't, Liza does, intuitively and not simply from his words. We are left wondering what he is up to. Is he only engaging in some kind of psychological manipulation?

The underground man gives Liza his address and, a few days later, Liza arrives. He attempts to assert himself in front of Liza, standing with his arms "à la Napoléon" trying to get the servant to do his bidding. The underground man aspires to behave like a Napoleon, asserting his will on others and getting his way.

In the scene with Liza, the underground man alternates between the self-assertive and manipulative behavior of the underground—not exactly the cocky behavior of the officer, but a more insecure version—and a new mode of being, inspired by Liza. When she tells him that she has decided to stop being a prostitute and to start a new life, he responds cruelly and derisively, telling her what he thinks will be news to her: that all that took place between them at the brothel was intended simply to humiliate her.

She responds in what for him and for his worldview is a totally unexpected, irrational way. She recognizes his suffering and pain and, instead of retaliating in response to his latest blow, she selflessly shows compassion for him because he is suffering. Liza throws her arms around the underground man in an embrace. Her posture is opposed to the "sitting with arms folded" or the standing with arms à la Napoléon of the underground man, or, for that matter, the arms akimbo of the pert officers on Nevsky (or twice two makes four).

They make love, but the underground man is unable to bear the vulnerability that human intimacy brings. He immediately tries to find a way of asserting himself. To re-establish authority, he needs to make Liza into a "subjugated object": he seizes her hand as she is leaving and crams money in it.

This episode ends with him back in the underground, where he will remain. The underground man may well be stuck in the underground, but part 2 at least offers some model of "something else entirely different" that the underground man yearns for, but will never attain. Liza's behavior was not in accord with rational principles. Her behavior is irrational and utterly self-sacrificing; she expects no gain, she feels no need to assert herself.

Throughout his works, Dostoevsky shows meekness in action. He's interested in a different kind of love: a charity that doesn't seek its own and that doesn't puff itself up. Scientific discovery, from Newton through to Darwin, was determining that the "natural" behavior of matter in the universe or of animals in the jungle was to be selfish and self-assertive. Dostoevsky was presenting Liza as an alternative to this. Dostoevsky intended for "faith and

Christ" to emerge from *Notes* as some kind of answer to the underground man's funk.

Translations

Throughout this lecture, I quote from the Constance Garnett translation. Garnett's translation may be found in *Notes from the Underground, The Double and Other Stories* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2003).

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Why does the underground man object to the laws of science and mathematics?
2. Is the underground man free?
3. How is Liza's behavior different from that of "normal" people or of the underground man himself?

Suggested Reading

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *Notes from the Underground, The Double, and Other Stories*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Jackson, Robert Louis. *The Art of Dostoevsky.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

———. *Dialogues with Dostoevsky: The Overwhelming Questions*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993.

Scanlan, James P. *Dostoevsky the Thinker.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002.

Films

The Gambler. Directed by Károly Makk. Screenplay by Katharine Ogden. Starring Michael Gambon as Fyodor Dostoevsky. Hungary, 1997.

Notes from Underground. Directed by Gary Walkow. Screenplay by Gary Walkow. Richland, WA: Gruber Pictures Production and Renegade Films, 1995.

Lecture 6:
Calculating Murder in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (first half), trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky.

Raskolnikov, Petersburg, and Experiential Realism

Consider this . . .

The same person who commits murder is capable of deep compassion for others. How can these opposites occur in one person?

Dostoevsky plunges us right into the action of this novel, without any introduction. Out of the blue we are following a "young man," not yet named, as he leaves his closet-like room on a very hot summer evening in a slum neighborhood in Petersburg. Dostoevsky's narrative sticks very close to this young man. We see everything from this young man's point of view, except when the narrator steps back to offer us bits of information: "Incidentally, he was remarkably good-looking, taller than average, slender and trim, with beautiful dark eyes and dark blond hair. But soon he lapsed as if into deep thought, or even, more precisely, into some sort of oblivion, and walked on no longer noticing what was around him, and not wishing to notice."

Dostoevsky's narrative technique here fits what Robert Alter has called "experiential realism," or "the practice of conducting the narrative more and more through the moment-by-moment experience—sensory, visceral, and mental—of the main character or characters." Alter argues, further, that this technique of experiential realism naturally came into being in novels set in cities and written about city life. City life changes perceptions of time and space and transforms the "boundaries of the self."

And indeed, we experience, along with the main character, his own "babbling" about taking "a new step," which people are "most afraid of." We follow him to the apartment of an old woman. It is only at this point that we learn his name—Raskolnikov—as he identifies himself as a student to the old woman, who, we gather, is a pawnbroker. We begin to understand what Raskolnikov's plan is. He wavers, but tries to convince himself to do it: "It's loathsome . . . It's absurd . . . Could such horror really come into my head?" Thanks to Dostoevsky's "experiential realism," we feel what it's like to contemplate being an axe murderer and we may even find ourselves sympathizing with him.

Is this what city life does to lonely young men when they leave home for the first time? As part 1 progresses, and before Raskolnikov's murder of the pawnbroker and her sister Lizaveta, we learn enough to piece together more of his story. His story is a typical story, a typical "Bildungsroman," or "novel of

education" (sometimes "novel of formation"). Such novels feature a hero who is in the process of finding his place in the world; the hero sets off on his own from home to the city to study or find work and eventually makes his way and rises in the world, without the help of parents; the mother is home, the father is often dead.

Raskolnikov's situation fits this model. He has come to Petersburg to study at the university. His father is dead and his mother and sister have gone to great pains to make this life in the city and education at the university possible for him. He lacks money, but thinks it is pointless to work as a tutor or translator. Instead, he seems to be hatching a plan that will solve his financial problems. But is that all there is to it? There seems to be something more.

Raskolnikov's Motives

Up until the murder, Raskolnikov is torn in two directions. To murder or not to murder? Oddly enough, others around him have likewise been contemplating murder. It's the talk of the town. In fact, Raskolnikov had overheard a student in a tavern talking about murdering the very pawnbroker he himself had just visited. The student in the tavern rationalizes that if you kill a certain mean and exploitative pawnbroker, you could use her money to do great good:

> Hundreds, maybe thousands of lives put right; dozens of families saved from destitution, from decay, from ruin, from depravity, from the venereal hospitals—all on her money. Kill her and take her money, so that afterwards with its help you can devote yourself to the service of all mankind and the common cause: What do you think, wouldn't thousands of good deeds make up for one tiny little crime? For one life, thousands of lives saved from decay and corruption. One death for hundreds of lives—it's simple arithmetic! (part 1, chapter 6)

This passage echoes a similar conversation about the ethics of murder in one of Dostoevsky's favorite novels, Honoré de Balzac's *Old Goriot* (or *Father Goriot*), in which city life brings new ideas and the promise of social mobility, at whatever cost (of the lives of others!). In Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment,* the student is relying on Western ideas of social theory, here Jeremy Bentham's "felicific calculus" of maximizing felicity (happiness) for society as a whole. Later, Raskolnikov will hear from the drunk Marmeladov that new scientific ideas from England (evidently a mix of the capitalist theory of Adam Smith and the theories of "rational egotism") rule out compassion.

Compassion is the other force that affects Raskolnikov's actions. Early on in the novel, after his dress rehearsal of the murder, Raskolnikov takes the drunken Marmeladov, whom he has met in a tavern, home to Marmeladov's apartment. As he leaves, Raskolnikov leaves behind money to help the family because they are clearly in need. But Raskolnikov soon regrets this spontaneous act of generosity. Later, wandering the streets of Petersburg, Raskolnikov notices a teenage girl being stalked by an older man. Raskolnikov notices that the girl is drunk and that her dress isn't on properly: She has been dressed hastily "by clumsy male hands." He sizes up the situation and concludes that someone has gotten her drunk, has taken advantage of her, had sex with her, dressed her, and turned her loose on the street, where she is about to fall prey to another man.

Raskolnikov intercedes on her behalf. A policeman hears the commotion, and Raskolnikov explains what has happened, gives money for her cabfare home, and sets off on his way. Raskolnikov expects nothing in return. There is no self-interest involved. Why does he do this? Out of compassion. But then Raskolnikov starts to reason and second-guess his kind act.

Every thought of violence contemplated in the name of social theory is balanced by an act of compassion, and every act of compassion is undermined by social theory. Raskolnikov, musing on the fate of young women in the city, thinks in terms of the "moral statistics" of the Belgian social scientist Adolphe Quetelet:

> Every year, they say, a certain percentage has to go . . . somewhere . . . to the devil, it must be, so as to freshen up the rest and not interfere with them. A percentage! Nice little words they have, really: so reassuring, so scientific. A certain percentage, they say, meaning there's nothing to worry about. (part 1, chapter 4)

According to Quetelet, no matter how society is structured, a certain percentage of the population will become prostitutes, a certain percentage murderers, a certain percentage commits suicide, and so on. Quetelet's theory turns individuals into statistics.

Raskolnikov's behavior leading up to the murder thus shows a pattern: When he acts from the heart, spontaneously, in the spur of the moment and in relationship to others, he shows compassion; he seems incapable of violence. But when he starts to reason, to calculate, then he is all too ready to regard his fellow human beings as statistics; he becomes capable of murder.

Raskolnikov's Dream

We gain insight into Raskolnikov's psychology from a dream Raskolnikov had of his childhood, when he was with his father on a feast day, an occasion for communal drunkenness. As they pass the tavern, a peasant named Mikolka invites other peasants to hop into a cart, to which is harnessed an old mare. Everyone tells him he's crazy, that the horse is far too old and weak to pull them all. But Mikolka declares: "I might as well kill her, she's not worth her feed. Get in, I say! I'll make her gallop! Oh, how she'll gallop." What's of interest here, aside from his unbearable cruelty, is that he is in fact making a calculation. It's not just wanton, drunken violence or cruelty to animals. This horse is clearly old, with limited utility, with not much work left in her. But if she were healthy and strong—and therefore a money-making machine for him, then he wouldn't be treating her this way. Mikolka's reasoning, whereby he calculates the cost versus income of the horse, smacks of the social theories and utilitarian thought that Raskolnikov has learned since going to Petersburg. Mikolka asserts that the horse is his property, and therefore he can do as he wishes; he can play God. There is an implicit reference here to the relationship of landowners to serfs and husbands to wives, since these were two other contexts where abuse was tolerated on the grounds that serfs and wives were the "property" of masters and husbands.

But in many ways this dream is not only about Mikolka and the violence of Russian peasant life. It is also about fathers. Witnessing the scene, Raskolnikov appeals to his father, as an authority: "Papa, papa, papa, what are

they doing? Papa, they're beating the horse . . ." But the father can do no more than to say, "Come along, come along! They're drunk, they're playing pranks, the fools—come along , don't look!" The father's other line is "It's none of our business!" Little Raskolnikov expects his father, the authority figure, the person he looks up to, to do something about this situation, but the father does nothing. He doesn't seek justice; he doesn't try to stop the beating; nor does he show compassion. (One could argue that becoming involved might put his son in danger. But this may also be a rationalization for his refusal to get involved.)

In the crowd of drunken peasants, many egg Mikolka on, but one voice asks: "Have you no fear of God, or what, you hairy devil!" It is to this man that little Raskolnikov runs when he breaks free from his father. The man is also described as being gray-bearded, which gives him a patriarchal aura. He seems to be the one person there to take a moral stand. And then we are told that "a woman takes him by the hand and tries to lead him away . . ." She provides maternal protection.

Before the dream ends, Raskolnikov manages to break free and tear through the crowd to the horse. He throws his arms around her and kisses her eyes and mouth, which is all bloody. His father finally catches hold of him. Raskolnikov embraces him, asking "What did they . . . kill . . . the poor horse for!" At this point he wakes up. We see here the young Raskolnikov expecting a moral universe, one where the authorities can act to restore justice and eliminate suffering. But he is disappointed.

When Raskolnikov wakes up, he is horrified at the thought of spilling blood and has lost all stomach for his perfectly calculated murder . . . His immediate and overwhelming response is to recoil with horror at the thought of murdering the pawnbroker. Clearly active in the dream was the compassionate side of Raskolnikov that moved him to have pity on others. After the dream, the reader might think: There will be no murder. But then Raskolnikov starts to reason, rationalize, and calculate again—and upon finding out, by chance, that the pawnbroker will be alone the next day, he feels as though this is too good of an opportunity (for the perfect crime) to pass up. Thus, Raskolnikov goes through with the murder, in the process murdering not only the pawnbroker but her sister Lizaveta, who is possibly pregnant.

Luzhin and Love Thy Neighbor

The issues at stake become clear to Raskolnikov (and the reader) when he meets Luzhin, an up-and-coming lawyer whom his sister Dunya has agreed to marry. In the scene in which Raskolnikov meets Luzhin (part 2, chapter 5), Luzhin holds forth with a long speech in which he proudly declares that "love thy neighbor"—the very foundation of ethical behavior in both Old and New Testament—is outmoded and has been replaced by a new law, the law of "love yourself."

Luzhin argues that general prosperity will result from each individual enterprise or person looking out for number one, with the wealth and prosperity eventually trickling down to others. In Luzhin's speech, in all the rationalizations for replacing "love thy neighbor" with "love thyself," may be discerned the impact of all the new social thought: utilitarianism, rational egotism, capitalism.

The Napoleonic Hero

Raskolnikov is horrified by Luzhin because he sees in him a kind of vulgarization of his own, much bolder theorizing. We learn later in part 3, chapter 5, that Raskolnikov has published an article, "On Crime," which was read by the police inspector Porfiry Petrovich. Its content seems to have convinced Porfiry Petrovich that Raskolnikov is guilty of the crime, but he knows that he lacks evidence and will therefore need to make Raskolnikov confess. He thus engages in mind games with his suspect, mind games that have been thought to inspire a lot of prosecutors' techniques in subsequent crime drama, in different media.

In Raskolnikov's article, he argues that certain "extraordinary men"—a very small percentage (!) of the population—have the right or even the duty to break existing laws, to commit crimes, including "removing" "one, or ten, or a hundred or more people" if that would be the means necessary to achieve their ends. Raskolnikov cites as examples of extraordinary men Newton, Mohammed, and Napoleon. In this theory, people can be murdered with impunity. People cease to be God's creatures, created in the image and likeness of God; they become ciphers, statistics. Raskolnikov's extraordinary man theory is a complete demotion of God. Individual men and especially an extraordinary man like Napoleon can play God. Raskolnikov has persuaded himself that he is one of these Napoleons. And yet, for all his Napoleonic delusions, there is a kernel of compassion in his soul.

Translations

Citations from *Crime and Punishment* are from the translation by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage/Random House, 1993).

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Which part of Raskolnikov pushes him to commit murder and which part makes him recoil from it?
2. On what grounds did new social theories deny the value of acts of charity?

Suggested Reading

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *Crime and Punishment.* Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Vintage/Random House, 1993.

Other Books of Interest

Alter, Robert. *Imagined Cities: Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005.

Bloom, Harold, ed. *Fyodor Dostoevsky's* Crime and Punishment. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003.

Knapp, Liza. *The Annihilation of Inertia: Dostoevsky and Metaphysics.* Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996.

Films

Crime and Punishment. Directed by Lev Kulidzhanov. Screenplay by Nikolai Figurovsky. Russian (Soviet Union), 1969.

Match Point. Directed by Woody Allen. London: BBC Films, 2005.

Lecture 7:
The Power of Compassion in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (second half), trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky.

