5-4-2006

Tolstoy and the Woman Question

Jeanna Marie Whiting

University of South Florida

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/etd

Part of the American Studies Commons

Scholar Commons Citation

Whiting, Jeanna Marie, "Tolstoy and the Woman Question" (2006). USF Tampa Graduate Theses and Dissertations.
https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/etd/2755

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the USF Graduate Theses and Dissertations at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in USF Tampa Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usf.edu.
Tolstoy and the Woman Question

by

Jeanna Marie Whiting

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Liberal Arts Department of Humanities College of Arts and Sciences University of South Florida

Major Professor: Victor Peppard, Ph. D.
Michael Milam, Ph.D.
Paula Lee, Ph.D.

Date of Approval:
May 4, 2006

Keywords: Russia, women, nineteenth-century, art, anna karenina, family happiness

Copyright 2006, Jeanna Marie Whiting
Note to Reader: The original of this document contains color that is necessary for understanding the data. The original dissertation is on file with the USF library in Tampa, FL.
I would like to thank all of the fine professors who have helped me in the pursuit of this degree and in the writing of this thesis. To Dr. Peppard: who was always pushing me to move ahead even when I lacked the confidence to do so and for all of the good talks over tea. To Dr. Milam for his inspiring emails from “Mother Russia” when I was in the throws of reading Tolstoy. These first-hand experiences cemented images in my mind that had heretofore been considered as part of the fine literature of the past. To Dr. Lee: for being a wonderful mentor to me as a young and inexperienced student. You “showed me the ropes” and were always encouraging me with your positive, though large, words of encouragement.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my family for their support, encouragement, and patience while I was trudging through the mess of academia and trying to remain vigilant in my true purpose to my husband and children. To my mother and father who have been a support in so many ways. To God, for giving me the strength to bear the pressure of school and the ability to persevere in all challenging areas; this work is first and foremost a dedication to Him who lives in me.
Table of Contents

List of Tables i
List of Figures ii
Abstract iii
Chapter One: Introduction 1
Chapter Two: Social Issues Facing Women in 19th Century Russia 12
Chapter Three: Family Happiness: The Emerging Ideal 33
Chapter Four: Tolstoy’s Triumph: Seeing Beyond Gender 51
Chapter Five: Conclusion 73
References 81
Bibliography 84
List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.</td>
<td>The Major's Betrothal</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.</td>
<td>The Village Sermon</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.</td>
<td>The Unequal Marriage</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tolstoy and the Woman Question
Jeanna Marie Whiting

ABSTRACT

This work examines the perceptions of women in art and literature in Russia during the later half of the nineteenth century. It specifically focuses on the women question and examines women's function and role in Russian society and how different visual artists along with Tolstoy examine this issue through their artwork.

The first section of the work focuses specifically on women's social conditions in Russia highlighting their role as daughter, wife and mother. It examines the educational system in place designed for women and the limitations placed upon women concerning marriage and family life. Along with the historical and social analysis, this section also examines three Russian artists' portrayal of various issues relating to the woman question and the role, or lack thereof, of women in society.

The second section examines Tolstoy's initial examination of women's issues through his novella "Family Happiness," and attempts to answer the question: On what side of the woman question debate is Tolstoy? It challenges the accepted,
traditional reading of Tolstoy’s work as misogynistic and anti-woman, and reveals through a careful reading of the text, a sympathetic female character.

The last section deals with his monumental work, *Anna Karenina*, with a specific examination of how Tolstoy deals with the character Anna. It negates previous readings of the text by other critics who attempt to reveal Tolstoy’s antagonistic behavior toward the women characters in the text. Through a careful reading of specific passages of the text, the work shows that Tolstoy also creates a sympathetic character in Anna.

This work concludes attempting to position Tolstoy on neither side of the woman question, not the case with the artists studied in the work nor other authors mentioned during this period in history, and instead reveals Tolstoy’s determination to create characters and situations which are present in every society. In his approach, Tolstoy has succeeded in surpassing the boundaries of class and time and created characters and situations universal.
The social atmosphere in Russia during the mid-nineteenth century was tense with widespread debate which centered on questions focused on the rights and freedoms of several classes. Among the multiple social revolutions taking place in Russia such as the emancipation of the serfs, was the question of the woman's place in Russian society, which prompted a trenchant debate regarding the proper role of the nineteenth century woman. Up to this point, Russia, reflecting closely the ideology of the Western world regarding women, was consistent with the attitude that a woman's role in society should be limited to marriage and child bearing-- that she should devote all of her life to the care and service of her family. Women were denied the right to work outside the home, and if they sought such a position were rejected on the grounds of their femininity. To be intellectual also created another set of problems for women as they sought a means to asservate their prevailing anxieties through writing and other forms of expression. Men considered intelligence to be a masculine feature, which, on a woman, was inapt. But, because a younger, more progressive generation of Russian intellectuals, mostly men, believed women should be emancipated somewhat from the confines of their duties and be allowed more freedoms within marriage and in society, these issues spurred debate.
Artists from various genres examined the subjects of woman in marriage, woman in love, woman as mother and wife; woman's place in society was challenged and reconsidered. These topics were at the core of the debate of the woman question and became the platform for the examination of woman's acceptable place in society. Authors and painters reflected the unjust expectations society placed on women and, in some circumstances, offered a more positive though highly romanticized view of the emancipated woman in her glory. The three Russian painters chosen for this study focused specifically on the marriage of the young woman to the older man through amusing yet perceptive stereotypes of the older, unattractive man and the younger, innocent girl. The works of Pavel Fedotov and Vasily Pukirev show only the initial arrangement and ceremony of the ill matched couples, but Vasily Perov offers insight into the marriage post "honeymoon" period. These satiric pieces, through their examination of the cause and effect of the arranged marriage, establish one of the major debates concerning the woman question.

Leo Tolstoy, one of the most influential writers both in Russia and worldwide during the nineteenth century, picks up on the discourse regarding the marriage of the young girl to the older man. His position regarding the woman question has prompted debate among critics due to his polarizing views toward women. Many critics tend to read into his texts Tolstoy’s views, as a man, of woman. But, although he was an outward opponent of the emancipation of women, it is clear that Tolstoy generated, within the texts of his novels, sympathetic female characters whose lives were depicted as severely inhibited by social restrictions--the topic of arranged marriage being central. Both Family Happiness and Anna Karenina have heroines as the central protagonists
whose struggles center on their journey to define self, thereby reaching self-acceptance and happiness. The resolve of the character Masha in *Family Happiness* results from her acceptance of her place first as mother and second as wife. For Anna, whose slavish practice of honesty and the seeking of truth isolates her from her family and society, the only way to completely resolve her struggle with society and with her self (her conscience) is suicide. Neither of these heroines is condemned because of her actions; indeed, their plight is represented more as a natural human struggle which asserts itself in women even today than a historically contextualized problem which faced only women in the nineteenth century. What begins as an examination of the debate surrounding marriage and the woman question for Tolstoy, ends with a condemnation of society and the unsympathetic male. The focus of this work is to highlight Tolstoy’s genius which transcends not only his own personal views concerning women, but also the social and political debate on the "woman question," resulting in the examination of the soul of the person regardless of sex. His focus emphasizes his ultimate goal for himself and his characters—uncovering the truthfulness of the soul and using this quality to gauge the goodness of the person. The woman question for Tolstoy becomes only part of a deeper analysis of the problems facing society and his work is therefore able to epitomize not only the struggle of the women of his generation but the struggle of women in every generation.

During the 1860s in Russia, there arose from the intellectual circles a captivation with the woman question regarding their rights to freedom and property. This younger, more avant-garde or liberal circle of men took the point of view of the most influential
writers such as Chemyshevsky and Turgenev that women should be regarded equally with men, that their capacity for understanding and reason should not be considered hindered in any way, and that men should cease to view women as weak, emotional beings who lack the gift of a logical mind. George Sand, whose life and fiction both reflect the "idealized" example of the emancipated woman, was hailed by many of the liberal intellectuals in Russia and abroad because work and life gave proof that women had the ability to live freely, happily, and successfully without the aid and guidance of men. Chemyshevsky, author of "A Woman's Complaint," wanted to emancipate women from the "bedroom and the kitchen" (Pushkareva, 236), and wanted to improve the educational system for women so that it would be comparable to that of men. "These two demands, to work and to receive education became the focus of the Russian women's movement that was born in the mid-nineteenth century" (Pushkareva, 236).