The Woman Question in *Crime and Punishment*

Consider this . . .

Why is the protagonist of Match Point *reading* Crime and Punishment*? How does Woody Allen's film respond to Dostoevsky's novel?*

This lecture looks first at what in the nineteenth century was known both in Russia and England as the "woman question." *Crime and Punishment* reflects Dostoevsky's own engagement with the woman question in the way it asks what women do when they need to earn money.

Perhaps the most significant step Dostoevsky takes in *Crime and Punishment* is to make readers wonder whether marriages of necessity or convenience (to secure the financial welfare of one's family) amount to prostitution. Dunya's engagement to Luzhin has an aura of social respectability about it, but it is twinned with Sonya's act of selling her body for her family by becoming a prostitute. Readers are forced to ask whether there is much difference in what they do. Dunya and Sonya both "sell themselves." In *Crime and Punishment,* Dostoevsky raises disturbing questions about the courtship plot, which is at the heart of so many proper novels. His intent is not necessarily to indict Dunya, by showing her to be no better than a prostitute. Rather, Dostoevsky is, in his own way, protesting against a culture that thus blurs the boundary between marriage and prostitution.

Crime and Punishment shows limited options for working women, with emphasis on their vulnerability to abuse: washing floors, sewing on collars—even being a governess ends in humiliation. (Lizaveta keeps house for her sister, but her sister beats her; Sonya at first tries to do piece-work as a seamstress, but her employer claims the collars were crooked and takes the work she has done but refuses to pay; Dunya suffers the sexual advances of Svidrigailov and humiliation when she serves as a governess for the family). Some of the working women in *Crime and Punishment* succeed—but at a price. The pawnbroker takes full advantage of her customers' economic desperation. Three German women in the novel, all associated with the sex trade, appear to prosper: the boss of the bordello, whom Raskolnikov meets at the police station; Sonya's boss; and Svidrigailov's landlady, who procures under-age mistresses for Svidrigailov.

As Nina Pelikan Straus and others have noted, a culture of violence to women pervades *Crime and Punishment.* Everywhere Raskolnikov turns, women of all ages—most notably underage—are being abused and violated.

Raskolnikov ends up adding to the victimization of women when he murders the pawnbroker and her sister Lizaveta, who may be pregnant.

Thus, there is no doubt that Raskolnikov, for all the compassion he feels toward the suffering mare in his dream, adds to this violence toward women. And he has certainly taken advantage of his mother's and sister's good will and generosity. But he is increasingly drawn into this feminine world with its very different ethos. Sonya Marmeladov is the ultimate (and extreme) embodiment of this culture and ethos, which is antithetical to all that contributed to making Raskolnikov into a murderer.

Women Who Love (Too?) Much

Raskolnikov is torn about the murder, both before and after he commits it. If Raskolnikov is, as his name in Russian suggests, a split personality, then the split is between (a) the rational, calculating side, his head, which is filled with new social theories, whereby the ends justify the means, and (b) compassion in imitation of God's compassion—by love. This kind of love is also found in the novel.

We may recall that when Raskolnikov first meets Marmeladov in the tavern after Raskolnikov has done his dress rehearsal for the murder, Marmeladov tells Raskolnikov his whole drunken story, noting that "in our time compassion has been outlawed by science as has been happening in England." He also, however, goes on to describe Sonya's loving behavior and how, with no thought for herself, she goes out and becomes a prostitute to help feed her family. Marmeladov preaches the doctrine of pity, love, and compassion. And Marmeladov has found pity, compassion, and forgiveness from his daughter Sonya. He is aware that her kind of forgiveness is nothing short of a miracle and he is convinced that God will forgive her her sins (how she earns her money) because she "pitied her earthly father, a foul drunkard, not shrinking from his beastliness" (part 1, chapter 2). Marmeladov presents his daughter, the fallen woman, as a "woman who has loved much," recalling Luke 7:47. Whether Marmeladov's theological understanding is sound or not does not matter. As soggy as his outlook is, it represents another point of view on these issues, as embodied by Sonya: You don't judge, you don't calculate—you just love.

Governments usually make decisions according to rational theories, with an eye on utilitarian principles, with the general welfare in mind. Social workers also often have to make tough decisions, or advocate "tough love," love according to rational principles, love that weighs the pros and cons. Sonya, however, doesn't operate that way. All she does is love. She doesn't stop to ask herself if she is being the nineteenth-century equivalent of an enabler. Her stepmother, Katerina Ivanovna, however, does wonder whether it's worth giving Marmeladov another chance: Won't he just go drink again? Marmeladov's speech highlights the conflict between faith-inspired love and new and rational social thought with ties to science. Modern social thought, which was making inroads even in Petersburg in the 1860s, would criticize Sonya for "loving too much," but *Crime and Punishment* is full of intimations that Sonya's love is a kind of Christian love that, according to some theological views, you can't have "too much" of.

How does Raskolnikov respond? We've already seen him being buffeted about, alternating between his rational self and his compassionate self. As the novel progresses, however, he is drawn more and more to Sonya and her world(view). But he meets with it elsewhere in Petersburg as well. After he has been horsewhipped by a driver, a mother and child give him a coin, "in Christ's name." Their act of pity is an expression of the kind of love that Sonya embodies. But it turns out that they take him for a beggar, which he's not. And does their act help him? Does it alleviate his suffering? He ends up tossing the coin into the River Neva, and feels as though he'd cut himself off from humanity as if with scissors. At this point, you may agree with Luzhin and Lebezyatnikov and say that compassion really ought to be outlawed.

But Dostoevsky doesn't stop there. In part 2, Raskolnikov is out wandering in his post-murder daze and happens to be there when Marmeladov has been hit by a carriage—he really is one of those drunks the cabdriver who hit Raskolnikov was complaining about being hard to avoid. We again see Raskolnikov interceding with a spontaneous act of compassion (he takes Marmeladov home and offers money). He simply does what his heart tells him to in that moment.

Raskolnikov is profoundly moved by all that he has witnessed since bringing the dying Marmeladov home. His wife Katerina Ivanovna is left asking how she will bury her husband and how she will feed her children the next day. As he is leaving, Raskolnikov gives Katerina Ivanovna twenty rubles. When Raskolnikov steps in like that, he acts out of a spontaneous and free sense of compassion, and not because, rationally speaking, he is responsible.

When Raskolnikov gives money to the Marmeladovs, his gesture recalls that of the mother and child who gave him the coin on the bridge. It's typical of Dostoevsky's mode of composition to have one encounter echo a prior one. Dostoevsky often takes the same components and shuffles them about. In both cases, a carriage accident figures in. Raskolnikov was whipped for being in the way by a driver who mentioned that it would be easy to run over drunks like him. Raskolnikov is not actually drunk, but this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when the drunken Marmeladov ends up under the hooves of a carriage. Raskolnikov, in leaving the money for the victims, echoes what the mother and child had done for him. Raskolnikov, at that point, responded by tossing the coin into the water. But now he is returning the kindness.

His behavior here suggests that although he tossed away the actual token of pity and compassion, their gesture was not lost on him. He is responding in kind! As he goes down the stairs from the Marmeladov family's room, he is like a man condemned to death "who is suddenly and unexpectedly granted a pardon."

A young girl, called Polenka (or Polechka), one of Katerina Ivanovna's children, comes running after him. As Raskolnikov guesses, she has been sent by her sister Sonya. Her mission is to find out the name and address of Raskolnikov and invite him to the funeral. The scene is carefully choreographed: The child stops on the step above Raskolnikov (to make man and child more equal). And, indeed, the scene is about them meeting, face to face. Dostoevsky places them outside of the temporal world, outside of normal time and in an apocalyptic or heavenly time. Gone are the divisions that

normally structure and determine social interactions in the world. Gone is the division between adult and child and male and female that ordinarily would determine their interaction and keep them from reaching each other as they do. Then Polenka asks Raskolnikov his name. Before he answers, he asks her all sorts of questions, and ends up hearing about how she loves and prays for her sister, Sonya. He asks her whether she will love him, too, to which she responds by embracing him. The scene is remarkable in many respects: for its intimacy without any erotic edge. Their embrace is intended to evoke Christian loving-kindness.

After leaving, Raskolnikov seeks out his friend Razumikhin.

> "I'm a little dizzy, only that's not the point, but I feel so sad, so sad!—like a woman . . . really!"

Dostoevsky seems to suggest that Raskolnikov associated his vulnerability with the feminine. And it would seem that this is a positive feeling, although Raskolnikov will not let himself feel this way for long.

From this point on, Raskolnikov shuttles back and forth between his family, Porfiry Petrovich and the police station, Sonya, and the villain Svidrigailov, who has also just come to town and who by Dostoevskian coincidence rents a room from a certain Madame Resslich. She lives right next to the Kapernaumov family from whom Sonya rents her room.

Ultimately, Raskolnikov turns to Sonya, the suffering daughter, devoted sister turned prostitute, and to Svidrigailov, who is rumored to have murdered his wife and others, to have violated young girls, at least one of whom has committed suicide, and to have humiliated and nearly ruined Dunya. Dostoevsky presents Sonya, for all her sin or because of it—that is, despite her shame as a prostitute—as the embodiment of a pure form of love: It's meek, unconditional, and forgiving. As Raskolnikov notices, it's "boundless." She has sacrificed herself out of love for her stepsiblings; she has forgiven her father for everything and her stepmother as well. She rents a room from a poor family named Kapernaumov, whose name suggests that her true home is Capernaum in Jesus' time.

The other influence in Raskolnikov's life is Svidrigailov, who fascinates Raskolnikov. Whereas Luzhin used reason and theory to justify his selfish behavior, Svidrigailov just does evil. He has left behind traditional ethics, and he has not bothered to replace them with newfangled theories about the general welfare. God just doesn't exist for him. Svidrigailov fascinates Raskolnikov, but, ultimately, Sonya wins out.

Svidrigailov and Raskolnikov meet in a last interview. This amounts to Svidrigailov showing Raskolnikov that it is possible to live without God, to play God, to judge who will live and who will die. Is Svidrigailov truly able to live beyond good and evil? This question is open to debate in the novel. Not long before killing himself, Svidrigailov makes a last attempt to blackmail Dunya into surrendering to him—and in the process nearly gets shot by her, so deep is her hatred. When he finally kills himself, after a disturbing nightmare in which his violation of children comes back to haunt him, he may be killing himself because he has gone beyond God and wants to demonstrate his willingness to exercise some ultimate decision about whether he himself

should live or die. Or his suicide could amount to a recognition of despair on his part: Dunya's inability to love him may have affected him. Perhaps even Svidrigailov needs human love after all.

In the end, Raskolnikov confesses.

Epilogue: Repentance and Redemption?

One of the major questions that this novel provokes relates to the epilogue. Many readers and critics have protested: "Who is Dostoevsky kidding in suggesting that Raskolnikov could ever repent of his crime and be born again?" In prison camp, we see further evidence of the rational, judgmental side: Raskolnikov justifies his crime, perhaps only suggesting that he himself wasn't quite up to it, but that maybe some stronger and truly "extraordinary" man could have pulled off the murder with impunity. Ultimately, however, Raskolnikov has a dream that seems to suggest that all such theorizing about who should live and who should die is wrong. There are no extraordinary men is the conclusion he comes to. All are subject to divine law.

Dostoevsky times Raskolnikov's "conversion" so that it coincides with Lent and Easter, suggesting that he, too, may be born again. Playing a role in his conversion from a distance—from outside the prison gates and by proxy—is Sonya, who brings him the New Testament that he keeps under his pillow. As the epilogue ends, we are told of Raskolnikov's illness and of his change after the illness. Dostoevsky then gives signs of an upsurge of love that Raskolnikov feels for Sonya. Is this motivated? Yes, for all along we have certainly seen him capable of love of this sort. Will it last? Dostoevsky leaves this up to faith. As the novel ends, however, Dostoevsky has Raskolnikov pull out from under his pillow the New Testament. He doesn't read it yet, but there are seven years left.

Translations

Citations from *Crime and Punishment* are from the translation by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage/Random House, 1993).

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. How does *Crime and Punishment* address “the woman question”?
2. Why is Raskolnikov drawn to Sonya?
3. Is the epilogue of the novel believable?

Suggested Reading

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *Crime and Punishment*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Vintage/Random House, 1992.

Other Books of Interest

Straus, Nina Pelikan. *Dostoevsky and the Woman Question.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994.

Lecture 8:
Leo Tolstoy and the Search for Meaning in Life

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Leo Tolstoy's *A Confession and Other Religious Writings* and A.N. Wilson's *Tolstoy: A Biography.*

Tolstoy's Early Life

Consider this . . .

The "crisis" that Tolstoy underwent in the late 1870s arose when Tolstoy ceased diverting himself from ultimate questions and faced them more directly. But these questions had been lurking in his consciousness all along.

Leo Tolstoy, Count Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy, lived from 1828 until 1910. He was not only a great novelist, but increasingly toward the end of his life, he became a voice of morality that echoed throughout Russia and far beyond. For Tolstoy, being a novelist was just one of the things he did. Among the other callings he considered or tried his hand at were diplomat, lawyer, soldier, gentleman farmer, pianist, teacher and pedagogical reformer, wannabe peasant, linguist, paterfamilias, arbiter of the peace for newly freed peasants, beekeeper, dairy-cow breeder, hunter, vegetarian activist, advocate of sexual abstinence and zero-population-growth, biblical scholar, sage, pilgrim, pacifist, anarchist, teetotaler, and opponent of the death penalty. Tolstoy had an active, logical mind, which made him attuned to, and troubled by, contradictions.

Tolstoy was born the fourth of four sons (a younger sister was born after him) on the family estate of Yasnaya Polyana, which he subsequently inherited and which he loved beyond all measure. He lived there for most of his life, raised his children there, and worked the land: It was the constant in his life. Tolstoy's childhood was marked by death. His mother died when he was a toddler, leaving a void he spent his life trying to fill. Tolstoy's father died suddenly in 1837 when Tolstoy was about eight or nine. Tolstoy's most legendary childhood memory is of playing a game with his brothers during which they would make a tent and huddle together seeking solace. Tolstoy's older brother Nikolai claimed that they were being "ant brothers." Tolstoy scholars have suggested that this idea derived from Tolstoy's brother having heard about the "Moravian Brethren" and conflated the word for "Moravian" with the Russian word for "ant." The Brethren, who emphasized love of Christ and faith based on direct contact with the Gospels, fit the iconoclastic Tolstoy. This game of ant-brothers left an imprint on Tolstoy: this brotherhood of orphans clinging to each other in love. In essence, his life may be seen as a crusade to re-create that aura of a brotherly love.

Repeatedly, from the autobiographical memoir to the fictional retelling, Tolstoy told the story of his boyhood falls from religious faith into a spiritual void and from innocence into sexual depravity. Over time, Tolstoy's childhood

belief in Russian Orthodoxy was eroded: Tolstoy recalled an announcement by a family friend that there was no God. Tolstoy, who was ten at the time, and his older brothers were "enthralled" by this idea. As Tolstoy tells it, peer pressure (or brother pressure) played a role not only in his loss of faith but also in his loss of virginity to a prostitute at an early age.

Adolescence and Early Adulthood

Tolstoy enrolled in the University of Kazan, but was bored by his teachers. Tolstoy dropped out and set about educating himself. His first serious bout of diary-writing, which remained a passion, habit, even addiction, through most of his long life, dates to a stay in a clinic while he was being treated for venereal disease. The next phase of his life featured gambling, more womanizing, music, and attempting to find a career or something to do with himself. (His gambling debts were so bad at one point that he had to sell the main part of the family house at Yasnaya Polyana to raise money.) Tolstoy joined the army, participating in the Siege of Sevastopol during the futile but destructive Crimean War.