At this time in Russia, a woman was quite constrained over the decisions regarding her life before and after marriage. There is some debate as to the privileges a married woman might have had in Russia, but there are no dissenting views as to the limited rights and powers of a young girl before she was married. Views about femininity greatly hindered the education of young girls as it was considered a waste of time to spend resources on the education of women whose sole purpose "whether conducted at home or at school, was to make...attractive brides" (Pushkareva, 226). It was also generally believed that education made women appear unfeminine (Hutton, 33), and that they were intellectually inferior to men.

Resources were channeled into the moral education and instruction of etiquette of a young girl. The children's literature and magazines highlighted the moral ideals of a
young girl through stories focusing on specific concerns. Russian society taught that the "ideal woman" would be pious, pure, submissive and domestic. Once the young girl was indoctrinated into accepting and trying to imitate these ideals, and her parents could afford to send her to gymnasium (an term equivalent to high school), she would learn how to put into practice the lessons of childhood by learning behavioral etiquette--when at court, when being courted, when at balls and other social events--in general, how to appear desirable to young men. Domestic education, another essential subject for the young woman, focused on preparing her for the duties of household manager and educator of her children. This type of education was designed to encourage the young upper-class girl, in her pursuit as a successful wife and mother, to achieve a well-balanced home life (Stites, 10).

Much of Russian art and literature reflected the most pressing issues facing women in Russia in the 19th century. Westernizers, those Russians who identified with the rest of Europe and wanted to adopt some of its ideologies, both social and political, wanted art to serve a useful purpose -- not just be "art for art's sake," "the Russian artist was concerned with the tendentious and transformative purpose of art and not simply with formal or esthetic qualities" (Stavrou, 113). They wanted their art to comment on the social and political issues in Russia and then create an art that would embolden participants to change their positions -- to act in a socially conscientious manner (Valkenier, 163). The tradition of marriage matching was hotly contested by the younger, more liberal generation. The subject of a young, almost child-like girl being wed to an old, worn out man was commonly explored through art. Three paintings, each produced by three individual Russian artists, will be studied in order to examine how the
"woman question" was being addressed through art: Fedotov's *The Major's Betrothal* (figure F-1), Perov's *A Village Sermon* (figure F-2), and Pukirev's *The Unequal Marriage* (figure F-3). In many of these paintings, the young girls look like they are being sold into slavery, for it is clear in their expressions that, had they to make this choice on their own, they would never have made such an ill-suited match.

This gender-"gapped" marriage, many times the woman being as much as thirty years younger than the man, was also reflected in Russian literature and linked to the failing institution of the family—another topic of interest in the later half of the nineteenth century. In his book *Anna Karenina*, Leo Tolstoy portrays a young, beautiful woman who has been ill-matched to an older, lifeless man. Their difference in age forges the wall that will eventually separate them both emotionally and physically. Anna's son Seryoga loses his mother, her husband Alexey loses his wife, and Anna loses herself in her search for love and true happiness. The "unhappy marriage" has led directly to the "unhappy family."

It is then safe to say that women were trapped in the male dominated world where a woman's most celebrated virtues were her looks, her purity, and her innocence. Precisely these virtues would win a man, and it would be these fleeting, superficial virtues that would be the first to evaporate. Many of Tolstoy's works dealing with the issue of women, family, and love address this inevitable decline. What is one to do? A girl is raised with the specific purpose of acquiring a good "match," and when she has done all for her family and has sacrificed all for husband, he tires of her (in many circumstances) and seeks pleasure through other means, mainly through other women. Tolstoy emphatically believed that a woman's sole purpose should be that of having
children and being a mother, but his fictionalized female characters reveal that this most "blessed" job is what robs a young, lovely girl of the charm that won the heart of her husband. She is trapped.

The main literary examples to be examined show Tolstoy's inquiries as a writer into the "woman question." Characters such as, Masha from *Family Happiness*, and Kitty, Anna, and Dolly from *Anna Karenina*, are more like sociological experiments of women before marriage and after marriage than concrete, stabilized characters with predetermined intentions and experiences. Their femaleness is the only constant, and once these characters have been established in their married lives, the manipulated variables, love, marriage and family, are introduced with a precise record of the actions and reactions these characters make regarding their choices with little commentary from the narrator to lead the reader in any direction at all. Indeed, Edwina Cruise suggests in her article "Women, Sexuality and the Family in Tolstoy," that Tolstoy seemed to be as enthralled at the outcome of the characters' lives as were his readers, and it does not appear from the historical evidence that he planned the events to take place as they did. "There is an oft-told story that during the writing of *Anna Karenina* he [Tolstoy] emerged from his study shaking his head in bewilderment at what Anna had done that day" (Cruise, 192).

The heroine Masha in the novella *Family Happiness* is Tolstoy's first attempt at such an examination into the heart and actions of a woman. Tolstoy links the causes that lead to Masha's "downfall" to her husband's negligence. Sergey offers no direction and is too willing to give Masha the freedom to live life as she pleases. Anna, the main character in *Anna Karenina*, shares traits similar to those of Masha. She is faced with an
excessive amount of freedom and almost no direction from her husband who is more consumed with work than with fostering his relationship with his wife and son. Anna is presented with a tempting offer of intimacy with a man whose whole world seemingly revolves around his adoration for her -- such an intelligent and attractive woman. The parallel is evident in both stories -- Masha is also forced to choose between a life filled with lovers or one devoted to her husband. The main difference between these two characters lies in the tenderness and compassion of the husbands. Masha's husband, although discouraged at her choices and the direction her life is heading, nevertheless had at some point garnered her whole heart in such a way that the sweet memories of new and unbridled love held her in check when she was being pursued by other men. Anna’s relationship to Alexey assumes a formal tone from the moment they are introduced as a couple in the novel, and, in fact, we see her together with Vronsky before we ever see her with her husband.

The two other main female characters in Anna Karenina, Dolly and Kitty, are both presented in differing scenarios and followed through the course of the novel. Dolly is naïve, much like Masha, when she is first married. Tolstoy is unforgiving in his description of her appearance after bearing many children, and her piousness becomes somewhat of a drawback to her character because she lacks the sexual appeal to hold her husband's attention. Combined with Dolly’s lack of appeal is her husband’s insatiable desire to pursue and conquer women, and it is with this sad truth that Dolly must live. Tolstoy's sympathy toward Dolly seems to extend only so far as her devotion to her children makes her a valuable commodity to her household, but her upbringing and appearance have not brought her the happiness she desires.
Kitty is perhaps the epitome of the ideal female according to Tolstoy. She has beauty, which is the first and most powerful point of attraction for a woman. She is humbled through Vronsky's rejection of her once Anna is introduced; this humility brings depth of character to her once shallow façade and introduces her to the "ways of the world." Her love for Levin is stronger through his ability to forgive her rejection of his initial offer of marriage, and this love secures Kitty's determination to be the best wife and mother in order to fulfill the desires of her husband. She has a mind of her own which was allowed to flourish with thoughts and ideas after she removed herself from society and reflected internally on her situation as a woman with no future. These traits combine to create the ideal female character for Tolstoy.

Anna's actions are widely rejected by society, and it is apparent that Tolstoy uses her character to show the inconsistencies, the hypocrisies in her society. Anna is rejected but yet she has stayed true to herself and has refused to be a liar and hide her love affair with Vronsky. So the question then becomes, what is Tolstoy's view of her actions and of her life? Of course, it is impossible to know for sure what views Tolstoy had regarding Anna and her actions. He certainly has created a sympathetic character, but her actions have also merited her unhappiness; so in a sense she is also to blame for her unhappiness. Here, the more important question is what was Tolstoy's view on the "woman question," and how does he portray his view whether consciously or subconsciously through his art.

As documented by Troyat, Tolstoy shared no common interests with society, so it is safe to assume that his opinion would not be the most popular nor the most widely accepted one. In fact, Cruise states that "Tolstoy developed a reputation for orneriness,
or, to put it more charitably, he revealed what was to become a defining feature in his life and art: an inherent antipathy toward popular theories and accepted authorities, especially if they are endorsed by members of his own class" (191). Troyat and others, have documented Tolstoy's fervent belief that a woman's place is in the home, being productive, and with this understanding, she would inevitably be endowed with purity and obedience to her husband. So on what side of the woman question is Leo Tolstoy? Neither side; Tolstoy's feelings for women are as independent as he is from the rest of Russian society.

Tolstoy is more concerned with aspects of the soul than he is with defining the functioning role of a certain class or gender within a society. It can be argued that Tolstoy believed all of these attempts to define people, to categorize, only restrict the natural course and flow of their true place in society. If one limits the role of women to merely a decorative piece of property, then the results will be her unfulfilled desires leading to desertion from her husband either physically or emotionally. If one encourages women to escape from their natural role--defined by Tolstoy to be limited to mother, wife and estate manager, and seek fulfillment outside this sphere--the family will suffer, the family being the chief cornerstone only upon which a great nation can be built. He considers the role of the wife and mother as "the potential salvation of the human race:"

Such women who fulfill their mission reign over men, and serve as a guiding star to humankind; such women form public opinion and prepare the coming generation; and therefore in their hands lies the highest power, the power to save men from existing and threatening evils of our time. Yes, women, mothers, in your hands more than in those of anyone else lies the salvation of the world. (quoted in Mandelker, 28).
It is clear when examining Tolstoy's fiction that his view on the "woman question" remained unanswered. All of his characters, female and male, who show a desire to pursue happiness, find it lies within themselves. Freedom, money, children, and love do not matter—do not secure happiness. What does matter is the ability to find istina, Essential Truth, within oneself (Nabokov, 141). Anna, too much a part of the physical world, relied too heavily on the gratification of the flesh to ever reach a place of contentment and an understanding of life's istina. This is her downfall. Yet, Tolstoy masterfully creates Anna as a sympathetic character because he reveals her desire to find istina. She does not compromise her love for Vronsky by hiding their affair, but openly embraces it. This honesty is what saves her, in the eyes of the reader, and what destroys her resulting from the pressures of society.
Social Issues Facing Women in 19th Century Russia

For a long time I had to fight against a feeling of aversion for my country; now I am beginning to accustom myself to all the horrors that make up the human condition...Fortunately there is one salvation; morality, the world of the arts, poetry and human relations. There, nobody bothers me, policemen or town councilor. I am alone. Outside the wind howls, outside all is mud and cold; I am here, I play Beethoven and shed tears of tenderness; or...I create my own men and women and live with them, covering sheets of paper... (quoted in Troyat, 179)
--Leo Tolstoy

The question of the emancipation and education of women emerges in the fourth part of *Anna Karenina*, Chapter 10. The setting is a dinner party where the main characters Levin, Karenin, Oblonsky, Dolly and Kitty as well as other "intellectuals" are discussing the issue of the education of women. The two viewpoints established by this discussion are those who believe that women can only better serve their communities and themselves if they are educated, and those who consider the education of women "injurious" due to the fact that it will eventually lead to their emancipation, which in turn will destabilize the most concrete feature of society, marriage and the family.

Pestsov, the young, enthusiastic, educated, intellectual is the most vocal proponent for the education of women. He expresses his views on the subject by stating: "It is a vicious circle. Women are deprived of rights because of their lack of education, and their lack of education results from their lack of rights" (353). The value of
education would then open the doors for women to be able to hold office in government agencies and be self-employed, if their life so demanded that course of action.

There arises a general consensus of agreement on the education and rights of women, but interestingly, Tolstoy pits two unexpected characters against the general consensus: Dolly and her father the Prince Shcherbatsky. Dolly argues that women who find themselves without the shelter of a man or, at very least a home, are the type who have willingly chosen their denigrated life, because the only source of existence for a woman outside the home would be some form of prostitution. Dolly's position is an interesting one in that she chooses a conservative role as a wife and mother and has no pity for women whose fate, though likely unmerited, is less desirable.

There are two reasons Tolstoy has bestowed upon Dolly's character this view of women. The first is due in large part to her husband’s infidelity with "less desirable women." The second, less obvious reason lies in her position in society. She is worth something, she is valuable in her place in society precisely because these clearly defined roles for women and men exist. If these roles reversed, or at very least if women were able to become more educated and have more choices in society, Dolly's value as a wife and mother would be lowered as has happened in modern time with the devaluing of the role/job of the mother/housewife.

Prince Shcherbatsky is surprisingly unsympathetic to the plight of women's education and emancipation. He has been, up to this point, a positive, sympathetic character regarding women. His relationship to Kitty and his reaction to her rejection by Vronsky show a father who genuinely loves his daughter and does not merely wish to see her betrothed to a "proper and respectable man." He prefers the rugged, ill-tempered
Levin who has never been particularly fashionable with the ladies and is not part of the "fashionable circle," because he sees in Levin the qualities that he knows will make for a true, genuinely good husband for his daughter. But in this scene, he holds nothing back in disparaging of Pestsov's view on the subject of women. He is portrayed as a babbling buffoon, who is making the most incredulous jokes about women at Pestsov's expense. The prince refers to an old Russian proverb: "Women's hair is long, but their wits...[are short]" (Tolstoy, 354), with the implication that women are not capable of becoming contributing members of society.

This argument takes a more personal turn when Kitty and Levin carry on the discussion. In a more secluded location, Kitty and Levin are about to declare their love to one another. Here, before the famous chalk scene can commence, Levin and Kitty must come to terms with their past relationship. Kitty must be forgiven and Levin must come to understand her situation. It is here that the woman question re-emerges.

Levin is in complete agreement with Dolly that the woman's place is undoubtedly in the home. "Levin agreed with Dolly, that a girl who does not get married can find woman's work in the family. He supported this view by saying that no family can dispense with help... (361)." Levin's justification for his belief is at least more understandable and better articulated than that of Shcherbatsky and Dolly, but his argument does not have enough merit to stand up to Kitty's response.

She challenges his idea by exposing how shameful a position she was placed in after she had rejected Levin and been rejected by Vronsky. Her "opportunities" for marriage had both been extinguished over the course of a week. She was ashamed of being rejected, and although she does not specifically say so, the implications such a
rejection would have in her circle of friends and society at large would have been disastrous for a young girl. Since Kitty turned down Levin's earlier proposal of marriage, she was faced with the unfortunate fact that she could have very well been forced to assume the role of "old-maid" with no more opportunities for love or family life. Once her parents died, she would have had to rely on the generosity of her sisters for support. Her education and training have provided her with no other skills beside that of raising a family -- what is one to do?

Levin sees this despair, as the reader is also intended to see it, and changes his mind immediately and surprisingly. He does this out of his love for Kitty, of course, but also because he is able to grasp the full impact such a life and such restrictions have on women all across Russia. By giving the conversation over to these two characters with whom the reader has become intimately acquainted, Tolstoy makes it much easier to examine these issues from the viewpoint of Kitty and Levin, two sympathetic characters. In arguing for our sympathy for her, he thereby also causes us to sympathize with the plight of all women.

It is also important to consider the placement of this conversation within the text of *Anna Karenina*. At this point in the novel, Karenin is resolved to divorce Anna due to her flagrant disregard for his most urgent demand that she not see Vronsky at the Karenin home. Anna's relationship with Vronsky is now public knowledge and her pregnancy from this relationship bears the omen of death from the dreams both she and Vronsky are having. Her hatred toward her husband is evident, and although we feel sympathetic toward Karenin because of his wife's infidelity and her utter hatred of him, we see Anna's predicament as one that is utterly hopeless and caused by the unnatural union between the
older Karenin and the young, energetic and passionate Anna. Accompanying this exposure of the failure of their marriage, Tolstoy's move to highlight Anna's truthfulness, her most noble quality, accentuates the sympathetic feelings the reader has for Anna.

The only real history the reader gets regarding Karenin and Anna is through the eyes of Karenin. Tolstoy briefly alludes to the match made between the two as one not growing out of love and desire but being merely a business arrangement. Anna’s aunt essentially induces Karenin to propose out of what she claims is his responsibility by the mere fact that he has had relations with the family and therefore with Anna. To dismiss her would be a dishonor both for himself and Anna. This secures for Anna, a young, upper middle-class girl, the best possible match both for herself and her family. "Anna was betrothed by an aunt, orphan to orphan, to an embarrassed older man. The Oblonsky children, like the Karenins and the Vronskys, but unlike the Levins and the Shcherbatskys, are highest aristocracy but weak links in a chain. Married young for the sake of security and fortune, she has it seems never lived out the beauty and gaiety in her demeanor" (Segal, 93). In this passage Tolstoy seems to be rejecting these unequal marriages between couples with no physical or emotional desire for each other, with an age gap sometimes ranging twenty-five years or more, and no common interests. With these events unfolding parallel to one another--the discussion of women’s rights at the dinner party and Karenin’s actions to initiate divorce--Tolstoy seems to be saying that Anna’s behavior in this situation does not seem to be so unforgivable.