From his experience he produced *Sevastopol Sketches.* Real war, according to Tolstoy, was chaos. And the soldiers rather than the commanders were the true heroes. The Tolstoyan view of war, first presented in *Sevastopol Sketches,* then writ larger in *War and Peace,* has gained great currency, as you can see in many novels about Vietnam. One of the narrative techniques used by Tolstoy is known as "estrangement" (or "defamiliarization"): describing something without recognizing it and without assigning a label to it. For example, after describing a truce after a fierce battle, which resulted in a pile of stinking corpses, Tolstoy goes on to note that rather than recognize the absurdity, soldiers and officers from both sides, who have been enjoying camaraderie during the respite from fighting, will the next day start to kill each other again: "The rags of white cloth will be put away . . . and once again the blood of the innocent will flow." By calling the white flags that signify a truce simply "rags of white cloth," Tolstoy defamiliarizes these flags, presents them from an estranged point of view, which catches the reader, forcing him or her to ponder how arbitrary war—and other human endeavors—in fact are.

Even before writing about Sevastopol, Tolstoy began to publish his trilogy, *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth,* which offers a fictionalized account of the coming of age of a young member of the gentry. The climax of *Childhood* is the death of the hero's mother.

Knowing that the Emancipation of Serfs was in the offing, Tolstoy came up with his own plan for liberating the serfs at Yasnaya Polyana. Why wait for the government? But to his chagrin and profound annoyance, his serfs, assuming that he was trying to swindle them, refused his offer, saying they would wait until the government decree and then live with the terms of that offer. As discussed in the introduction, serfs received only modest grants of land and had trouble paying the indemnity. Out of concern with the plight of peasants, Tolstoy set up a school at Yasnaya Polyana, remarkable for its progressive attitude.

Disillusioned at home, Tolstoy traveled to Paris, where he hobnobbed with Turgenev, took in the museums and the sights, and then witnessed a guillo-

tining that disturbed him profoundly. Years later, in his *Confession,* Tolstoy would name this experience as the one that made him want nothing more to do with civilization or progress if it justified such an immoral act. Tolstoy vowed always to follow his heart, which told him, for example, that an execution is immoral. Throughout his life, Tolstoy often found that his conscience put him at odds with the activities of the government at home.

During this period, starting in 1858 and ending with his marriage in 1862, Tolstoy had an affair at Yasnaya Polyana with a married peasant, Aksinya Bazykina, who bore him a son. His diaries record him marveling that his feelings for Aksinya are not those simply of a "stag" but those of a "husband."

Distressed by turning thirty, Tolstoy proposed to the eighteen-year-old Sophia Andreevna Behrs, known as Sonya. She was the daughter of a family friend. They settled into married life. Tolstoy, like Levin in *Anna Karenina,* gave his bride his bachelor diaries to read; these diaries shocked and tormented her. Tolstoy, no doubt out of respect for his new wife, put Aksinya and their child into the background of his life, without seeming to accept paternal responsibility. We don't really know what Tolstoy felt, although he is on record, very late in life, as having expressed remorse for his behavior with Aksinya.

Tolstoy's marriage has been subjected to a great deal of scrutiny, in part because each spouse left behind written chronicles of their long marriage. Tolstoy clearly felt the strong desire to create for himself on his estate with his new, and constantly growing, family some kind of realm apart from the rest of the world, a haven from society and from the temporal order, both of which Tolstoy considered quite corrupt. And Tolstoy felt strongly compelled to carry on the legacy of his family, to preserve his patrimony—in the sense of the land, the traditions, and the values—and pass it along to his children. Tolstoy felt this sense of responsibility for family legacy in part because two of his brothers had died young, and his remaining brother lived with and then married a gypsy mistress; his younger sister's marriage had been disastrous and she herself was involved in a love affair.

The family legacy, thus, was in his hands. His wife appears to have tried very hard to conform to her husband's expectations of how she should be and of what their family life should be. Tolstoy took joy in life at Yasnaya Polyana, with his wife and their ever-growing nuclear family, their extended family, but even then his feelings were mercurial.

War and Peace

During the early period of his marriage, Tolstoy set about writing what became *War and Peace.* Tolstoy knew he wanted to write about national identity and about the contemporary state of his class, the Russian nobility, but then determined that to understand the current state of the nobility, it was necessary to look back in time to previous generations. That's how he came to the decision to write about the events that led up to the War of 1812 and the aftermath. Here we have a typical Tolstoyan dynamic. He was always very sensitive to the interconnectedness of human events, both through time (what we feel today depends a lot on what we experienced yesterday) and in relationship with others (how we act today doesn't just depend on us, but on others around us).

In *War and Peace,* Tolstoy pits Russia, her people, her land, her culture, her Moscow, her spirit, and her winter, against Napoleon. Napoleon loses. In this respect, Tolstoy used the pre-made plot of history. But in most other ways he tries to undermine prevailing views about history and about the role of plot in narrative. One of his major concerns throughout *War and Peace* is to show that what happened was not the result of the actions, the genius, and the will of great men, whether Napoleon or Tsar Alexander, or anyone else. Tolstoy posits a model of history that takes into account the myriads of tiny, infinitesimal acts of all men.

Most of the significant characters in *War and Peace* belong to the Russian gentry. Tolstoy was aware that his obsessive concern with the gentry might appear as unliberal, but it didn't bother him. He was unabashed about his desire to focus on his social group, to tell the story of his fathers and forefathers. The cast of characters seems overwhelming, but most belong to a handful of gentry families. The fact that these family constellations are so central to the plot (in the larger, overarching chronicle of history) reveals part of Tolstoy's purpose. The various families—the Rostovs, the Kuragins, the Bolkonskys, the Bezukhovs—are linked together by mutual friends, distant kinship, common class interests, and political and social connections. And, because these families include a large number of unmarried young people, by the end of the novel the families are even more closely knit together.

War and Peace, despite all the suffering that the war brings, is often thought of as being more upbeat than many of Tolstoy's works. As it draws to a close, there may seem to be cause to celebrate. Napoleon has been sent packing. *War and Peace* seems to end happily; those who have survived have married well and produced lovely children. But, as Virginia Woolf once noted, happiness in Tolstoy is never all that happy: There is always what she calls a "scorpion" lurking. At any moment, deeply disturbing existential questions can come up, questions like "Why live?" that make happy endings rather precarious. Throughout *War and Peace,* Tolstoy forces his characters to look at life and all its occupations from a point of view that takes death into account. Tolstoy shows, time and time again, either as a soldier approaches the enemy line and the certain death it promises, or as a prisoner faces the firing squad, or as a woman faces childbirth, that the categories that are usually used to structure life and provide its meaning start to blur. In general, Tolstoy repeatedly sets up binary oppositions—such as war and peace—and shows how the categories blur.

Crisis and Late Life

The late 1870s is usually described as a period of crisis in Tolstoy's life. Indeed, thereafter, he renounced many of the parts of his life that used to occupy him and give his life structure, if not meaning: his fiction, for starters. During this period, Tolstoy started to complain about his marriage and family life and ask whether it was an obstacle to his living a life that was more in keeping with the teaching of Christ. During this period Tolstoy recognized this teaching as the only thing that could give his life meaning. He would bluntly criticize institutional religion:

> I witnessed members of the Church, her teachers, monks, and ascetics condoning the killing of helpless, lost youths. As I turned my attention to all that is done by people who profess Christianity, I was horrified. (*Confession,* 1988, p. 76)

In 1882, Tolstoy participated in a Moscow census-taking mission, during which he witnessed urban poverty. Over the next few years he wrote a long treatise called *What Then Should We Do?*, where he outlined a program whereby the gap between rich and poor would be eliminated if members of his class would stop exploiting the poor and start doing real labor themselves. Women, argued Tolstoy, should embrace their roles as mothers.

Sexuality so disturbed Tolstoy that he sought the means to domesticate and contain it. One way of doing this was to have women tied to the cycles of pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding, because this put them out of sexual circulation or halted sexual activity at least temporarily. Tolstoy argued that sexual relations during pregnancy and lactation should be avoided. By the early 1890s, Tolstoy's views on sex and family life took what may seem to be a radical development: He went from appealing to wives to embrace motherhood (and bear many children, this being the only way of redeeming sex) to advocating abstinence, even in marriage.

In the later years, Tolstoy wrote out on a number of issues: nonviolent resistance, Christ's teachings, vegetarianism, chastity, and abstention from tobacco and alcohol. He was critical of the state, whose policies and power were founded on violence. He was also outspoken about certain practices and dogmas of the Russian Orthodox Church, and was eventually excommunicated. But many of his followers were inspired by his interpretation and formulation of the teaching of Jesus and by Tolstoy's efforts to practice what Jesus preached.

In the last decade or so of his life, his family life became ever more contentious. Many of his policies seemed to undermine the family life that Tolstoy and his wife had worked so hard to establish; his wife felt betrayed and humiliated. Finally, Tolstoy did what he had been talking about doing: he packed a few things and set off from home, in search of his sister who was living in a convent at the time. He fell ill with pneumonia along the way and lay sick for a week in a train station. Members of his family came to be with him, but his entourage did not let his wife in to his bedside until after he lost consciousness. His illness and death attracted enormous attention from the media and public. Tolstoy's body was returned to Yasnaya Polyana for burial.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. How did Tolstoy respond to having been an orphan?
2. What are some of the contradictions in Tolstoy's life and how did he react to them?
3. What caused Tolstoy to question his marriage and family life?

Suggested Reading

Tolstoy, Leo. *A Confession and Other Religious Writings.* Trans. Jane Kentish. New York: Penguin, 1987.

Wilson, A.N. *Tolstoy: A Biography.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001.

Other Books of Interest

Gustafson, Richard. *Leo Tolstoy: Resident and Stranger: A Study in Fiction and Theology.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Orwin, Donna T., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Tolstoy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Lecture 9:
Entering the Labyrinth of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (parts 1 and 2).

Opening Up *Anna Karenina*

Consider this . . .

The novel Anna Karenina *contains so much more than the story of Anna Karenina. Tolstoy is thus forcing the reader to see her life in a broader context. How does it change our understanding?*

Before we begin, we need to deal with three preliminaries: the title, epigraph, and opening sentence. The title promises a story about one person by the name of "Anna Karenina." In fact, we learn little about her past. She shares the stage with a number of other characters: Stiva Oblonsky (Anna's brother); the three Shcherbatsky sisters—Dolly (Stiva's wife), Nathalie, and notably Kitty; Karenin (Anna's husband); Vronsky (Anna's eventual lover); and above all Levin, who is so important he almost seems to be the hero of the novel. What is Tolstoy up to? He may in fact be playing on our expectations that the novel will be about one person, Anna, and trying to wean us from the focus on one individual. Tolstoy wants us to understand that what matters is relatedness, that one has to take the whole social, familial fabric into account, rather than simply consider one's actions as determining the course of one's own individual pursuit of happiness.

This ruse with the title is part of what Tolstoy (in a letter) called the novel's "hidden architectonics." In another letter, Tolstoy declared that if you try to extract one thought from the novel, it loses its meaning and is "terribly degraded by being taken out by itself from that linking in which it is found." Everything is interrelated in this novel; the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. He goes on to describe *Anna Karenina* as an "endless labyrinth of linkages," and this "labyrinth of linkages" is for him "the essence of art."

After the title comes the novel's epigraph: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." Read in one way, with emphasis on "vengeance," the epigraph promises moral order: Sin will be repaid by vengeance. Read another way, with emphasis on the pronouns "mine" and "I," it emphasizes the role of an agent. This puzzling epigraph has a biblical ring, and in fact it traces to a letter of Paul, who, paraphrasing Deuteronomy 32:35, was advising the Romans not to take justice into their own hands. In either reading, the epigraph seems to promise an orderly universe in which sin is repaid by an agent, presumably God.

At the same time, the sin of adultery inevitably recalls another biblical passage (John 8:1–11), where Jesus tells the scribes and Pharisees who want

him to judge an adulteress that whosoever of them is without sin should cast the first stone. Thereupon the scribes and Pharisees are "convicted by their own consciences." Jesus does not judge the woman but tells her to "Go and sin no more."

It is not at all clear which reading—that God will punish or that human beings should refrain from condemning each other—Tolstoy intended. In any event, throughout the novel, the question of judgment and vengeance hangs heavy over Anna's adulterous affair.

With these two preliminaries out of the way, we come upon the third, the famous first sentence of the novel: "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." Thereafter we learn that "Everything was in confusion in the Oblonsky household." The cause of the chaos seems obvious: Stiva has been having an affair with the family's former French governess. But, as Tolstoy tells it, the chaos stems from Dolly's response to finding out. She locks herself in her room and forgets her children and domestic responsibilities; the children play dangerous games (involving a railroad!) and go hungry. When Dolly finally emerges to set things in order, her first act is to ask: "Did you send for some fresh milk?" The question reminds us of the centrality, for Tolstoy, of the maternal role for women. He has little use for Dolly's feelings of humiliation and jealousy. For Tolstoy, the root of the problem is sex, and jealousy is a reaction to sexual competition. She is allowing her sexual feelings—not so much passion as jealousy—to overwhelm her being and to get in the way of her maternal duties, which are many and pressing.

All the characters seem more sympathetic to Stiva than to Dolly. Why? It's not really clear. Maybe Tolstoy is showing the irresistible charm of Oblonsky; or maybe it's the double standard that makes everyone side with Oblonsky against Dolly. At one point, we learn in a throwaway line that Stiva Oblonsky likes to make Darwin jokes. One goes like this: When we (the Russian nobility) trace our ancestors, why stop at Riurik (the Scandinavian ancestor of the best of the Russian nobility), why not the monkey? In Stiva's world, if man is descended from a monkey, then he's not to blame if he goes out and has sex like a monkey.

Dolly, by contrast, conquers her sexual self. In the short term, she emerges from her bedroom and begins to function. This seems to be Tolstoy's message: Sexual feelings shouldn't get in the way of domestic life, and motherhood for a woman should be the end-all and be-all of existence.

The Tolstoyan Typology of Love

In the opening lecture, it was suggested that Russian classics are about love and death. Love is not just sexual love, but other kinds of love: family love, love of neighbor, love of God, and so forth. Tolstoy is exploring the nature of love and the big question can be seen in terms of what Tolstoy called the "tragedy of the bedroom"—can it be avoided? Is there any way to engage in sexual love without having it become terribly tragic? Is family love a solution? Where does God fit in? And what about neighbor, extended family, and so forth? Tolstoy was obsessed with finding the right mix of loves, the right balance.

In part 1, the major characters are in Moscow, for one reason or another. Levin has come thinking he will propose to Kitty. His mission is motivated by sexual or marital love. But, while in Moscow, he is challenged to show brotherly love to his profligate dying brother. At the same time, Anna comes to Moscow, not on a sexual mission, but on a mission of sisterly love, summoned by her philandering brother to fix the crisis in the Oblonsky household. This is the first time she has been separated from her eight-year-old son, whom she loves intensely. Indeed, Dolly, ever wise about human relations, thinks there is something unnatural in Anna's playing the role of devoted mother. Arguably, Anna lavishes so much love on her son because she lacks passion for her husband. Anna thus arrives on the scene seeming to be maternal and sisterly: she is the beloved aunt, whose lap all the nieces and nephews want to sit on.