The issue of the emancipation of women, or as it will be referred to hereafter as the "woman question," arose at a time when Russian society was facing serious moral
questions in all aspects of society. The emancipation of women was certainly not the main focus at this time, but it was part of the broader range of issues present by mid-nineteenth century. Many intellectuals and more liberal politicians were calling for an examination into the justification and fairness of the serf/slave economy. The ability to question anything in Russia during this time was due in large part to the new regime of Alexander II whose lax rules on censorship and bureaucracy opened the doors for more dialogue on issues that had begun to surface in politics, literature and art. There were clearly drawn divisional lines on these hotly contested issues, but, more interestingly, these debates, which surface in the art and literature, had varying degrees of support from across the different social strata. Freedom, in general, was the rallying cry under which most all else was lumped: serfdom, women, censorship, etc. "In this situation, literature and art must inevitably become directly embroiled in social questions, nearly always defending the interests of the most oppressed sections of society. They embodied the critical mood of the age, touching its rawest nerve, ruthlessly exposing its inner conflicts and subjecting every artistic image to rigorous ethical evaluation" (Sarabianov, 103).

According to Richard Stites, author of *The Women’s Liberation Movement in Russia*, the initial surge in support, let alone acknowledgement of the issues facing women, came from male advocates seeking to inspire debate and bring about change in support of women’s freedom through education and employment. Greene also refers to the initial Russian Liberation movement beginning in the 1850's stating that: "it was publicized and theorized by men such as Nekrasov, Chernyshevsky, Herzen, etc. . ." (89). Greene notes that these men did sympathize with the women’s movement, because they themselves were suffering under oppression that was political in nature; a direct result of
the censorship restrictions imposed by Nicholas I. She also points out that these actions could be interpreted only as a part of the furtherance of their broader cause—to revolutionize all of Russia.

The idea of art being a catalyst for change was not only present within the framework of literature but also pervaded the visual arts. In order for these artists to truly represent the most pressing societal issues in Russia they first had to determine what exactly set them apart as Russians so that the art reflected genuine interest in areas which mirrored the movements in Russia. What may have been a central area of interest and debate in Europe would not necessarily have correlated with issues of interest in Russia. In any case, the approach to subject matter and depiction was a hotly contested and highly debatable area depending on the views of the artist, whether they be a Slavophile, leaning more toward a conservative standpoint to depict various aspects of Russian culture that reflect only Russian culture, or whether they be a Westernizer generally tending to be more liberal with a more European influence, who "saw art as an auxiliary to the reform movement, expecting painters to help edify and improve Russia by reminding the public that the reforms, begun in the 1860's, needed to be extended and elaborated" (Valkenier, 163). These reforms included the issue of marriage, women's rights and the family and are evident in the works of the painters highlighted here.

Pavel Andreevich Fedotov's (1815-52) emerges as a painter that seems to satisfy both points of view. He has the ability to capture the true Russian spirit while commenting on the negative aspects of that spirit. According to Alan Bird's *A History of Russian Painting*, Fedotov gained initial success as a satirical, social comedy painter. His work, due in large part to its controversial subject matter, was rejected by the regime of
Nicholas I, and his reputation as an artist was further challenged by the Academy due to jealousies and rivalries. What is significant about Fedotov is how he viewed his work regarding its social significance. Bird states, "he commented without allowing his work to deteriorate into mere illustration of social topics. He did not attack specific abuses but like his contemporaries Gogol and Ostrovsky sought to expose the greed, the hypocrisy, the materialism and the lack spirituality to be seen everywhere in the Russia of Nicholas I" (109-110).

The Major's Betrothal (F-1) is both a satiric and eerie scene whose subject includes a young girl running away from her mother, father, a match-maker and an older, overweight major standing in the doorway. The only figure who displays any sympathy for the young girl and her predicament, that of being forced marry a man whom she does not love or have anything in common with, is the peasant positioned to the left of the canvas and more toward the background of the picture. The mother is physically holding the daughter in place, seeming to yank her back toward the open door where the major is waiting, like a lion in the shadows, ready to pounce upon his prey. The mother and the daughter are almost identical in physical appearance aside from the mother bearing a more aged face. The father of the young girl looks as if he could be her grandfather with his long white beard and unassuming expression. It is clear that the mother has no scruples assigning to her daughter the same life, the same husband, she was also given as a young girl, in order to carry on the tradition of betrothal and marriage present in nineteenth century Russia. The major's calm, bemused expression only confirms the worst—that the girl has no chance of refusal, but that, even if she initially rebels against
her parents' best wishes, she will be resigned to comply due to monetary and legal agreements between the two families.

Alexander II's ascension to the throne made the second half of the nineteenth century the most political and socially active time in Russian history. The new Tsar's more complacent attitude toward political critics gave artists, intellectuals, and social reformers a chance to step up their call to the change and advancement of social issues. Vasily Grigorievich Perov (1833-1882) who is considered the successor of Fedotov through his socially critical subject matter in his art, "exemplifed the political inclinations of the 1860's" in that his art makes the transition from "Fedotov's satirical treatment of various classes and their foibles to an expose of institutions that oppressed the people" (Valkenier, 161). His painting, *A Village Sermon* (F-2) 1861, not only exaggerates the futility of the power of the church, the vast discrepancy in wealth and privilege revealed through the contrast of the peasants and the wealthy landowner, but also the critical view of marriage in upper class society. The husband, fat, old, sleeping, is contrasted to a young, beautiful and very curious wife who is being seduced, in the church, by an equally young and handsome courtier. Her indifference to her husband's presence and the curious and amused expression on her face give the viewer the impression that the young man's whisperings, whatever they may be, are evidently more exciting than her husband's snores.

Vasily Vladimirovich Pukirev (1832-90) belongs to the school of Russian painters known as the peredvizhniki which was the Russian movement begun by artists around the time of Perov who were disenchanted with the formal subject matter and ideology of the Academy of the Arts and sought to establish a counter-culture artistic style to more
adequately address issues of interest for them. The subject of Pukirev's painting, *The Unequal Marriage* (F-3), aligns best to the topic of study for this paper. Depicted is a very young girl, head bowed and eyes downcast, positioned proximally to a much older, or old man, whom she is apparently going to wed. The fact that the priest's face is in the shadow suggests his unwillingness to shed light on the grave situation of this and all unequal marriages, which will eventually lead to a scene similar to Perov's *The Village Sermon* (F-2). Behind the bride are positioned all of the younger audience members, and behind the groom are the much older, more traditional members of the group. The absence of wrinkles or any signs of aging whatsoever on the bride's face and hands are starkly contrasted to the deep creases lining the cheeks, brow and lips of the groom. "The misery of the bride is given added significance by the indifferent or calculating faces of the onlookers, the heavy gold vestments of the priest and the virginal whites and greens of the wedding dress on which a lighted candle throws an appropriately symbolic patch of red" (Bird, 136).

iii

Since the main focus of this paper is the examination of certain artists and their reactions to the woman question through very selected works, this socio-historical analysis will focus exclusively on the upper-class women of Russia. Much could be said about the peasant and working class women's emancipation, but the subjects of all the visual and literary work remained focused on the upper classes.

As noted earlier, women of the upper classes were restricted through the outward governmental policies that confined women to the home and to life as a mother. These policies empowered men to take control of the life and property of women once they
were married. They were not allowed to travel without the consent of a male relative, and this limited their opportunities for work, education and experience. Outside the restrictions imposed on women by the law, were the internal restrictions placed on women by their limited roles in society. They were limited though their education, through their marital choices, and through their role as wife and mother to the extent that, in the mid-nineteenth century, advocates such as Pirogov (Stites, 32) who fought for the reshaping of woman's place in society, began their campaign to empower and enable women to achieve a new status in society.

Critics tend to agree that the rearing and education of girls during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was debilitating for the woman's cause. Up to the age of eight or nine, a young middle to upper class girl was raised at home under the protection of the father and mother and educated in the home. Sometimes, if the family could afford the expense, a private tutor or governess was employed to educate the young girl in the rudiments of math and the languages as well as instruct her in the etiquette of her class, rank and social position.

Diana Greene's article titled "Mid-Nineteenth Century Domestic Ideology in Russia" details the ideology perpetuated by the government and the popular fiction of the day to harness the young woman's understanding of herself and her role in society through the literature written exclusively for young children. Using multiple examples, Greene reveals how these fictional stories had every intention to clearly define the social standards for young boys and girls. The stories, usually found in children's magazines, set clear boundaries for a young woman's role in society illustrating the necessity for girls to be pure, pious, submissive and domestic. These veiled qualities carried hid behind
good versus bad fictionalized characters that were placed in certain situations and
succeeded by doing the right and noble thing.

These stereotypes were very influential and widely accepted across much of
society. Their presence continued to influence women and the perceived notions of
women long after girlhood simply by the fact that they reappeared in the male authored
literature (as opposed to the random works appearing in Russia authored by women) who,
more often than not, cast their heroines with these same qualities. This transfer and
adoption of ideology permeating a wider audience in society effectually created, for the
nineteenth century woman, the burden of meeting the strict criteria of "the ideal woman,"
and these didactic tracts became an influential part of Russian consciousness. Greene
points out that these same magazines would include stories directed to the male audience
stoking the flames of desire to become brave, noble, heroic and recklessly daring.

The obvious impact this type of "moral story" had on an entire generation of
Russians was pervasive. In the first place, there is no denying the mere fact that a young
girl who lacked the "ideal" qualities of purity, piousness, submissiveness, and domesticity
would be made to feel inadequate both to herself and in the eyes of those around her. Her
faith in her abilities as a woman would be greatly shaken as is shown through the writings
of several female authors during and after this time who felt it was outside their realm of
"defined roles" to write. The second hindrance this type of literature had on the Russian
population is that it predisposed young men to assume that the image of the "ideal
female" should be innate in all young women and thus created unrealistic expectations for
mates later on in life.
It is unfortunate that, after the initial phases of education and upbringing, all a young girl had to look forward to were studies focused primarily on the nature of domestic responsibilities and the art of attracting a husband. Stites again: "There was no higher or professional education for women until the 1870's... Secondary schools were few in number and accessible only to gentry girls and a smattering of merchants' daughters (Stites, 4)." Indeed, the "high school" which had been established by Catherine II in 1764 (Stites, 4) for the education and advancement of women, had become a breeding school for beautiful brides. Initially, the school was designed for the purpose of advancing the education of women and the cultural values of Europe, but it soon became apparent that Russian society considered it foolish to spend valuable resources on educating women in subjects that would be unnecessary extras. A woman's place was in the home and she should be educated to perform her duties as skillfully and adeptly as possible. Math, science, the languages, etc., were unnecessary save for a basic understanding of the rudiments in order equip her to then educate her young children. Education for women was limited to domestic teaching regarding roles as a wife and mother so that women could achieve both success in domestic affairs and a well balanced home life. "The institutka (high school girl) was a standing joke in Russian society, and the word became a veritable synonym for the light-headed and ultra-naïve female" (Stites, 5). Stites quotes Pirogov as saying on the dangers of superficial education for women: "'Her education usually turns her into a doll. It consists of dressing her up, putting her on display before a class of idlers, keeping her behind a curtain, and having her perform like some marionette. But as the rust eats away the wires, she begins to see
through the holes and tears in the curtain what has been so carefully hidden from her' " (Stites, 32).

In spite of what the modern educated reader would interpret as severe educational deprivation, Russian society and Russian women were surprisingly better educated than much of their European counterparts and had more rights and responsibilities than women in other countries. Marceline Hutton, author of *Russian and West European Women: Dreams, Struggles and Nightmares*, writes that Russia was very progressive compared to other European countries. Women had control, at least to some extent, over their land, their bodies, marriage choices, and social lives. "Primogeniture was not the rule in Russia as in Europe, and daughters could inherit land as well as moveable property. In upper class families, land was normally divided among all children. Russian women had de jure, if not de facto, control of their property after marriage" (Hutton, 31). Stites also notes that, although young girls were not permitted to marry without their parents' consent, they could not be coerced into a marriage they did not desire (6). Of course, this type of blatant rebellion would do more harm than good to a young girl, but it was a legal right in Russia and should be noted. Also, more Russian women were educated with higher degrees than women in Europe, and the general consensus concludes that this was due to the support from the liberal, radical Russian men who generally sanctioned their education and their work (Hutton, 31).

But, girl's education continued only until she was married; her duties were then solely focused on being a wife, mother, and household manager. Pushkareva, in her book *Women in Russian History from the 10th-20th Century*, divides the upper classes into two groups: city dwellers and those who lived in the country—with each group carrying
certain associations with class, wealth and domestic labor. The city dwellers had to be of a more aristocratic and wealthy family in order to afford the luxury and expenditures of life in the city. Their lives reflected a more prosperous income with idleness, social visitation, balls and the theater common on the agenda of many who dwelt in the city.

In the less affluent upper class families, wives were sent to live on the family estate and only the man of the house would trip to the city for business and pleasure. Rural women had numerous domestic duties but less social pressure to look and act a certain way; they were free to dress how they wanted and entertain whomever they chose. Domestic duties included: managing the finances and general affairs of the estate, and the education of the children. "The master of the estate hoped to find in his wife a friend most of all" (Pushkareva, 229).

No matter what the class, all women shared the understanding of subjection to the male head of house. In her work *Mothers and Daughters*, Barbara Engel discusses the patriarchal authority in the household and the understood implied promise a woman would make upon marriage—"they must promise to be submissive and show "limitless obedience" (10). This idea was one to be challenged by the liberals and reformers of the mid to late nineteenth century. "They [the reformers] recognized that the family hierarchy reproduced and reinforced the social hierarchy and that the authoritarian relations between parents and children and husbands and wives perpetuated the despotism of the old order" (Engel, 45).

Just as Tolstoy, when he grew older, began searching within for life with a greater purpose than what he already knew—once marriage had revealed all its fruits, a literary
career all its purposes, and a position as a landowner all its joys and sorrows—so too does
the Russian woman want to have an opportunity to make her life count; thus the woman
question emerged.

Tolstoy's accounts of single and married life for women in the two works of
fiction *Family Happiness* and *Anna Karenina*, graphically reveal just how confining and
rigid life was for a girl in nineteenth century Russia—before marriage and once she
became a woman.

The character Masha in Tolstoy's *Family Happiness* exhibits all the qualities of
the "ideal woman." According to Greene, for a girl to be pious she must always be
involved in prayer. She must submit to the male authority figures or relatives, and her
choices if she does not marry are to either take the veil or to die young (84). These
romantic notions all play out in *Family Happiness* through Masha's experiences as a
young girl. She is pictured at the beginning of the story as having apathetic views about
life, but is charged by her male "guardian figure" to make use of herself by way of
educating her younger sister. Once she realizes that she will soon be asked to marry her
"guardian," she falls into a time of intense piety: fasting, praying, going to confession,
etc. She is also portrayed after her marriage as kneeling down to pray to the icons in her
bedroom.

Masha displays the ideal quality of purity that, according to Greene, can be
defined as finding no enjoyment in the act of sex and not being aware of her power to
allure (85). Immediately upon marriage to Sergey, Masha is revolted by his touch and
shrinks into the corner of the carriage to escape the fear that grows in her heart.

He sat down beside me and shut the door after him. I felt a sudden pang...
.Huddling in a corner, I looked out at the distant fields and the road flying

27
past in the cold glitter of the moon. Without looking at him, I felt his presence beside me. 'Is this all I have got from the moment, of which I expected so much?' I thought; and still it seemed humiliating and insulting to be sitting alone with him, and so close. I turned to him, intending to speak; but the words would not come, as if my love had vanished, giving place to a feeling of mortification and alarm. (521)

Although Tolstoy makes no reference to her fear of intercourse, we can only assume that her upbringing and her education has done little to prepare her for the experience awaiting her in the bedroom. As noted by Engel, the Russian Orthodox church considered chastity to be the highest form -- the most ideal state. Even in marriage, the church required that prior to sexual relations, the icons should be turned away to face the wall and the man should remove his cross. Women were considered sinful because they were associated with "sexual attractiveness and therefore with sin" (Engel, 10).