What happens to Anna in Moscow? We see her for the first time at the train station where she is met by her brother. Vronsky is there to meet his mother, who has been riding in the train compartment with Anna listening to her talk about her son. At the station, Anna meets Vronsky. It seems to be a case of love at first sight.

Their meeting is laced with death. A railroad worker has been killed on the track, in a probable suicide. He leaves behind a widow and family. Here we have a case where Tolstoy asks what the suffering of others has to do with us. How are we to respond? This is a variation on the question that Dostoevsky raised in *Crime and Punishment,* where Sonya lived in devotion to an unworthy father and even Raskolnikov engaged in acts of compassion: Recall the time when Raskolnikov comes across Marmeladov right after he has been hit by a carriage, carries him home, and leaves money for his widow and children, who are all but strangers to him.

How do Tolstoy's heroes respond to the tragedy they behold? The Oblonsky siblings, Stiva and Anna, are moved to tears. Stiva and Vronsky view the gruesome remains. Anna asks, referring to the widow left behind: "Couldn't one do anything for her?" Vronsky leaves money with the stationmaster for the widow and family. Vronsky seems to be following the age-old ethical imperative to be charitable to the widow, the orphan, and the poor. Why? We the readers sense that this act of charity was not done for the love of one's neighbor, but for the love of Anna—an erotic passion that has hit him, much as the train hit the man: suddenly and irrevocably. Thus, his act of apparent compassion is in actuality motivated by sexual love. And Anna knows.

Anna orchestrates a reconciliation between her brother and sister-in-law. But there is a sudden change in Anna. Anna goes into the hall looking for an album with a picture of her son—she "longed to look at a photograph of him"—when the doorbell rings and Vronsky enters. We sense that her maternal love is about to be supplanted by sexual feelings for Vronsky. As if to prove the point, Tolstoy shows us the ball (where she dances the *mazurka* with Vronsky) and afterwards the domestic scene, where her nieces and nephews no longer clamor to sit on her lap.

The revolution in Anna's heart becomes all the more irrevocable when she returns home, with Vronsky stalking her on the train. She gives way, surrenders her will, to the passion, even though it will take another year before she yields to his sexual advances and consummates the love. But even as she

emerges from the train and greets her husband, her heart is different. While it was clear that she never felt much passion for him, her feelings for Vronsky have so altered her that she now feels a kind of physical repulsion, which focuses, in another famous Tolstoyan detail, on Karenin's ears: "Oh, my God! Why do his ears look like that?" Not only does she experience this erotic revulsion against her husband—to be expected, perhaps—but she feels disappointed in Seryozha, her son. A certain volatility has been introduced into her now adulterous heart.

Cows and Horses

In the end of part 1, Tolstoy establishes a kind of diptych contrasting Levin and Vronsky, both suitors of Kitty's. Each returns home to his bachelor life, thereby revealing a great deal about who they are. (Externals in the Tolstoyan scheme do this.) Levin returns to his family estate, of Pokrovskoe, to live in wordless intimacy with his old peasant nanny and a beloved dog, a female, named "Laska," which means caress. We then see Levin fussing over his prize milk cow Pava, who has just given birth. Levin, though tender and loving, feels excluded from the mother-child dyad, all the more so when the mother is suckling the babe. He seems to be acting out his fantasies of family life. As we read about Levin, "He was so far from conceiving of love for woman apart from marriage that he actually pictured to himself first the family, and only secondarily the woman who would give him a family" (part 1, chapter 27).

Meanwhile, Vronsky returns to his apartment in Petersburg, where his friend Petritsky has been trysting with his married mistress, the Baroness Shilton. When Vronsky arrives home, he catches them letting a newfangled coffee pot boil over, making a mess on the carpet and the Baroness's dress. There is a wantonness about their behavior and a lack of domestic order, which recalls Oblonsky's profligate behavior and disregard for preserving the patrimony of his family.

Vronsky's relations with his racehorse Frou-Frou couldn't be more different from Levin and his Pava. On the day of the steeplechase, Vronsky and his horse fall; Vronsky makes a "clumsy movement" that breaks her back, but he kicks her in the belly trying to urge her up. She has to be killed. Vronsky's relations with his prize racehorse Frou-Frou seem eerily evocative (or prefigurative) of his relations with Anna, just as Levin is acting out with Pava the fantasy he would like to live with Kitty. As Vronsky kicks Frou-Frou, it almost feels as though he's kicking Anna in the belly. And indeed, this is the very day that he learns that Anna is in fact pregnant with his child. The horror is thus enhanced.

All of this is woven into what Tolstoy proudly referred to as the "labyrinth of linkages," which gives *Anna Karenina* its artistic structure. As readers, we are invited to make connections and draw conclusions, based not always on logical, linear, rational thought processes, but rather on leaps of fancy, flashes of insight, moments where our minds connect disparate phenomena and see patterns of association (of similarity, of contiguity, of opposition).

Now, lest life seem too idyllic back in Levin's cowshed, we must ask whether his treatment of Pava is, similarly, telling of his understanding of Kitty and her vocation. Or, to put it bluntly, can a woman ever be more than a milk cow for

Tolstoy? (And his choice of barnyard animal to raise is surely telling.) If Vronsky shows total disregard for the maternal function or mystery of femininity, is that all Tolstoy's hero Levin sees?

The symbolism of cows and horses is woven throughout the rest of the novel as well (see part 6, especially). Later, when Anna gives birth to Vronsky's child, this babe, too, goes without her milk. Cows also figure into the Oblonsky family's domestic economy. Recall that the Oblonsky children were not fed their milk in the opening scene. In part 3, when Dolly takes her children to their family estate for the summer, which Stiva has supposedly gotten ready, she finds that things are in disarray. Among a handful of problems, none of the nine milk cows is giving milk. Once again the poor Oblonsky children are going without their milk. Dolly deflects Levin's offer of help and scorns his expertise. For her, it's simple: If you want Spotty and Whiteflake to produce more milk, then you simply convince the cook not to give the family's kitchen scraps to the laundress's cow, but keep them in the family where they belong. The logic is sound and sensible. And it's an allegory for how she wishes her husband would behave: Instead of scattering what belongs in the family elsewhere, he should keep it all in the family. Again we see Tolstoy's "labyrinth of linkages": Dolly's commonsense attitude toward farming reflects her wisdom in regard to family.

Tolstoy mines all aspects of life with meaning. And what he creates is not just a symbolic system. For him, as we will see, great stock is placed in making the right choices in the mundane details of life. What you do in the cowshed or in the stables matters. Having, for example, the right attitude toward horses transfers into having the right attitude toward women, or toward one's neighbor. And that's not meant to be demeaning: Tolstoy did believe that all these things link mysteriously and gloriously, in part because of the presence of God. (See Gustafson and Morson for discussion of how Tolstoy imbues the mundane details of real life with higher meaning.) If, however, the presence of God comes into doubt, then all his labyrinth of linkages can become a haunted place.

Translations

Passages from *Anna Karenina* are cited from the Constance Garnett translation, as revised by Leonard J. Kent and Nina Berberova (New York: Modern Library, 2000). Garnett's translation also may be found in a version edited by Amy Mandelker (Barnes and Noble, 2003). Also recommended is the translation by Pevear and Volokhonsky, which is widely available.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What does the epigraph mean and what questions does it raise about the action of the novel?
2. How is Stiva Oblonsky's affair different from his sister's?
3. In what ways does Tolstoy contrast Vronsky and Levin? What do the differences reveal?

Suggested Reading

Tolstoy, Leo. *Anna Karenina.* Trans. Constance Garnett, revised by Leonard J. Kent and Nina Berberova. New York: Modern Library, 2000.

Other Books of Interest

Alexandrov, Vladimir. *Limits to Interpretation: The Meanings of* Anna Karenina. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.

Gustafson, Richard. *Leo Tolstoy: Resident and Stranger: A Study in Fiction and Theology.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Morson, Gary Saul. "The Daily Miracle: Teaching the Ideas of *Anna Karenina.*" *Approaches to Teaching Anna Karenina.* Pp. 60–66. Eds. Liza Knapp and Amy Mandelker. New York: MLA, 2003.

Steiner, George. *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky: An Essay in the Old Criticism.* 2nd ed. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996.

Tanner, Tony. *Adultery in the Novel: Contract and Transgression.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.

Turner, C.J.G. *A Karenina Companion.* Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1993.

Lecture 10:
Anna Karenina and the Tangled Skein of Plot

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (parts 2 through 4).

Parallel and Intersecting Plots

Consider this . . .

Many critics have complained that Anna Karenina *lacks unity and that the plots remain separate. Yet Tolstoy believed that the novel was held together by an elaborate "labyrinth of linkages." As you read, try to discern the hidden structure that binds the novel together in an artistic whole.*

In *Anna Karenina,* Tolstoy works with two distinct plot lines: on the one hand, Kitty and Levin; on the other, the Karenins and Vronsky. Arguably there is a third, more minor, plot as well: the Oblonskys. Up to a point, the development of plots in *Anna Karenina* is consistent with the theory of plot laid out long ago by Aristotle (in his *Poetics*), who saw plots as first tangling and then untangling (like yarn). That certainly happens individually with the two main plots of *Anna Karenina.* But Tolstoy does more. Even as he's knotting and unknotting one plotline, each one a separate strand, he is braiding them together. *Anna Karenina* is driven by the development of each plot, but its real meaning lies in the way the two (or three) plots are made to play off against each other and get tangled up with each other.

Kitty Desexed

After being jilted by Vronsky, Kitty falls ill. Although no overt sex occurred between her and Vronsky, perhaps not even a kiss, Tolstoy wants to suggest that her whole organism has been violated by courtship—or seduction—and then rejection. To add to the insult, she has to endure more violation at the hands of the doctors who examine her. She certainly has no further appetite for romance and sex as she recovers. Once the belle of the ball, she no longer enjoys being seen in a ball gown. She can't stand the notion of being evaluated by suitors: "It seems to me they're taking stock of me and summing me up." Tolstoy has to rid her of all sexual feeling in order to make her receptive to other modes of love.

We then see Kitty in the German spa of Soden, where Kitty becomes friends with one Varenka, who acts as a kind of unofficial sister of mercy to the poor and sick Russians of Soden. Under the spell of Varenka, Kitty reads the gospels and ministers to the sick.

Kitty sets about imitating Varenka, to the horror of her mother, who senses that Kitty is overdoing it. But Kitty thinks, "one could not talk about overdoing

it where Christianity was concerned." A tension arises because Kitty's new-found religion and social convention conflict. Incidentally, Kitty's dilemma here—the conflict between a life of compassionate love carried to its logical extreme and convention—is the same that Tolstoy would agonize over more and more in his later life.

For this brief period in part 2, Kitty almost gets a brave new plot, in which suitors and balls would be replaced by feminine friendship, the gospels, and sickrooms. Tolstoy, however, soon puts her back on track . . . toward altar, conjugal bed, and nursery. The trigger, ironically, is sex. The wife of a painter whom Kitty has been nursing gets jealous of Kitty's attention to her husband. Here Tolstoy seems to suggest that the expression of compassionate love gets complicated by sex. This is a common syndrome for Tolstoy. In fact, one of his major rationales for not having women outside of the home was that he had trouble envisioning men and women working together without sex taking over the workplace. (Remember Oblonsky and that French governess.)

And so Kitty's attempt to find "interest in life, a dignity in life—apart from the worldly relations of girls with men" comes to naught. It is remarkable that this novel gestures at an idea that is central to *Crime and Punishment*: Courtship and marriage amount to hawking goods. *Anna Karenina* is now another major novel in the Russian tradition that exposes the ugly underbelly of the marriage plot, the staple of so many "proper" novels.

Levin and Peasant Life

In parts 2 and 3, Levin's story parallels Kitty's. He attempts to find meaning in life outside of marriage and family. He develops a new economic system, turning land over to peasant family cooperatives. He even dreams of marrying a peasant woman, so devastated was he by Kitty's rejection. He, too, seems to want nothing more to do with the traditional gentry marriage plot.

In a young peasant couple, Levin witnesses a new model of healthy love. Levin watches the couple load hay into a cart and asks of Parmenych (a voice of peasant wisdom) if they have children (they have been married almost two years), to which Parmenych replies: "Children indeed! Why, for over a year he was innocent as a babe himself . . ." Tolstoy describes the wife working (part 3, chapter 11), "First, she gathered it together, stuck the fork into it, then, with a rapid, supple movement, leaned the whole weight of her body on it, and at once with a bend of her back under the red belt she drew herself up, and arching her full bosom under the white smock, with a smart turn she swung the fork in her arms, and flung the bundle of hay high onto the cart." And then, "In the expressions of both faces was to be seen vigorous, young, freshly awakened love." Here is a new kind of quite vibrant, quite sensual, conjugal love, purer than the eros of aristocrats.

Levin thinks of "going native," of marrying a peasant woman, even of renouncing his property. It's his parallel for Kitty's altruistic life in Soden. But after a night of musing on this project, he sees Kitty riding in her carriage, on her way to Dolly's estate (near Levin's). Levin realizes he loves Kitty. From here until part 4, Levin will fight with his pride (hurt by Kitty's earlier rejection) and his disillusionment with courtship rituals. He will find his own form of courtship later when he goes to Moscow.

Before he does, Levin's dying brother Nicholas visits. As the two brothers talk politics, Tolstoy's narrator tells us what they would say if they said what was really on their minds. Levin would say, "You're dying," and his brother would reply, "Yes, I know and I'm afraid." Tolstoy uses the scene to remind Levin (and us) of his mortality. He abandons all his farm reform as vanity and goes off to Europe, talking about death, yet at some level still longing for continuity, for heirs, for a woman who can provide them.

For Tomorrow We Die

The dinner party in part 4 is the hinge that joins the novel together: It joins the first half and the second half, and it joins the Anna plot and the Levin plot. This dinner party, at the Oblonskys' in Moscow, is occasioned by the arrival of Alexei Karenin, Anna's famous husband. Oblonsky goes to Levin's hotel to invite him to the party, too. Levin, who has just killed a bear on his estate, is being measured for a bearskin coat. In the hotel, Stiva and Levin have a conversation about the meaning of life. When Oblonsky asks Levin how he is, Levin replies:

> "It's true that it's high time I was dead; and that all this is nonsense . . . all this world of ours is nothing but a speck of mildew, which has grown up on a tiny planet. And for us to suppose we can have something great—ideas, work—it's all grains of sand." (part 4, chapter 7)

Levin sounds like Bazarov contemplating his insignificance under the haystack (chapter 21) in *Fathers and Sons* or, for that matter, the "all is vanity" of Ecclesiastes.

What does Oblonsky say? "Come to dinner!"—a faint echo of the famous adage, "Let us eat and drink, because tomorrow we will die," which Paul discusses as a possible response to death if there is no Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:32). Oblonsky's reply suggests that Oblonsky has looked his mortality in the face and has been scared out of his wits. His "Come to dinner!" is an alternative to Levin's "All I know is that we shall soon be dead."

The dinner party is perfectly orchestrated by the Oblonskys. In the midst of a general discussion of topics of the day, including childbearing, Kitty and Levin begin talking. Kitty says, "you've killed a bear, I hear . . .," while trying to stick a fork into a mushroom with her dainty hand in a lacy sleeve. The bear evokes Artemis, goddess of childbirth, and Russian folk associations of the bear and mating: The act of wooing is underway! Kitty's attempt to daintily fork the mushroom is reminiscent of the peasant bride forking the hay, with her bosom "arching." This is a mating scene, but eros is sublimated, transformed. Kitty and Levin communicate by writing the first letters of words in chalk on the table cloth; they develop a private intercourse that transcends the lies of ordinary social discourse. They get engaged in the process. Levin has conquered the courtship plot and the evil of sex. But can he conquer fear of death?

Anna's Womb

In Petersburg, Anna, after having given birth to her lovechild with Vronsky, is dying from an infection of her womb. Anna and Vronsky's relations have

deteriorated. Their communication is flawed. Increasingly, lies and deceit take over. But they do still have a mystical language of lovers, which in their case is associated with the world of evil spirits. Anna and Vronsky had the same nightmare, about a bear hunt and a peasant "beater" thrusting something in a sack and uttering disturbing words. Within her dream, Anna is told that she will die in childbirth.

Anna summons her husband Alexei Karenin to her deathbed. In the presence of her other Alexei (Vronsky), Alexei Karenin spontaneously feels compassion and forgiveness, a selfless love for his "neighbor." For Tolstoy, this upwelling of compassion could happen only in the utter absence of sexual feeling. Tolstoy felt that there are two forms of love that cannot mix: sexual love and spiritual love. For women to feel a spiritual love, according to Tolstoy, you have to bring their sexual drive to naught, through illness that approaches death.

Here, as with Kitty in Soden, the situation is unstable. It's a radical diversion from the traditional adultery plot, where lover and husband should be fighting duels, not weeping together in the bedroom. What happens subsequently is that the "coarse force"—sexual feelings, in some or another form—returns and gets in the way of forgiveness. Karenin fears society's ridicule for the affront to his sexual pride. Vronsky realizes that the new love that arose briefly at Anna's deathbed, when her sexual being was near extinction, has no natural future. Could they raise the children together? Share Anna? Vronsky attempts to remove himself from the picture, first in a failed suicide attempt and then by signing up to go off to the far reaches of the Russian Empire. But as he comes to say farewell to Anna, sex rears its ugly head again. Anna has recovered and Vronsky's passion communicates itself to her. Anna and Vronsky—with their biological daughter in tow, but with Seryozha separated from his mother—go off to Italy.

Anna has been given a chance to purify herself through the contemplation of her mortality, but unlike Levin and Kitty, it does not take. We see in Part 4, as throughout this novel, the comparison and intertwining of two sets of people and two parallel plots, each posing the same questions: How can one tame "the coarse force" and how can one live and love in the face of death?

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Kitty and Levin go their separate ways in parts 2 and 3 of the novel. In what ways are their separate experiences parallel?
2. How do the different characters, such as Levin and Oblonsky, respond to their awareness of mortality?
3. Why does Karenin feel compassion and forgiveness at the end of part 4?

Suggested Reading

Tolstoy, Leo. *Anna Karenina.* Trans. Constance Garnett. Rev. by Leonard J. Kent and Nina Berberova. New York: Modern Library, 2000.

Other Books of Interest

Mandelker, Amy. *Framing Anna Karenina: Tolstoy, the Woman Question, and the Victorian Novel.* Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1994.

Steiner, George. *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky: An Essay in the Old Criticism.* 2nd ed. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996.

Tanner, Tony. *Adultery in the Novel: Contract and Transgression.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.

Lecture 11:
Love and Death in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (parts 5 through 8).

One Wedding

Consider this . . .

Anna and Levin, who emerge as the major characters of the novel, have little to do with each other on the surface of the plot. Anna is the sister-in-law of Dolly, Levin's sister-in-law. They don't actually meet until part 7. Yet Tolstoy suggests that there is some mysterious link between them. What is it?

In part 5, the two major couples of the novel are finally united, Kitty and Levin by the sacrament of marriage and Anna and Vronsky in an adulterous union. Tolstoy has "deferred closure" of the wedding of Kitty and Levin (in the terminology used by D.A. Miller in *Narrative and Its Discontents*), like any Jane Austen novel or contemporary wedding movie. Kitty and Levin have to overcome obstacles: Kitty reads Levin's bachelor diaries and declares his past vile; Levin must go through the sacrament of confession to a priest; Levin's late, but only because he had no shirt to wear. Then the joyous event occurs. But Tolstoy undercuts the joy. Some women outside declare: "What a pretty dear the bride is—like a lamb decked [for slaughter] . . . Well, say what you will, we women feel for our sister" (part 5, chapter 5). Thus the bride is viewed as a lamb sacrificed on the altar of male sexual desire. She needs sisterly compassion.

Levin is moved by the ceremony. The prayer that the newlyweds be granted *both* "chastity and fruits of the womb" promises a way of redeeming sex. The same Levin who confessed his skepticism even contemplates God in the midst of this sacrament. As the ceremony declares that God "joins together in love them that were separate," Levin wonders about his bride, "Is she feeling the same as I?" and after a glance, "concluded that she was understanding it just as he was." But the narrator announces, "But this was a mistake; she almost completely missed the meaning of the words of the service." At the central moment of the sacrament of marriage that pronounces unity, there is a separateness, and potentially alienation.

And Two Honeymoons

Kitty and Levin forego a wedding trip and go right to Levin's Pokrovskoe to start their life together. Levin feels guilty for not working and blames Kitty. The narrator tells us that she is enjoying her last period of carefree life before the never-ending, all-consuming labor of motherhood begins. Levin is summoned to the deathbed of his brother. Thus, in the midst of their honeymoon, Levin and Kitty are reminded that they are their brother's keeper. And their

sister's: They invite Dolly—whose family is in a terrible state—to spend the summer with them.

Kitty accompanies Levin to the deathbed of Nicholas (part 5, chapters 17–20), where Kitty, relying on her experience in Soden, knows better than Levin how to deal with death. If her nursing experiment in Soden floundered on the rock of sexual jealousy, here the threat of eros has finally been eliminated. Nicholas is family, and the same doctor who pronounces Nicholas Levin dead pronounces Kitty pregnant. As one generation fades, a new generation arises to perpetuate the Levin name.

Kitty and Levin make a successful transition from their honeymoon to new stages of love for their future child, and quite possibly return to a state of chastity for the rest of the novel (to extrapolate from Tolstoy's oft-uttered prohibitions on sex during pregnancy and lactation).

In Italy, Anna and Vronsky enjoy a dilettantish and sybaritic life. Vronsky has had to resign from the army, which had given his life structure. Anna and especially Vronsky have trouble filling the time not spent in bed. The most significant event is their visit to the studio of the Russian painter, Mikhailov, where they see his painting of *Christ before Pontius Pilate*. Here, Christ's face bears "an expression of pity, of love, of heavenly peace, of readiness for death, and a sense of the vanity of words" (part 5, chapter 11). Even as the characters seek to amuse themselves, Tolstoy reminds us of the vanity of human life and the imminence of death.

Vronsky and Anna return to Russia because Anna yearns to see her son Seryozha and because Vronsky has affairs to settle. They, too, must make the transition from honeymoon mode. Anna's reunion with her son is one of the more poignant scenes of the novel. What's so remarkable is the grace, humility, and charity with which Anna carries herself. The rest of their stay in Petersburg proves disastrous. Vronsky is received, but doors are shut to Anna. Even Vronsky's sister refuses to receive Anna.

Anna becomes more and more undone. She lies, she manipulates, she alienates Vronsky. She appears at the opera. There she experiences public humiliation, like Nathaniel Hawthorne's Hester Prynne wearing her scarlet letter in public, unlike the adulteress whom Jesus saves from stoning (John 8:1–11). From this point on, Anna must retreat.

In part 6, the action shifts back and forth between Levin's estate and the estate where Vronsky and Anna have set up house, a day's carriage journey apart. At Levin's, a family group spanning generations joins in jam-making and mushroom-picking. Levin is preoccupied with Kitty's pregnancy. All energy is focussed on bringing this child safely into the world.

At Vronsky's estate everything is swank, new, and European, in contrast to the worn heirlooms at Levin's Pokrovskoe. Tolstoy shows us how two particular visitors, Dolly and Veslovsky, behave in the two environments. Vasenka Veslovsky, a distant Shcherbatsky relative, is a womanizer who is careless of Levin's horses and dares to flirt with Kitty. Levin, to everyone's horror, sends him packing. When he is back at Vronsky's, he flirts with Anna, and Vronsky seems to enjoy it.

As Dolly arrives at Vronsky's estate, she does not judge and condemn the adulterous Anna, but wonders to herself how Anna can be blamed. Did not God put in our hearts the yearning for happiness? But before long, Dolly is alienated by a pervasive denial of family and maternity at Vronsky's estate. Anna doesn't know how many teeth her baby Annie has. The hospital Vronsky has built for poor peasants lacks a maternity ward. Worst of all is the question of divorce. Vronsky wants Anna to get a divorce so that their future children—and the male heir he hopes for—will bear his name and be legally his. Dolly is alienated when Anna refuses to consider divorce and declares she will have no more children.

And a Meeting

Not until part 7 does Tolstoy bring together Anna and Levin for the first time. Levin and Kitty have come to Moscow to await the birth of their child. Vronsky and Anna are also living there. One night, after drinking, Oblonsky takes Levin to visit his sister, Anna Karenina. Levin, in part 1, had condemned all adulteresses, in harsh terms. But during the visit, Levin "felt for her a tenderness and pity which surprised him."

When Levin reveals to Kitty that he has been at Anna's and found her charming, unhappy, and good, Kitty bursts into tears and declares that "that hateful woman has bewitched" Levin (part 7, chapter 11). Again, Tolstoy is suspicious of compassion, which for him is always at risk of being contaminated by eros. Indeed, Anna "had unconsciously the whole evening done her utmost to arouse in Levin a feeling of love." And "she knew she had attained her aim, as far as was possible in one evening, with a married and honorable man."

And a Birth

The morning after this scene Kitty goes into labor. The birth scene is remarkable, for its ability to convey Levin's tender bewilderment as he experiences the blessed event. Levin, examining his feelings for his son, feels a mix of compassion and fear—ironically, the very words used to describe his feelings for Anna the night before. Fatherhood for Levin is described as a "consciousness of a new sphere of liability to pain" (part 7, chapter 16). Levin is now forced to define boundaries on his compassion and fear, which cannot be squandered on the likes of Anna.

Meanwhile, Anna is in need of compassion. We see her desperate, waiting for Vronsky's return, feeling self-pity, which she wants to conceal. Anna is an adulteress, a sex-fiend, a dope-addict, a bad mother, a liar, a seductress. And she is to blame for the fix she's in. But she is a lost soul. Doesn't she still deserve pity and compassion? How are we to respond? How about looking at it with *Crime and Punishment* in mind, and asking, What does the suffering of others have to do with us? What kind of response should we have to it, even if they are guilty? How does Anna compare to, say, the horse being beaten in Raskolnikov's dream or to Marmeladov himself? This is one of the most important questions that *Anna Karenina* asks.

A Death

A few months later, Vronsky eats beefsteak for breakfast (his menu the day he killed Frou Frou) and quarrels with Anna. Anna decides that death is "the sole means of bringing back love for her in his heart, of punishing him, and of gaining the victory in that strife which the evil spirit in possession of her heart was waging with him" (part 7, chapter 26). Another day passes in enmity. Anna's maid sends her to Dolly for sisterly love, for compassion. As she rides through the city streets of Moscow, Anna's mind is bombarded with chaotic impressions. Anna resolves to seek Dolly's help. She reconstructs her virginal, innocent self, who visited monasteries and had a pure soul. She reviews her life, as people are said to do in the moment before death.

Dolly is occupied with Kitty, there to consult about breastfeeding—the quintessential maternal activity. After an awkward exchange, Anna leaves. The Shcherbatsky sisters, Kitty and Dolly, tend to the survival of their Shcherbatsky species, but they appear to fail to love their fallen sister.

As Anna continues on her journey, she observes someone making the sign of the cross as church bells ring and she asks, "Why these churches and this ringing and this humbug? Simply to conceal that we all hate each other, like these cab drivers who are abusing each other so angrily." In her bitterness, Anna rejects the Christian message of neighborly love. When she finally emerges from the train at the station, she overhears a conversation (in French): "Reason is given man . . . in order to escape his troubles." Anna resolves to kill herself.

In the scene of her death, Anna first struggles to throw away her red handbag, which happens to be the same handbag she carried at the start of the novel, and then makes the sign of the cross in an instinctive gesture, as if she were about to plunge into water for a swim. Again she returns to her innocent, virginal self, through making the sign of the cross. Now the sign of the cross has meaning; it returns her to God from a world of hatred. Her last words are "God, forgive me everything."

And a Non-Suicide

When everyone assembles at the end of *Anna Karenina* at Levin's estate at Pokrovskoe, Dolly mentions that Oblonsky has seen Vronsky on the train, but Anna is not mentioned; memory of Anna seems lost forever.

However, Tolstoy does in fact make Anna's presence felt, in Levin's life at the end of the novel. Tolstoy haunts Levin with the same ultimate questions ("Why live?") that drove Anna to her death. Levin isn't aware of the similarity, because Anna doesn't seem to enter his mind, but the reader is. Tolstoy actually planned (in drafts) to have Levin be at the fateful train station and observe Anna's corpse cut in two. In part 8, Levin finds himself tormented by thoughts of suicide as he attempts to find answers to the questions about life and death. On the last day of the action of the novel, as Levin is going about the business of his farm, feeling as though he can't go on, he falls into conversation with a peasant named Fyodor. Fyodor contrasts two other peas-

ants, one who “lives for the soul and remembers God” (and would therefore never “flay the skin off a man”) and the other who lives simply for the belly. In this contrast, Levin suddenly senses an answer to his questions; he feels as though he has found faith in this folk wisdom about living for the soul as opposed to living for the belly—and in the importance of refraining from “flaying the skin off a man,” that is, taking advantage of another person. Levin thus affirms the value of loving one’s neighbor.

Levin’s crisis and breakthrough recall Anna’s last desperate interior monologue where she declares that Vronsky’s friend Yashvin is right: we’re all in the world to hate each other and we’re ready to strip the shirt from the other person. . . . However, at the very end, when Anna begs God’s forgiveness, she seems to have similarly returned to the bosom of God and faith in loving one’s neighbor.

Anna and Levin might be seen as seekers on the same path. Levin finds an answer in faith—faith in loving one’s neighbor even though, as he reminds himself, this runs counter to reason. Perhaps this is what Anna learns at the last moment, just before the train cuts her in two.

Much of the rest of part 8, with its discussion of the conflict in Serbia, focuses on defining the limits and extent of neighborly love. This was, however, a question that would plague Tolstoy. This kind of love was the solution to the question of “Why live?”

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Kitty and Levin's wedding is a joyous event. How and why does Tolstoy cast doubt?
2. Why is Anna all alone at the very end of her life?
3. Does Tolstoy sympathize with Anna or condemn her?

Suggested Reading

Tolstoy, Leo. *Anna Karenina.* Trans. Constance Garnett. Rev. by Leonard J. Kent and Nina Berberova. New York: Modern Library, 2000.

Other Books of Interest

Knapp, Liza, and Amy Mandelker, eds. *Approaches to Teaching Anna Karenina.* New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2001.

Miller, D.A. *Narrative and Its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Steiner, George. *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky: An Essay in the Old Criticism.* 2nd ed. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996.

Tanner, Tony. *Adultery in the Novel: Contract and Transgression.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.