In Anna Karenina, the main character Anna has chosen to rebel against the moral principles established by society and the church, leaving her husband and abandoning her son to live openly with her lover Vronsky. This behavior and the subsequent violent demise she suffers, carry the implication that Tolstoy was trying to convince his peers (the liberals in favor of women's emancipation) how ill equipped women are to handle their own affairs and to show what becomes of a woman who has too much freedom. Many critics tend to read Anna's actions and interpret her character under the influence of the opening quote in the book: "Vengeance is mine, I shall repay," and consider Tolstoy's decisions in creating such a character with these certain flaws as his determination to condemn all women, who have the ability to make decisions for themselves, to an unhappiness equivalent to a type of "death in life." It would be a shallow reading if one were to stop there and not consider all the noble qualities Tolstoy has bestowed upon his unlucky heroine. Aside from this argument that will be addressed later, Anna has been
subject to a very limited existence void of significant adult relationships, a marriage lacking any passion, and so little responsibilities that her life has no meaning. Her one saving grace is her love for her son Scryoga, but he is unable to provide the emotional and physical needs still present within her. Vronsky's admiration and attentions fulfill this need, a need that her husband's nature is utterly unable to fill. Vronsky's affections quickly complicate her relations with her son and lead her away from her family. The limitations placed upon Anna directly related to the structures established by society, limiting a woman socially and educationally, lead to the negative results of the Karenin family as seen in the novel.

Tolstoy not only considers what will be the fate of women, but then, in turn, what will become of the safest and strongest establishment in Russia, the family. In Anna Karenina, Tolstoy gives representations of three married women and examines their successes and failures in part to understand and convey what is needed to create happy, fulfilled families. Dolly has lost her husband to the affections of other women because she is too conservative and has no ability to relate to him outside of the very limited sphere of family life. Anna has lost both her husband and her child because she has too freely embraced her freedom and refused to accept the responsibilities, whether pleasant or not, of her role as a mother and a wife. Kitty is the best and brightest example of what Tolstoy imagined to be a successful wife and mother. She is portrayed as both a little humble and a little proud; she argues with her husband but only concerning things that will be beneficial to him in the long run; and she has an attractive appearance, a quick enough wit, her own thoughts and feelings and her own sense of independence outside of her role as wife and mother while remaining in her role as both. She has achieved the
status of "ideal woman"—the representation given by many authors and painters during the nineteenth century.

Much of the criticism examining the work of Tolstoy and other male authors during the early to late nineteenth century assumes a negative view toward these authors by arguing that they helped to limit the already diminished view of women by negatively reflecting what they considered "weak" feminine emotions and highlighting the desirable women as being attractive and reserved—having no voice of her own.

Rosalind Marsh examines the female characters in Russian literature written in the early to late nineteenth century in order to identify apparent ideological trends establishing and/or limiting women's roles in society. She opens her article by examining the literary traditions of the 1850s-1917 and how, even if a female character were depicted as the central figure, or the protagonist, her role was limited to illuminating the central male figures in the work. Referring to the ideal woman in Russian literature, Marsh notices the emergent trends: the woman as the "'object', 'immanence', 'nature', 'passivity', or 'death' as opposed to the man as 'subject', 'transcendence', 'culture', 'activity', 'life' "(9). The only "worthy" trait in a woman, according to Marsh's readings of certain texts, is beauty. Indeed Marsh brings attention to the point by stating that plain women hardly appear in a text, and when they do, it is always with disdain and disapproval.

Amy Mandelker's work *Framing Anna Karenina* opposes the formulaic, feminist reading of Tolstoy's work by providing substantial evidence to prove that not only was Tolstoy not identified as a leading proponent of limiting the rights and freedoms of women, but that he, over the course of his life, became an active advocate for the
advancement of women's rights through his writings. The chapter titled "The Myth of Misogyny" highlights Tolstoy's position concerning women while examining the debates surfaced across Europe and Russia during the latter half of the nineteenth-century. While it is significant that Tolstoy's narrative voice and his depiction and placement of characters can be read within the framework of his fervent beliefs that a woman's place should be in the home, caring for children and attending to the needs of the estate, Mandelker also points out that these duties were considered by Tolstoy to be of higher significance and more valuable than the "bourgeois, male-dominated work force" (27).

As noted in the Introduction, Tolstoy considered the duty of the female, specifically the wife and mother, to be the cornerstone upon which all of society is built and upon which it relies and rests.

You [women] alone know—not that false, showy kind of work in top hats and illuminated rooms that men of our circle call work—instead you now that genuine work given to people by God... You know how, after the joys of love, you wait in agitation, terror, and hope for that tormenting condition of pregnancy that will make you an invalid for nine months, will bring you to the brink of death and to unendurable suffering and pain; you know the nature of true work... when, immediately after these torments, without a break, without a rest, you take on another burden of labors and suffering—nursing, during which time you renounce... the most overwhelming human need, sleep... you do not sleep through a single night for years, and sometimes, often, you do not sleep at all for nights on end (quoted in Mandelker, 23).

It is also interesting to note that the male characters in Tolstoy's work are, according to Mandelker, examined and judged within a more rigorous and specifically stringent set of standards than are his female characters. This helps to advance the argument that Tolstoy was not deliberate in his attack upon women in his works, but that he was concerned with the advancement of all individuals through a moral examination. As has been the theme of this work and will continue to be the pervading theme
throughout, Tolstoy's direction and inspiration as a writer was not to objectify and trivialize his art by attaching current ideology that would have no place in the conscious understanding of the reader of the future, but his hope and aim was to create fiction that would transcend the sphere of time by highlighting and focusing his energies on themes, situations, and characters universal--exploring the universal truths residing under the surface of man's soul.
Family Happiness: The Emerging Ideal

However important a political literature may be, a literature that reflects the passing problems of society, and however necessary to national progress, there is still another type of literature that reflects the eternal necessities of all mankind, the dearest and the deepest imaginings of a whole race, a literature that is accessible to all and to every age, one without which no people has been able to grow powerful and fertile (quoted in Troyat, 190).
--Leo Tolstoy

The literature referred to in the previous quotation refers to a type of literature that faces no boundaries historically or socially but can be influential throughout time since it examines the deepest parts of human action. Tolstoy's rebellious nature had notions of life, love, politics and marriage that did not directly line up with those from his own class and profession (writers). When Chernyshevsky and Turgenev were writing literature imbued with the underlying tenants of women's emancipation from marriage and family, Tolstoy was seemingly reinforcing the notions of limiting women's roles by placing his most idealized characters within the confines of marriage and motherhood. His work also seemingly negates our painters negative representations of marriage as seen earlier in *The Major's Betrothal* (F-1) and *The Unequal Marriage* (F-2). For, although Tolstoy's heroine in *Family Happiness* seems doomed to suffer the fate of the main female subjects in these works of art, his portrait of the marriage, even though divided by age and interests, is celebrated as the supreme achievement of relationships and a place of unity.
and equality shared between the husband and wife. Cruise sums up Tolstoy's personality succinctly: "Tolstoy developed a reputation for orneriness, or, to put it more charitably, he revealed what was to be a defining feature in his life and art: an inherent antipathy toward popular theories and accepted authorities, especially if they were endorsed by members of his own class" (191). But Tolstoy's reason for disavowing the artistic practices of his fellow writers was not because he was trying to be difficult, but more importantly, and what makes his work far superior to that of other writers during his time, because he wanted to address the underlying issues facing not only his own class of people, but those issues which would prevail in society throughout history irrespective of class, culture and time. So that what becomes apparent in Tolstoy's work are issues that reflect universal conflicts emerging in the modern as well as nineteenth century marriages versus the work of writers afore mentioned and the painters studied whose goal was merely to highlight a central issue facing women, women's rights, and marriage in Russia during the nineteenth century.

Many critics take *Family Happiness* to be a direct reflection of Tolstoy's dealings with Valerya, a girl much younger than Tolstoy, from a country estate, whose brother Tolstoy had been made guardian over (Cruise, 193). Several critics cite Tolstoy's maniacal pedantry over Valerya as some misogynistic fantasy come true. Here he had a virgin, both physically and emotionally, that he could teach and train in all the ways he thought most desirable in a bride and a woman. Letters by Tolstoy addressed to Valerya reveal this pedantic desire to educate his young friend. The subjects of these letters include everything from encouraging her to dress on her own to the type of exercise she should practice (Cruise, 193). Bearing this in mind, Tolstoy was keenly fond of lists and
structure in his own life and, without giving him too much credit, his approach to Valerya seems to fall directly into his line of thinking and living (Troyat, 59). Their relationship failed when Valerya received a "proper" city education, getting involved and accepted in the higher social circles of society, and decided she didn't enjoy being told what to do by a man who wasn't her husband or her father. She became successful by her own charms, much the same way as Masha does in *Family Happiness*, and didn't feel she needed to practice such a disciplined lifestyle to be successful.

Tolstoy's experiences heavily influenced the subject matter and characterization of *Family Happiness*, where a young girl is pursued by an older, more worldly man who sees in Masha a pliable personality. Aside from the superficial setting though, it is difficult to ascertain whether or not Tolstoy develops the plot through experiences that are autobiographical in nature. It can be argued that Masha's character becomes the archetype for many of Tolstoy's later female characters. Natalia Kisseleff, in her article "Idyll and Ideal: Aspects of Sentimentalism in Tolstoy's Family Happiness," contends that "Tolstoy's philosophic influence for the work -- the characterization of Masha -- is based largely on the Tolstoyian "ideal" of a female character -- his mother (or the memory of her) (338). Indeed, the memory of Tolstoy's mother had great influence over his life. Without a concrete figure to affirm or negate his childhood imaginings of his "perfect mother" every great quality was plausible in her (Troyat, 16). But Masha's figure, even if she does possess some of those qualities, only does so because they are of Tolstoy's own imaginings of what an ideal woman would be like.

Interestingly, Tolstoy's ideal female characters are not derived from some elevated, unapproachable type which traditionally held sway over the presentation,
development, and characterization of developing the heroines in Russian novels but they come packaged with their own set of flaws. Alexander Boyd, in his book \textit{Aspects of the Russian Novel}, places Tolstoy's female characters into three main categories:

The first group includes the women who realize and dutifully follow the way of domestic dedication. Tolstoy upholds these ideals, but the limitations of their single-minded path of service and care blunt even his own interest (qualities seen in many heroines in other Russian novels -- my voice). [...] The second group includes those women who have transgressed these precepts and flout their own independence as dangerous rebels [...] the third group includes girls animated by romantic love who anticipate with joy and trepidation the demands which will be made upon them in marriage (Boyd, 94).

Masha can be considered the archetypal example for the third group of female characters. Indeed, Kisseleff also describes Tolstoy's ideal female character as having "an impulsive generous nature, her girlish dreams and her musical talent" (339). Critics who tend to label Tolstoy as a misogynist have neglected to recognize his preferred treatment of his female characters who don't have it all figured out, and who aren't exactly satisfied with just being a wife and mother but are seeking and searching for their own identity irrespective of gender, class or social station. The "first group" categorized by Boyd would seemingly be the preferred type to a writer believed to have such unhealthy, unwholesome views of women, but they aren't. Masha must come to terms with her responsibilities and her life, Kitty must be rejected by Vronsky and be humiliated and humbled, Dolly must constantly battle her anguish over her own inadequacies in light of her husband's infidelities, and Anna must battle her soul for acceptance of her actions. These are the characters that come to exemplify the sympathetic female in Tolstoy's novels.
In addition, his use of the first person narrative from the point of view of Masha was and still is considered a highly remarkable feature of the work. Until Tolstoy's time no male authors had undertaken such a challenging form, aside from Chernyshevsky's feeble attempt with the character Vera Pavlovna in *What is to be Done*, and Tolstoy does so with such amazing sincerity and accuracy that one cannot help but credit his unique abilities to observe and record the unspoken feelings of a young girl. Alexander Boyd states, "This was a foretaste of Tolstoy's genius in fusing himself into his characters, a genius which gives his novels their peculiar power" (92-3). Indeed, it is nothing short of an almost supernatural power that allows him such a gift of intuitiveness.

*Family Happiness* is centered on the courtship, love and marriage of a young woman, Masha, just past youth at the age of eighteen, to a much older, experienced man, Sergey. Masha has been confined to her family's country estate for the whole of the winter after the tragic loss of both her parents has left her and her younger sister orphaned. Masha is at the age of "coming out" for girls of society in Russia, but has been unable to participate in the social events of the winter because of her isolation and solitary condition. There is only the devoted governess who has cared for the two girls and has now become the only one suitable and capable of being their guardian.

The education of a young, upper-class girl at this time in Russia consisted in preparing her for her debut into society when all heads would hope to be turned and the girl would successfully make a good match. It is important to pay particular attention to the fact that Masha has been deprived of the social life that we can assume, although it is not directly stated, has been the sole purpose of her upbringing. It is in this isolated state
that Sergey Mikhaylych enters her life, and enters it accompanied by the arrival of the
long awaited spring. Tolstoy quite frequently draws unmistakable parallels to his
characters, their emotional and spiritual state, and to their natural surroundings, especially
the changing of the seasons. Kisseleff refers to these elements in the work—"the use of
pastoral elements, the repeated lyrical images (the garden, the lilac, the nightingale), the
quasi-allegorical use of the seasons are some other characteristics Tolstoy shares with the
sentimentalists" (342).

After the long, gloomy winter wearing its bleak aspect on Masha’s expression,
Sergey and the arrival of spring give her a feeling of new life—a new start.

It was six years since I had seen him last. He was much changed—older
and darker in complexion; and he now wore whiskers which did not
become him at all; but much remained the same—his simple manner, the
larger features of his honest open face, his bright intelligent eyes, his
friendly, almost boyish, smile (481).

Her initial reaction to Sergey’s appearance was one of disappointment. Richard Gregg,
author of "Psyche Betrayed: The Doll’s House of Leo Tolstoy," comments on the unusual
aspect of their relationship—"the peculiarity of their courtship is the dearth of physical
attraction. From the very beginning, . . . Masha confesses that Sergey does not fit her
notion of masculine good looks" (274), Gregg further elaborates on her physical
alienation from her husband once she has married him and the fact that their conjugal
relations must accentuate how terribly "strange" he appears to her.

Throughout the course of the spring and summer months Sergey’s influence on
Masha’s life increases steadily. He urges her to make herself useful, to not be so self-
absorbed, to be active in educating her sister to keep herself from her depression. All
these things Masha did willingly, and it is in this light that the mutual connection between
man and girl take root. He has become the replacement for her father—an instructor and a protector that is so valuable to one so fragile and exposed as Masha. She recalls several times in the first section of the story how her mother had, when she was just a child, told Masha of her admiration for Sergey Mikaylych and her desire that one day Masha would be so lucky as to marry such a man. She hears her mother’s voice in this liaison and feels assured that there could be no other man more suitable for her than Sergey. Some critics see this liaison between the older man and the younger woman and the love expressed between as bearing the mark of a father–daughter relationship versus the lover to lover relationship. To an extent the prior is evident within the initial bond the two create. The fact that Sergey was a close friend to Masha’s father, that it was not at all scandalous for a very young girl to be wed to a man her father’s age as seen in the paintings referred to above, and Masha’s own need for guidance and safety in a time of such isolation make Sergey an idealized father figure re-emerging in the house. In her book *Never Marry a Girl with a Dead Father*, Helen Hayward comments on this aspect of their initial relationship, "Even though the gap of nineteen years sets the youth and beauty of Masha against the moody middle age of Sergey, Masha is irresistibly drawn to him. Above all he reminds her of her father" (66).

Indeed, even Masha was at a loss to understand the nature of the relationship initially:

That he loved me, I knew; but I did not yet ask myself whether he loved me as a child or as a woman...I felt it a better and worthier course to show him the good points of my heart and mind than of my body. My hair, hands, face, ways—all these, whether good or bad, he had appraised at once and knew so well...but my mind and heart he did not know (492).
This father/daughter relationship between the two characters eventually turns into a more carnal, passionate bond. The scene in the cherry orchard is decidedly the most poignant turning point in their relationship, when Masha finally gets a glimpse into Sergey's heart and sees a weakness there which she hitherto did not realize had existed. She is all the more startled because she is the root of this weakness and she feels embarrassed to have uncovered it in such a sly, deviant way--by sneaking into the orchard where Sergey had forbade her to go. Once this occurs, Masha unwittingly asserts herself as an equal in the relationship. In "Tolstoy's Path Toward Feminism" Barbara Monter writes "Tolstoy hints that Masha has another side, almost a will to power, or at least to equality with Sergey" (525, Monter). This equality is something that is never apparent in the paintings focusing on the young girl married to the older man. Indeed, the relationship between Masha and Sergey which is the more poetic aspect of Family Happiness is non-existent in the paintings. Not only are the men much older than the young girls, but the gap in the emotional closeness exacerbates the gross alienation between the two.