Films

Anna Karenina. Directed by Julien Duvivier. Screenplay by Julien Duvivier. Starring Vivian Leigh. Ontario, Canada, 1948.

Anna Karenina. Directed by Aleksandr Zarkhy. Screenplay by Vasili Katanyan. Russian (Soviet Union), 1967.

Lecture 12:
Anton Chekhov:
Writer, Doctor, Humanist

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Anton Chekhov's "Kashtanka" in Cathy Popkin's (ed.) *Anton Chekhov's Short Stories,* "Rothschild's Fiddle" in *Stories* translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, and Alexander Chudakov's "Dr. Chekhov: A Biographical Essay (29 January 1860–15 July 1904)" in Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain's (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov*.

Chekhov's Background

Consider this . . .

Throughout his life, Chekhov alternated between literature and medicine, claiming to enjoy the variety. And yet he approached them both with the same humanistic spirit.

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov stands out among the so-called giants of nineteenth-century Russian literature for various reasons: background, professional training, and preferred genres. Avoiding novels, Chekhov is known rather for his mastery of—and innovation in—the short story and drama. His training as a physician gave him firsthand scientific knowledge of the basic facts of life that are at the heart of fiction as well as a respect for data. And yet Chekhov's works are filled with a sense of the poetry of life.

Chekhov stands apart from Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy in part because he belongs to a different generation. Although he died before Tolstoy (1828–1910), Chekhov (1860–1904) was his junior by more than thirty years. Chekhov also differs from our other authors, all from the gentry, by virtue of his background: His paternal grandfather was a serf who bought his family's freedom in 1841. Chekhov had no illusions about the peasant life that his predecessors so romanticized. Chekhov's family history is full of tales of poverty, hard work, and cruelty that reached back for generations and continued into his own childhood. As he put it in a letter, he had "peasant blood flowing in his veins," so you couldn't "impress him with peasant virtues." Chekhov believed that the backward conditions of peasant life caused untold suffering and that concrete steps should be taken to improve these conditions. He thus did not share the phobia about progress that Tolstoy and Dostoevsky sometimes expressed. He believed in progress, because he appreciated (as he said) "the difference between the period when [he] was beaten and when they stopped beating [him]."

Chekhov grew up in a family of five sons and a daughter. His father ran a dry goods store in Taganrog, a port town on the Black Sea. Chekhov's early exposure to multiple cultures in a port town, to diverse tradesmen around the harbor, and even to the array of goods in his father's store—as well as to all the customers—contributed to Chekhov's "lexicon" and his knowledge of the world (Chudakov, pp. 3–5).

While Tolstoy and Dostoevsky tended to wear their religious concerns on their sleeve, Chekhov refrained from preaching about anything other than humanistic values. He was wary of dogmatic and self-righteous representatives of organized religion. And yet Chekhov's stories are imbued with Russian Orthodox religious culture, and the need for ethical values, the importance of compassion, and the value of acts of kindness are implied if not stated. Julie de Sherbinin points out that Chekhov actually knew this religious culture more intimately than the "giants" of Russian literature (p. 1). Chekhov grew up in this religious culture and knew the Bible and the liturgy quite well. He also had a feel for folk religious culture.

Chekhov's family took education seriously. When his father went bankrupt and moved to Moscow to avoid creditors in 1876, Chekhov stayed behind to finish school, earning money by tutoring. In 1879 Chekhov moved to Moscow to study medicine at Moscow University. While still in medical school, Chekhov began publishing humorous stories. Remarkable in Chekhov's family story is how responsible Chekhov felt for the financial well-being of his family. For all the hardships (and some bad memories), Chekhov had a strong sense of family.

Doctor Chekhov

After completing his medical degree, Chekhov both practiced medicine and wrote. As he wrote in a letter, "Medicine is my lawful wife and literature is my mistress; when I get tired of one, I spend the night with the other." He set up practice in Moscow in the early years, but failed to make much of a financial go at it, because he wasn't good at collecting from his patients. Ultimately, writing was what earned him money.

At various points, he financed medical ventures or gave freely of his time. Thus, he bought his country estate at Melikhovo, near Moscow, in 1892 and started a medical clinic, where he treated local peasants himself. In 1890, Chekhov went to a penal colony on the remote island of Sakhalin (near Japan), did a census, interviewed inhabitants, and wrote an account called "The Island of Sakhalin," which is credited with having inspired penal reform. Throughout his life, as health permitted, Chekhov acted on his social conscience.

E.M. Forster points out that most of us have limited knowledge of birth and death. Chekhov is the exception. In his medical practice, Chekhov was exposed to the thresholds of existence, birth and death, and everything in between. He himself suffered from tuberculosis from 1884 (not diagnosed until 1897) and other ailments. Chekhov prided himself on his understanding of women and the sexuality of both genders; he expressed some annoyance at Tolstoy's attitudes toward these matters.

From "Antosha Chekhonte" to Anton Chekhov

Chekhov's early works appeared in humorous journals under pseudonyms, often "Antosha Chekhonte." "Chekhonte" was the name that Father Pokrovsky, the religious education teacher at Taganrog, used for him. According to Chekhov lore, this Father Pokrovsky imparted to Chekhov a love of literature and language as well as knowledge of religion. Chekhov also experimented with other pseudonyms. Eventually, however, he signed his works with his own name.

Because he began to publish in humor journals where there were tight limits on length, Chekhov learned to be concise. A number of his early stories revolve around one device, one event, one joke, one gimmick, one misunderstanding. In "A Government Clerk" (1883), an early three-page masterpiece, the tale is set in motion by one sneeze and culminates in the death of the sneezer. Here Chekhov engages a whole tradition in Russian literature that examines the marginal existence of the lowly civil servant cowed by the system. (Gogol is the most famous example, but Dostoevsky's early work and his *Notes from the Underground* also belong to this tradition.)

The Mature Chekhov

"Kashtanka" is a story of Chekhov's mature period (1887). Because it came to be billed as a "children's story" and was about a dog, it may not have received as much attention as its (grown-up) fans feel it deserves. "Kashtanka" is a story of "lost and found," told in the third person but conveying the dog's perspective. The story is this: A dog gets lost in the city. It's a chestnut-colored mongrel ("kashtanka" means chestnut in Russian) who lives with a cabinet-maker, Luka Alexandrych. One day, out on errands with the master (a drunk who is alternately loving and abusive), Kashtanka is distracted by a military band and is separated from her master. Although she experiences despair such that our (human) narrator notes that if she were human she might have considered shooting herself, before long she is "rescued" by a "mysterious stranger" who takes her home, feeds her plenty, doesn't hit her, and doesn't stamp his feet or shout nasty things at her. The stranger christens Kashtanka "Auntie." He keeps other animals as well, a goose, a cat, and a pig, whom he is training as a circus act. When the goose dies, the stranger taps Auntie to take the goose's place, having determined that she has great "talent." In her debut performance at the circus, Auntie suddenly hears, from up in the balcony, the voices of his former master and son calling her name, "Kashtanka." They have a joyous reunion. The story ends with her following them home. The interlude with the stranger now seems like a "long, mixed-up and painful dream".

"Kashtanka" treats the "facts of life": food, sleep (it is especially interesting on the dog's "dream-work," to borrow Freud's term), love, and death. It omits birth, although arguably the transition from Kashtanka to Auntie is a metaphorical birth. This story gives us special insight into both love and death, more than your garden-variety dog story from another literary tradition. In this regard, it may be worth wondering whether there wasn't some influence of the "Russian point of view," including "Kashtanka" in particular, in Virginia Woolf's *Flush: A Biography,* about Elizabeth Barrett Browning's cocker spaniel. Like Chekhov, of whom she was a big fan, Woolf uses the "device" of the dog's-eye-view (narrated in the third person) to go beyond the normal boundaries of narration and to explore the boundaries between life and death, being and non-being. One of the most remarkable parts of "Kashtanka" is the (short) chapter called "Restless Night," which describes the death of the goose from Kashtanka's perspective. The haunting description of death shows that Chekhov has mastered and perhaps gone beyond the Tolstoyan technique of "estrangement" (narrating from a fresh perspective, refusing to use "labels" but instead describing as if with uncomprehending eyes).

"Kashtanka" also is an inquiry into the forms of love—from the heart of a dog. We see different forms of love. We see her joy at the dramatic reunion with her master, but we also see Kashtanka in earlier stages "deciding" which life was better. Clearly the heart of the dog, like the human heart, "has its reasons of which reason knows nothing" (to quote Pascal). But what is most poignant in this love story is how it shows Kashtanka—despite her now-full belly—beset by a sadness that would sometimes take hold over her "like twilight over a room." In the midst of this sadness, she would have an inchoate image of two figures who seemed familiar, as if she used to see them and love them. In this way Chekhov evokes the way that what we have loved and lost stays with us.

Janet Malcolm (pp. 200–201) suggests that "Kashtanka" can be read as a fable expressing Chekhov's ambivalence about his new literary success: Had he become a circus animal doing tricks for the public and anxious to please a new master? Chekhov had indeed "arrived" on the literary scene by 1886 (the date usually cited). He continued to write and publish a great deal until his trip to Sakhalin (1890), which constitutes a natural break in his career. Worth special mention from this period is "The Name-Day Party," where Chekhov, using his medical knowledge to describe a miscarriage, offers a portrait of the complexities of marital love, as illuminated in a moment of crisis. Chekhov narrates from the third person but conveys the woman's point of view.

In 1890 Chekhov made his trip to Sakhalin. Not long after he returned, Russia suffered a terrible famine. Like Tolstoy, Chekhov became involved in relief work. Chekhov also returned to medicine during a cholera epidemic. He continued to write stories during this period. A number of them are related to his "medical" and "social" activities ("Ward No. 6"—a story that asks, in the best tradition of Russian literature, what the suffering of others has to do with us; and shows answers becoming clear in the face of death; "The Duel"—which in some ways is his closest approach to the novelistic form) or to his travels ("Gusev"—memorable for its description of a death at sea).

An important story from this period is "Rothschild's Fiddle" (1894), which is a classic Chekhovian take on love and death, in the Russian tradition. It tells of a coffin-maker in a small town, where business was poor. Though the town had a lot of old people, "they died so rarely it was even annoying"; even the jail and the hospital gave him little business. Yakov earns extra money playing his fiddle in a Jewish orchestra in the town, weddings mostly. We are told that "For no apparent reason, Yakov gradually began to be filled with hatred and contempt for the Jews, and especially for Rothschild," who is the flutist and plays even the happy songs mournfully (translation by Pevear and Volokhonsky, *Anton Chekhov: Stories,* p. 254). "He even started picking on him, abusing him with bad words, and once was even about to give him a beating, and Rothschild got offended and, looking at him fiercely, said: 'If not for respecting your talent, I'd be chucking you out the window long ago'" (p. 254). Yakov continues to live in hatred and isolation, until his wife announces that she is dying. Yakov is struck by the fact that now she suddenly has a happy look on her face, as if she welcomed death. (What does that say about the life they share?) He then recalls that all their life he had never once been gentle with her. Here we have a typical Chekhovian moment where the importance of one small act of compassion is signaled. He takes her to the clinic, but then makes her coffin; before dying she reminds him of their babe

who died fifty years ago, but Yakov can't recall. She dies and Yakov regrets his lack of kindness to her. He treated her as if she were a cat or a dog. At this point, Rothschild comes to ask him to play with the orchestra, and Yakov abuses him, venting his grief and anger on him. Yakov dies soon thereafter, but not before remembering that yes indeed, Marfa was right that they had had a child, who died some fifty years ago, and not before having one last encounter with Rothschild, who arrives while Yakov is playing his fiddle for the last time. Rothschild is moved by his playing and the two are reconciled, wordlessly, by the music. Yakov dies soon thereafter, but tells the priest that he wills his fiddle to Rothschild.

This story, one of Chekhov's best, is obviously about the intersection of love and death: specifically the melting of the heart that occurs before death, which can translate into regret for not having loved sooner. The coffin-maker (like a doctor and a priest) is intimately involved with death but paradoxically has a professional callousness about death. Yakov does come to love, albeit as his wife is at death's door. Chekhov often leaves things open-ended, and here we are left to judge whether it was a case of "too little, too late" or "better late than never." This story poignantly and boldly addresses the issue of Russian anti-Semitism. As Robert Louis Jackson has argued, Chekhov "unites Russian and Jew in the redeeming poetry of suffering."

In the late 1890s, Chekhov divided his time between his work in the theater and writing stories. During this period he produced stories on an array of subjects, including brutal portraits of peasant life ("The Peasants," discussed in the next lecture, and "In the Ravine"); his "trilogy" consisting of "Man with the Case," "Gooseberries," and "On Love"; and treatments of "love," notably Tolstoy's favorite "The Darling" and "The Lady with the Dog," one of a handful of Chekhov's stories that is, among other things, a response to *Anna Karenina* and the novel of adultery.

Chekhov the Playwright

Chekhov had been interested in drama from youth, when he wrote little plays and went to the theater in Taganrog when he could. He made two early attempts at full-length plays, "Ivanov" (1887) and "The Wood Demon" (1888–1889); but writing for the stage took off with his four masterpieces, still performed today: "The Sea Gull" (1896), "Uncle Vanya" (1897), "Three Sisters" (1901), and "The Cherry Orchard" (1903).

Chekhov is often credited with having been instrumental in heralding in a new age of theater. Countless modern playwrights consider him an influence. He is said to have helped redefine concepts of drama and theatricality. How did he bring this about? In large part, by introducing the same techniques that distinguish his stories: writing with understatement, finding drama in the everyday, avoiding the histrionic, muting the volume, deemphasizing plot, posing questions rather than answering them, showing how precious communication is by showing how often we speak at cross-purposes, illuminating the ephemeral nature of life.

The impact of Chekhov's plays on the theater at large was enhanced by his association with the Moscow Art Theater. Its director, Konstantin Stanislavsky, and others associated with this theater are considered the originators of

"Method" acting. To the extent his health allowed, Chekhov took part in the staging of his plays, attempting often to stand up for his vision in opposition to Stanislavsky. Chekhov, for example, insisted that the comedic should come through in "The Cherry Orchard."

Chekhov fell in love with and married an actress from the Moscow Art Theater, Olga Knipper. (Chekhov had been amorously linked to many women up until that point, but had not married; his younger sister remained his devoted caretaker.) Chekhov and Knipper married in 1901, but were forced to spend time apart because of her career and his health. Chekhov, ill with tuberculosis, spent time in Yalta by the Black Sea rather than in Moscow. Throughout his life, Chekhov wrote many letters (accessible in fine English translations, such as Heim's). Chekhov's and Knipper's letters in these last years of Chekhov's life give a picture of theater life and Chekhov's world.

In 1904, Chekhov's health worsened. Olga took Chekhov to Germany when he was already near death. Olga Knipper has left an account of his last hours. In accordance with medical custom, when one doctor attended the death of another doctor, he would order a bottle of champagne when death was clearly near (Rayfield, pp. 596–597). When the German doctor who was taking care of him took his pulse and offered him champagne, Chekhov understood, and said, in German, "Ich sterbe," noting that he hadn't drunk champagne in some time. Chekhov's body was brought back to Russia for burial in a train car marked "Oysters"—one of the few cars with refrigeration. This biographical detail has been the subject of much commentary. The writer Maxim Gorky declared it to be an affront to a writer who decried vulgarity. Others have seen a wry irony in this fact that Chekhov himself would have appreciated.

Translations

Quotations from "Rothschild's Fiddle" are from the translation by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, in Anton Chekhov's *Stories* (New York: Bantam Books, 2000). Chekhov's "Kashtanka" has appeared as an illustrated children's book in abridged translation. The full text may be found in *The Cook's Wife and Other Stories,* which is volume 12 of *The Tales of Chekhov,* translated by Constance Garnett (New York, Ecco: 1986) and translated by Pevear and Volokhonsky in the Norton Critical Edition of *Anton Chekhov's Short Stories.* Ed. Cathy Popkin. (2nd edition. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006).

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. How did religion figure in Chekhov's life and works?
2. How did Chekhov's medical training inform his literary work?
3. Why is Chekhov considered a major innovator in the field of drama?

Suggested Reading

Chekhov, Anton. "Kashtanka." *Anton Chekhov's Short Stories.* Ed. Cathy Popkin. Norton Critical Edition. 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006.

———. "Rothschild's Fiddle." *Stories*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Bantam Books, 2000.

Chudakov, Alexander. "Dr Chekhov: A Biographical Essay (29 January 1860–15 July 1904)." Eds. Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain. *The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Other Books of Interest

Chekhov, Anton P., and Olga Knipper. *Dear Writer, Dear Actress: The Love Letters of Anton Chekhov and Olga Knipper.* Selected, ed., and trans. Jean Benedetti. London: Methuen Publishing, Ltd., 1998.

———. *A Life in Letters*. Ed. Rosamund Bartlett. Trans. Anthony Phillips. New York: Penguin, 2004.

De Sherbinin, Julie. *Chekhov and Russian Religious Culture: The Poetics of the Marian Paradigm.* Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997.

Jackson, Robert Louis, ed. *Reading Chekhov's Text.* Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993.

———. "If I Forget Thee, O Jerusalem?: An Essay on Chekhov's 'Rothschild's Fiddle.'" Eds. Savely Senderovich and Munir Sendich. *Anton Chekhov Rediscovered.* East Lansing, MI: Russian Language Journal, 1987.

———. "'Rothschild's Fiddle': 'By the Waters of Babylon' in Eastern Liturgy." *Chekhov the Immigrant: Translating a Cultural Icon.* Ed. Michael Finke and Julie de Sherbinin. Bloomington, IN: Slavica, forthcoming 2007.

Malcolm, Janet. *Reading Chekhov: A Critical Journey.* New York: Random House, 2002.

Lecture 13:
Chekhovian Compassion:
Revisions of Peasant Life and Adulterous Love

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Anton Chekhov's "Lady with a Dog" and "Peasants" in Constance Garnett's (trans.) *The Chekhov Omnibus: Selected Stories.*

"Peasants"

Consider this . . .

Chekhov knew firsthand what the life of peasants was like, and he knew more about human sexual behavior than his giant predecessors. Keep an eye out for his ability to observe and narrate human behavior.

In "Peasants," Chekhov presents a view of peasant life that is anything but prettified or romanticized. In one short story, he reacts, from the gut, or from the veins, to the tradition of idealizing peasant life, found in different forms in the writings of Dostoevsky, who represents the bestiality of the Russian peasant, but in the next breath reminds us of the innate faith and implicit superiority of the Russian peasant to peasants of other national origin, and Tolstoy, who at times tried to imitate peasant life. None of this sat well with Chekhov. Indeed, "Peasants" expresses in story form the truth—the hard facts—of peasant life that Chekhov stated in a famous letter of March 27, 1894, which is excerpted below:

> **YALTA, March 27, 1894**
> . . . I have peasant blood in my veins, and you won't astonish me with peasant virtues. From my childhood I have believed in progress, and I could not help believing in it since the difference between the time when I used to be thrashed and when they gave up thrashing me was tremendous. . . . But Tolstoy's philosophy touched me profoundly and took possession of me for six or seven years, and what affected me was not its general propositions, with which I was familiar beforehand, but Tolstoy's manner of expressing it, his reasonableness, and probably a sort of hypnotism. Now something in me protests, reason and justice tell me that in the electricity and heat of love for man there is something greater than chastity and abstinence from meat. War is an evil and legal justice is an evil; but it does not follow from that that I ought to wear bark shoes and sleep on the stove with the labourer . . . the thing is that in one way or another Tolstoy has passed for me. (Garnett translation)

"Peasants" also reflects certain facts of peasant life in the aftermath of the Emancipation of the Serfs. There was an exodus of peasants to the city, when peasants couldn't make a go of life back on the farm on the small plots they had received. The story begins with Nikolai Chikildeev returning from the city back to his village, with his wife Olga and their daughter. He had worked

as a waiter in the Slavianskii Bazaar, a famous restaurant in Moscow. He appears to have met his wife in Moscow; she reveals to her sister-in-law that she came to Moscow when she was about eight. Meanwhile, back at home, one of his brothers was drafted into the army and is absent, whereas Kiriiak works elsewhere and lives in the forest. What happened to this generation of post-Emancipation peasants is telling. They had a hard lot.

We learn that everyone blames the *Zemstvo* for everything that goes wrong in their lives, even though they don't really know what the *Zemstvo* was or what it was supposed to do. The *Zemstvo* was the system of local government that, after the Emancipation, was supposed to provide social and legal services to the peasant. In theory the *Zemstvo* was supposed to take on some of the functions that under serfdom were provided by the serf-owner. In an interesting twist, the elders tell nostalgia-laced tales about life before the Emancipation, while the children listen, rapt. The *Zemstvo* also figures in *Anna Karenina,* in which Levin, for one, didn't want much to do with it: He resented the expectation that he participate in administering features of local peasant life that didn't affect him directly.

"Peasants" tells of an attempt to "go home again." Nikolai Chikildeev may be driven home by financial necessity—there is no "support network" for uprooted peasants in the city, so that once he falls sick and loses his income, where is he to turn? Or he may be driven home by some homing instinct activated by the proximity of death. Chekhov leaves the question open. Certainly both play a role. Before long, both Nikolai and his wife Olga realize it was a big mistake; Nikolai yearns for another glimpse of "Mother Moscow." Whatever the circumstances that drove him from Mother Moscow, he now realizes that its maternal embrace, such as it was, sure beat what his actual mother provides. Nikolai suggests that Olga write her sister and beg her to pawn or borrow, just to scrape up the money for the return. Ultimately, Nikolai dies at home, as planned. The story ends when Olga and Sasha, at last, set off to return to Moscow. In some ways then, this story, like "Kashtanka," hinges on a choice between two "homes," but here the choices are all mixed up; the values of each are reversed.

"Peasants" is permeated with indirect evocations and direct references to Mary, the Mother of God. As interpreted by De Sherbinin (pp. 74–83), constant reminders of the Mother of God simultaneously call attention (a) to the degradation of the feminine and the perversion of the maternal in this peasant realm and (b) to the faith in a protective and compassionate maternal presence. On their arrival in the village, Olga and her daughter Sasha have a cruel awakening to the facts of peasant life. One sister-in-law, Maria, lives in fear of her drunken husband's abuse, so much so that she quakes in church when the priest chants "Maria" as part of the liturgy, because it reminds her of her drunken husband summoning her for abuse. Fyokla, the other sister-in-law whose husband is off in the army, seems to be the only one who enjoys herself, which she does by seeking sensual pleasure wherever she can. The matriarch, Sasha's grandmother, is a sinister presence. She thrashes Sasha and her cousin for rolling down a hill and trampling her cabbages. At this point, readers familiar with Chekhov's definition of "progress" as the difference between being beaten and having it stop will see that coming home was a retrograde move.

But both Olga and Sasha maintain their faith. Throughout their stay they pray, read the gospels, and live a life of forgiveness and compassion. Is religion here "the opium of the people"? One could argue that their faith makes Olga and Sasha too passive, too meek. Why don't they rebel? Chekhov is, it seems, inviting readers to question Olga and Sasha's faith. In a context where man, woman, and child constantly suffer beatings, it is natural to ponder the meaning of "turning the other cheek." And yet there are other ways of looking at their faith: Their forgiveness and compassion may also be seen as embodiments of the true spirit of Russian Orthodoxy. Chekhov leaves it open-ended.

How do we respond to the end of the story? Olga and Sasha set off for "home," for Mother Moscow. Olga recognizes the degradation and suffering that peasant causes fellow peasant. She also acknowledges that "there was nothing in their lives for which one could not find excuse." She "feels sorry for all these people, painfully so," but she is glad to leave (Garnett translation).

As the story ends, we see Olga and Sasha, along the road to Moscow, begging for alms in the name of Christ. The story thus ends with questions about love and compassion in the face of suffering and degradation. They're the same questions that inspired Dostoevsky to write *Crime and Punishment.* Thus, in "Peasants," Chekhov responds to Tolstoy, while reopening questions that Dostoevsky tried to answer.

"Lady with a [Little/Toy] Dog"

The title of the story appears in different forms, depending on the translation: "Lady with a Dog" (also known as "Lady with a Little Dog" and "Lady with a Toy Dog."). The Russian uses the word for dog with a suffix added to make what is called a diminutive form in Russian. The diminutive form is in part used to signal size, for the Pomeranian (white spitz) fits in the category of small dogs. On some level, the dog in this story is a red herring. He figures in the beginning of the story, because that's how everyone apparently identified this woman when she first appeared on the embankment at Yalta. When the hero, Dmitry Dmitrych Gurov, first wants to make her acquaintance, he tries to do it through the dog, who growls at him. Gurov continues to refer to her as "the lady with the dog" in his own mind, even after he knows her full name, Anna Sergeevna von Dideritz. The dog does figure in the story once again, midway through, when Gurov goes to the town where she lives, observes her house from across the way, and sees a beggar approach the gate. The "dogs" attack him and he retreats. Then Gurov is tempted to call the dog, but was too moved to remember its name. Later, back in his hotel, he, with some irony, refers to her in his mind as the "lady with the little dog," but throughout the last chapter, which describes their feelings turning to love, the dog has been left behind in his thoughts of her.

Although the story is diminutive compared to Tolstoy's novel of adultery *Anna Karenina* or Flaubert's *Madame Bovary,* Chekhov's "Lady with a Dog" has many of the morphological features of a novel of adultery. It is one of several stories by Chekhov that treat the theme of adultery in response to lengthier treatments of the problem. Chekhov christens a number of his fictional adulteresses Anna, thus making them namesakes of Tolstoy's heroine. It's Chekhov's way of signaling his revision of the Tolstoyan take on the adultery plot. In "The Duel," a novella on the theme of adultery that comments

overtly on *Anna Karenina,* Chekhov names the heroine Nadezhda—Russian for Hope—and he tells of her reform.

Chekhov, like any Russian writer treating the topic of adultery in the 1890s, also had to take into account Tolstoy's last word on adultery: "The Kreutzer Sonata." This work caused a stir for its treatment of the ill effects of a sexualized culture. On some level, Tolstoy there treats adultery as the tip of the iceberg. In fact, the thrust of the story is to absolve a jealous husband for murdering an unfaithful wife on the grounds that the sexual environment in which he lived compelled him to this act. On first reading Tolstoy's story (in 1890), Chekhov was impressed with the artistry and its ability to get people thinking (letter of Feb. 15, 1890, to A.N. Pleshcheev). But Chekhov the doctor complained of Tolstoy's utter lack of knowledge about certain things, such as syphilis, foundling homes, and women's attitudes toward sexual intercourse. Later, after he returned from Sakhalin, Chekhov read the "postface" that Tolstoy wrote after the story, in which it becomes clear Tolstoy shared a number of the views expressed by the fictional murderer on marriage and sexuality. Chekhov declared it to be "ridiculous."

In all of Chekhov's treatments of adultery, he refrains from the vengeful stance of Tolstoy. He might, indeed, seem closer to Flaubert in *Madame Bovary.* Flaubert was condemned by the French establishment for refusing to condemn his adulteress, Emma Bovary. He even was taken to trial for the lax morals expressed in his novel. The public, evidently, expected adulteresses to be disciplined and punished. Flaubert didn't comply. Perhaps one feature of his novel that disturbed those who accused him was the way he unmasks the righteous of the town—those who are ready to ridicule the cuckold and condemn the adulteress, in the name of Christian teaching or family values—as hypocrites. Scholars have suggested that Flaubert's own attitude is probably closest to that of Doctor Larivière, who tended Emma Bovary as she was dying. The doctor, although used to suffering, cannot help holding back a tear of compassion. Doctor Chekhov's narrator in "The Lady with a Dog" is very much in the spirit of Flaubert's fictional Doctor Larivière.

One could say that Chekhov's narrator behaves much like Jesus in the famous scene in John 8:1–11, where he is asked by the scribes and Pharisees what should be done with the adulteress they parade before him. (She ought to be stoned, they remind him.) Jesus responds by telling them that whoever of them is without sin should be the first to cast a stone. The communities in which Anna Karenina and Emma Bovary live, different as they are, cannot resist casting stones at an adulteress, though the novelists hint that many members of these communities are not "without sin."

Chekhov inserts one subtle but telling reference to the theme of society's response to adultery. It occurs early on, when Gurov is musing about a fling with the "lady with the dog"; there is much talk in Yalta, a resort town, of loose morals. Gurov "knew that such stories were for the most part made up by persons who would themselves have been glad to sin if they had been able." This is an allusion to the issue of scribes and Pharisees, actual or modal sinners themselves, getting their jollies by casting stones or, in this case, spreading rumors. The irony is that Gurov is using his rhetoric simply to rationalize the affair he's about to begin. Gurov has been a serial adulterer,

without much of a conscience. And he has been perceived as something of a misogynist. But, in the course of "The Lady with a Lap Dog," this adulterer learns to love, for better or for worse.

The affair begins quite casually, at least on Gurov's part. The lady with the dog, however, behaves differently. After they first make love: "Anna Sergeevna . . . mused in a dejected attitude like 'the woman who was a sinner' in an old-fashioned picture." Gurov, in contrast, cuts himself a slice of watermelon, observing her with detachment.

Chekhov's depiction of a first-time adulteress in a state of post-coital agitation evokes the scene in *Anna Karenina* describing the aftermath of Anna and Vronsky's first lovemaking (part 2, chapter 11), in which Vronsky attempts to calm Anna, "not knowing how or why." Tolstoy graphically represents her "fall" by having her "once proud and gay, now shame-stricken" head drop. Other details of Tolstoy's scene make their way into Chekhov's. Chekhov's Anna, like Tolstoy's, beseeches God to forgive her.

Gurov's behavior, however, is more callous, more jaded than Vronsky's. "Gurov felt bored already, listening to her. He was irritated by the naïve tone, by this remorse, so unexpected and inopportune; but for the tears in her eyes, he might have thought she was jesting or playing a part" (Garnett translation). Here Chekhov seems to echo a famous moment in *Madame Bovary* when Emma's lover concludes that Emma is like all his mistresses because she used the same trite phrases. But the narrator pipes in to bemoan the fact that although her language may be hackneyed, this does not mean that her emotions are. This is a key moment in the book. Here Flaubert allows as how Emma, vulgar and trite as she is, may have some genuine need and yearning for love. Possibly, she is worthy of compassion after all. Flaubert then goes on to bemoan the fact that human language is "like a cracked cauldron" on which we beat out tunes to set a bear dancing, whereas what we would want our language to do is make the stars take pity on us. Maybe, suggests Flaubert, the fault lies in our expression.

Chekhov, in the next scene, moves Gurov and the lady with the dog to a bench overlooking the sea, "not far from the church." Here, the narrator uses his full powers of expression in a glorious way. In a subtle shift, he moves from them watching the sight of the sea to including us:

> The leaves did not stir on the trees, grasshoppers chirruped, and the monotonous hollow sound of the sea rising up from below, spoke of the peace, of the eternal sleep awaiting us. So it must have sounded when there was no Yalta, no Oreanda here; so it sounds now, and it will sound as indifferently and monotonously when we are no more. And in this constancy, in this complete indifference to the life and death of each of us, there lies hid, perhaps, a pledge of our eternal salvation, of the unceasing movement of life upon earth. . . . (Garnett translation)

In the rest of the paragraph, some of what the narrator has just conveyed seems to start to infiltrate the consciousness of Gurov.

Gurov goes back to his life in Moscow—his wife, his children, his club, but finds himself thinking about Anna Sergeevna. This is not unlike what happens

to Kashtanka when she is with the circus trainer and finds her thoughts conjuring up her former owners. And we find this serial adulterer who had married young, not for love, yearning desperately for Anna. Significantly, this comes to him in the context of repeated but very slight reminders of his mortality. These *memento[s] mori* are not dramatic ones: in, for example, the change of the seasons, or when one's breath in winter suddenly reminds one of youth. He goes to seek out Anna Sergeevna; they resume their affair. Eventually Gurov realizes that he is leading a double life, his "real" life and his life in Anna Sergeevna. Just before the end of the story, he catches sight of himself in the mirror, sees the gray in his hair and from there suddenly feels "compassion for this life [Anna's], still so warm and lovely, but probably already not far from beginning to wither and fade like his own. Why did she love him so much?" At this point, Gurov understands that he loves "for the first time in his life."

Here, Chekhov treats love and death *à la russe*: it is in the face of death that the hero feels love. What's distinctly Chekhovian is the way death is faced. There's no firing squad and not even a serious illness. The sea's dull noise or a few gray hairs prove to be enough for Chekhov's storytelling. The story ends with beautiful similes that evoke their love, and that evoke another realm in which they are husband and wife. That, however, is the narrator's construct that holds the reader until the end, which reads as follows:

> And it seemed as though in a little while the solution would be found, and then a new and splendid life would begin; and it was clear to both of them that they still had a long, long road before them, and that the most complicated and difficult part of it was just beginning. (Garnett translation)

This sounds rather like the end of *Crime and Punishment*:

> . . . here begins a new account, the account of a man's gradual renewal, the account of his gradual regeneration, his gradual transition from one world to another, his acquaintance with a new, hitherto completely unknown reality. It might make the subject of a new story—but our present story is ended. (Pevear and Volokhonsky translation)

Perhaps this kind of ending signals that the author has written himself into an impossible situation. Indeed, it is this story that Virginia Woolf had in mind when she wrote of Chekhov in "The Russian Point of View" that "our first impressions" are likely to be bewilderment. She notes the open-endedness: "A man falls in love with a married woman, and they part and meet, and in the end are left talking about their position and by what means they can be free from 'this intolerable bondage.'" But Woolf notes the following:

> These stories are inconclusive, we say, and proceed to frame a criticism based upon the assumption that stories ought to conclude in a way that we recognize. . . . where the tune is unfamiliar and the end a note of interrogation or merely the information that they went on talking, as it is in Chekhov, we need a very daring and alert sense of literature to make us hear the tune, and in particular those last notes which

complete the harmony. (“The Russian Point of View,” *The Common Reader*)

In the last notes of hope, Chekhov completed the harmony.

Translations

Constance Garnett’s translations were used for both “Peasants” and “Lady with a Dog.” These two stories appear together in *The Chekhov Omnibus: Selected Stories* (North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 1986). Garnett’s translations for these stories also appears on the Web at the University of Adelaide (South Australia) Library:

http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/c/chekhov/anton/

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. How does Chekhov de-romanticize peasant life?
2. What is his attitude to faith?
3. How does Chekhov's narrator (or Chekhov) respond to Anna? To Gurov?

Suggested Reading

Chekhov, Anton P. *The Chekhov Omnibus: Selected Stories.* Trans. Constance Garnett. North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 1986.

Other Books of Interest

De Sherbinin, Julie. *Chekhov and Russian Religious Culture: The Poetics of the Marian Paradigm*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997.

Mathewson, Rufus W., Jr. "Intimations of Mortality." *Anton Chekhov's Short Stories.* Ed. Cathy Popkin. Norton Critical Edition. 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006.

West, Cornel. "To Be Human, Modern and American" and "Chekhov, Coltrane and Democracy." *The Cornel West Reader.* Pp. xv–xx and 551–564. New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999.

Film

The Lady with the Dog. Directed by Joseph Heifetz. Starring Iya Savvina and Aleksey Batalov. Moscow: Lenfilm Studio, 1962.

Vanya on 42nd Street. Directed by Louis Malle. Culver City, CA: Sony Pictures, 1994.

Lecture 14:
Love and Death and the Russian Point of View

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Virginia Woolf's "The Russian Point of View" in *The Common Reader.*

In "From the Russian Point of View," Virginia Woolf introduces the following snippet from a work of literature:

> Learn to make yourselves akin to people. I would even like to add: make yourself indispensable to them. But let this sympathy be not with the mind—for it is easy with the mind—but with the heart, with love towards them. (*The Common Reader,* p. 174)

According to Woolf, a reader would take one look at that sentence and "instantly" declare "From the Russian . . ." What makes it seem so typically Russian? Woolf answers:

> The simplicity, the absence of effort, the assumption that in a world bursting with misery the chief call upon us is to understand our fellow-sufferers, "and not with the mind—for it is easy with the mind—but with the heart"—this is the cloud which broods above the whole of Russian literature, which lures us from our own parched brilliancy and scorched thoroughfares to expand in its shade—and of course with disastrous results . . .

Although certainly not all Russian literature complies, it would be fairly safe to say that Virginia Woolf has put her finger on one of the key concerns of Russian literature, one which, in her view, makes it stand out from the English literature of Woolf's time. And here, we should remember that the face of literature has changed since then. And one factor that has changed it is the fact that the Russian classics are now part of the reading fare of English-speaking readers, thanks to the brilliant work of generations of translators, who—in part through the encouragement of literary figures like Virginia Woolf—set about to make what Russians wrote available. I'd say that readers in the English-speaking world have embraced these features of the Russian novel, assimilated them, and to a degree made them their own. The extent to which Russian classics have infiltrated our literary—and cultural—scene can be seen from something like Woody Allen's *Love and Death.*

I want to return, however, to these questions. Based on Woolf's example of a "generic" passage from Russian literature and her ensuing explanation, it would seem that Russian literature does in fact specialize in a certain form of love: It's compassion, which is felt because human beings feel some solidarity with their "fellow-sufferers." Virginia Woolf also suggests that those nineteenth-century Russians seem to think the world is full of misery. What they had to go on is,

on some level, not our business here. But certainly we can't deny that for all our progress since the time of Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekhov, there is still untold misery. In that respect, then, the mission remains.

Virginia Woolf seemed to associate a new kind of love with the Russian novel. Although much that we have read follows some of the masterplots and formulas of novels everywhere, there may well be more varieties of loving experience than some other literary traditions display. Were that not the case, would Woolf be singling out their kind of non-sexual love? This is not to imply that sex doesn't make the world go around in Russia too, or that it doesn't heat up the Russian novel and drive its plots. It does. But where the plots often get original is in those cases where this new kind of love infiltrates.

Love in novels typically (but not always) is thought to take two forms, the courtship plot (the specialty of "proper" English novels) and the adultery plot—or the loosely plotted accounts of "dangerous liaisons." This would be the domain of the sexy French novel. Russians, who throughout their culture have assimilated models from the Western world, took on these models, often between the covers of the same book. *Anna Karenina* is a case in point. But just as important to *Anna Karenina,* and perhaps ultimately more so, is the love for one's fellow man, for one's neighbor, or for one's "near one," to translate literally the word used typically for this kind of love in the Russian context. And in the works we have read, this love of neighbor tends to be intertwined with love of God.

Although it's possible for compassion plots to become formulaic, much as love plots do, the nineteenth-century Russian novel and story seemed to offer a bit more variety because its definition of love was widened to include something beyond romantic or sexual love. (Playing a role here, to be sure, was the fact that within the nineteenth-century context, the expectation for a love plot by and large remained a traditional heterosexual pairing. Much has changed on the literary scene since then. The novels of Virginia Woolf, in fact, were among those that explored different kinds of loving relations, which may have been a factor in her engagement with new forms of narrative and new plots.)

Whether the works of literature we have read will be considered innovative on the romantic front will depend largely on how a reader responds to treatments of the courtship plot (as "marriage market") or of the adultery plot (solutions like Chekhov's that don't hinge on the death of the adulteress). What is new is the way these works make novelistic or story-worthy other forms of love. The constant question being posed regards the definition or delineation of neighborly love. Who does it include? Should Levin love (feel compassion for) Anna? Should Yakov love Rothschild? Should Raskolnikov love the horse? What does the suffering of others have to do with us? And, for that matter, when the circus man bumps into the lost Kashtanka, what is he supposed to do? And so forth. We have seen a number of our authors struggling to incorporate the different kinds of love into one heart. We have been warned of the dangers of turning the other cheek and we have been told to turn the other cheek. We have seen volatile mixes. The Russian novels seem to be saying "Love one another," but it's not as easy as all that. That's where the drama enters.

The other feature of the Russian novel is death. Whether reminders of death appear more often per page, per narrative life, or not, is open to question. (Leslie Fiedler has argued that the American novel, although squeamish about adult heterosexual sex, is all about death.) The Russians, however, seem to compete. At least, that is the consensus. E.M. Forster, in *Aspects of the Novel,* points out that it's very hard to "know" death, because the dying organism lacks the capacity for communicating the truth about death in a form of communication that the living can comprehend. All that is true, but the Russians we've read did their best to give us some sense of this. As you know, Dostoevsky felt that his experience of being prepared for a firing squad (in 1849) had some profound effect.

But narrating death itself isn't what is most important about the treatment of death. What these writers do is remind us of how, in the face of death, whether because death is staring us in the face (Bazarov's perception that death is an old joke that seems new when you're the one) or simply because we notice a gray hair (Gurov in the mirror at the end of "Lady with the Dog"), we may love differently. This explains the link between "Love" and "Death."

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What features does Virginia Woolf single out as being typical of the "Russian point of view"?
2. What are some of the typical "boy-meets-girl" scenarios in literature? How do the Russian works we have read diverge?
3. What means do the Russian authors use to draw attention to death, a subject that is ultimately beyond their descriptive powers?

Suggested Reading

Woolf, Virginia. *The Common Reader.* New York: Harvest Books, 2002.

Other Books of Interest

Many novelists, short-story writers, playwrights, and poets have acknowledged a profound debt to the Russian giants. The novels and stories listed as suggested reading below were written with Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, or Chekhov in mind. In some cases, they respond directly to a particular work; in other cases, the influence of one or more of the Russian giants may be beneath the surface.

Carver, Raymond. "The Errand." *Where I'm Calling From: Selected Stories.* New York: Vintage, 1989.

Coetzee, J.M. *The Master of Petersburg: A Novel.* Penguin, 1995.

Cruz, Nilo. *Anna in the Tropics: A Play in Two Acts.* New York: Dramatists' Play Service, Inc., 2004.

Ellison, Ralph. *The Invisible Man.* New York: Vintage, 1995.

Lawrence, D.H. *Lady Chatterley's Lover.* New York: Penguin, 1995.

McCartney, Sharon. *Karenin Sings the Blues.* (Poetry). Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane Editions, 2003.

Oates, Joyce Carol. "The Lady with the Pet Dog." *High Lonesome: New and Selected Stories.* New York: Ecco, 2006.

Trevor, William. "Reading Turgenev." *Two Lives.* New York: Penguin, 1992.

Tsypkin, Leonid. *Summer in Baden-Baden.* Trans. Angela and Roger Keys. Intro. Susan Sontag. New York: New Directions, 2001.

Suggested Readings:

Chekhov, Anton P. *The Chekhov Omnibus: Selected Stories.* Trans. Constance Garnett. North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 1986.

Chekhov, Anton. "Kashtanka." *Anton Chekhov's Short Stories.* Norton Critical Edition. 2nd ed. Ed. Cathy Popkin. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006.

———. "Rothschild's Fiddle." *Stories*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Bantam Books, 2000.

Chudakov, Alexander. "Dr Chekhov: A Biographical Essay (29 January 1860–15 July 1904)." Eds. Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain. *The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *Crime and Punishment*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Vintage/Random House, 1992.

———. *Notes from the Underground, The Double, and Other Stories*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003.

Frank, Joseph. *Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821–1849.* Vol. 1. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979.

———. *Dostoevsky: The Years of Ordeal, 1850–1859.* Vol. 2. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983.

———. *Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation, 1860–1865.* Vol. 3. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986.

———. *Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years, 1865–1871.* Vol. 4. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

———. *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet, 1871–1881.* Vol. 5. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Freeborn, Richard. *Dostoevsky: Life and Times.* London: Haus, 2003.

Freeze, Gregory L., ed. *Russia: A History.* Chapters 7 and 8. Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Hosking, Geoffrey. *Russia and the Russians: A History.* Chapters 6, 7, and 8. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Tolstoy, Leo. *Anna Karenina.* Trans. Constance Garnett, revised by Leonard J. Kent and Nina Berberova. New York: Modern Library, 2000.

———. *A Confession and Other Religious Writings.* Trans. Jane Kentish. New York: Penguin, 1987.

Turgenev, Ivan. *Fathers and Sons.* Norton Critical Ed. Trans. Constance Garnett, revised by Ralph Matlaw. New York: W.W. Norton, 1966.

———. *Fathers and Sons.* Norton Critical Ed. 2nd ed. Ed. and trans. Michael R. Katz. New York: W.W. Norton, 1989.

———. *Fathers and Sons.* Trans. Richard Freeborn. Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1991.

Suggested Readings (continued):

Wilson, A.N. *Tolstoy: A Biography.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001.

Woolf, Virginia. *The Common Reader.* New York: Harvest Books, 2002.

These books are available online through www.modernscholar.com or by calling Recorded Books at 1-800-636-3399.

Films:

Anna Karenina. Directed by Julien Duvivier. Screenplay by Julien Duvivier. Starring Vivian Leigh. Ontario, Canada, 1948.

Anna Karenina. Directed by Aleksandr Zarkhy. Screenplay by Vasili Katanyan. Russian (Soviet Union), 1967.

Crime and Punishment. Directed by Lev Kulidzhanov. Screenplay by Nikolai Figurovsky. Russian (Soviet Union), 1969.

The Gambler. Directed by Károly Makk. Screenplay by Katharine Ogden. Starring Michael Gambon as Fyodor Dostoevsky. Hungary, 1997.

The Lady with the Dog. Directed by Joseph Heifetz. Starring Iya Savvina and Aleksey Batalov. Moscow: Lenfilm Studio, 1962.

Love and Death. Directed by Woody Allen. Produced by Charles H. Joffe. Santa Monica, CA: MGM Home Entertainment Inc., 1975.

Match Point. Directed by Woody Allen. London: BBC Films, 2005.

Notes from Underground. Directed by Gary Walkow. Screenplay by Gary Walkow. Richland, WA: Gruber Pictures Production and Renegade Films, 1995.

Vanya on 42nd Street. Directed by Louis Malle. Culver City, CA: Sony Pictures, 1994.