Now that she understands his intentions, she is more sure of herself and begins emotionally preparing for the proposal. Although Sergey is initially unwilling, because of his fear of falling in love and being "happily married," he cannot resist the allure of Masha's youth and beauty and proposes through an elaborately disguised dialogue. Insecurity creates a cautious lover, and throughout the scene between the two it would seem as though he would rather be denied her hand and live with a broken heart than be accepted and have the uncertainty of unhappiness and despair awaiting him. In this telling scene, Masha seems to be mistress of the domain and pulls the words from Sergey's lips in order to accept.
At this point Tolstoy has successfully shown the weaknesses of the two characters--Masha and her inexperienced heart, and Sergey and his insecure heart. He has made them equal in all respects, and we know that Sergey's desire for Masha both physically and emotionally allows Masha to become his equal. This reality was one that Tolstoy in his own life was aware of in his relationship with women, but not one that he would have liked to own. But, there is no male versus female in this game of marriage, but two very vulnerable people who have given of and exposed themselves to the mind, body and soul of each other.

The two lovers enter into the next phase of their love through the marriage and Masha's move away from their old family, the stability of her youth, into the house of Sergey and his aging mother, where she adopts her new role as mistress and wife. In this section of the text, Tolstoy focuses very little on the individuals, and what is so breathtaking and poetic is his ability to knit the souls of two fictional lovers together merely through words.

Days, weeks, two months, of seclusion in the country slipped by unnoticed, as we thought them; and yet those two months comprised feelings, emotions, and happiness, sufficient for a lifetime (522).

He captures conjugal bliss in all its glory and idealism and lingers there just long enough to establish the sweet taste in the mouths of his readers so they will long and wish for such passages again between the two characters. Family happiness has been attained; Sergey's desire for married life fulfilled, and Masha's desire for a strong arm of protection gained.

It is significant that such a blissful time should take place in the country, and what Sergey considers Utopia becomes tiresome and lonely to Masha. For, once Sergey has
had his fill of his young wife, he becomes immersed once again in his work and spends less time with her. She, being full of energy and vitality, has nothing to exhaust her and becomes increasingly irritable. "The padded footsteps of inquisitive servants; the increasingly prolonged daytime absence of her kind but uncommunicative husband; the omnipotent mother-in-law, who imposes an "inflexible routine" on the entire household...] lends to Masha's existence an empty, almost prison-like character" (Gregg, 274-5). Masha is getting a taste of the reality of life after passion and romance and the newness of a relationship have passed. Sergey has experienced, from what the reader can glean, these ebbs and flows in romantic relationships and adjusts accordingly without being completely aware of the change taking place in Masha. Although Gregg makes a clear case for Masha's life becoming increasingly empty, his angle is to prove that Tolstoy's aim was to show Masha's limitation as she is unable to adapt to her new surroundings--"Tolstoy assigns to his female characters an essentially static role that excludes those stages of development which are granted to the more active, more dynamic male" (270). All of this to argue the point that Tolstoy was trying to create a frigidly, rigid environment leading up to the "rebellion" in Masha. Gregg implies that her character had nothing to do physically with Sergey and that her life, had she been with a child or with an occupation of some kind, would have served a different purpose and been met with different ends. Not so! She is a child entering the adult world. A wise professor once commented: "What would children do if they found out that life wasn't purely for enjoyment; what if they found out that life was really boring?" This is the case with Masha.
As discussed earlier, Masha is portrayed as the young, spontaneous, full of life girl who anticipated with trepidation the fulfillment of all of her fantasies and desires. Now she is simply coming to the harsh, realistic conclusion that many times life tends to fall into routine, mother-in-laws are hard to live with, and husbands aren't made to be chatty social friends for gossip and giggles. At the same time, Tolstoy isn't reproving Masha for her naivety, like many critics would have us believe, he is merely revealing this aspect of her character to help create the necessary tension (that of her apathy toward her husband and their eventual distance) all good stories require in order to achieve the comfortable, satisfying resolution of a more mature, dynamic Masha who is coming to understand her role as a wife and mother and her place in society.

Tolstoy's purpose in characterizing Masha as not yet knowledgeable of the world, or at least the fashionable world, becomes clear when Sergey takes Masha to St. Petersburg for the winter--into the fashionable world. Here, in the city, life comes alive to Masha. Her beauty and freshness impress all who come in contact with her and she thrives on the attention she receives. Sergey sees his wife's attraction to the society which he abhors and slowly withdraws from her--leaving her to rise and fall in this world of fashion on her own.

It is no surprise that Tolstoy would juxtapose the two settings so dramatically: the city and the country, for Tolstoy preferred his life in the country. He despised city life and the vain flattery and superficial relationships that thrived on deception, immorality, vanities and the like. It is symbolic that the first fruits of Masha's and Sergey's love be severed in such a place as the city. Sergey, in his fear that he will lose his wife to the flatteries and games of high society, speaks harshly against her conduct while in the city.
Masha, in her innocent youth, does not understand her folly and, what is more, is shattered emotionally by her husband's tone and language that abuse her character. He has been her support and guiding light, what she has lived and breathed for, the one in whom she has placed her identity. This outburst from Sergey, a result of his frustration, sets the wheels in motion; the wall has been erected almost instantaneously, and their love suffocates.

What shocks the reader even more than the rift caused by the argument is the stale lingering of their former life. Just lines before Sergey rebukes Masha, as she watches him pace up and down in their drawing room, she assumes that he is thinking of their wonderful life in the country and she too reflects on the anticipated arrival of their familiar home with longing.

He is dreaming already of...our morning coffee in the bright drawing room, and the land and the laborers...and our secret midnight suppers...Not for all the balls and all the flattering princes in the world would I give up his glad confusion and tender cares (539).

With these thoughts present in her mind, she is unprepared for what comes from her husband and with an instinctive defensive position, she responds, playing into the misguided assumption her husband has adopted.

Page after page the reader must endure their estranged position with one another. A child is born and Masha shows no emotional response to motherhood, while Sergey becomes a doting father but a neglectful husband. The scenes that were once full of beauty, life and love, have been replaced by a dialogue of strangers. Masha has only two real threads of experience in her short-lived, secluded life: that of her husband and that of society. Since her heart has been cut off from that of her husband's, she inevitably turns to the open arms of fashionable society--a cold, emotionless place where one can
exist without feeling. Cruise writes, "Masha's excursion into society, initially a playground for desire, becomes a battle field for self-identification; she must lose control before she can win" (195).

It would seem that Tolstoy is punishing Masha for becoming too enamored with social life and that it is Sergey who has suffered under the selfish pursuits of his wife. And indeed, many writers who are quick to link Tolstoy's personal life to his life as a writer have come to these conclusions, but there is enough evidence within the text that clearly finds fault at the same time with both characters and with neither. They are both at fault because they have mistakenly allowed their conflict to go unresolved--denying each other the forgiveness and understanding that could heal such a breach, and they are neither at fault because there will always exist the inevitable decline of any marriage from its initial height of lofty and passionate love to a more rational, productive love. Both Boyd and Kisseleff refer to the shift in prose style and plot from the beginning to the end of the work by Tolstoy as a means of moving from the unstable, emotional high of romantic love, which inevitably lasts for only a short time, in order to make way for a more steady, long-lasting and rewarding love to be the foundation for a secure home life upon which to build a family; "the pattern of the novel is not the shattering of an ideal of married life. It is, instead, the dream which is recaptured and which the actual and idealized are brought together" (Kisseleff, 340).

Her flight from her home, her family and her responsibilities are a result of her lack of direction, the blame for which lies in part with her husband and in part which society which places the value of appearance above the value of character. What good can she serve, what value does she have now that her life with her husband is all but
spent, how can she make a positive impact on her world through her actions? These questions, although not directly posed by Masha, are prevalent throughout the text as she wanders from party to party, from town to town, following but never leading and never taking her own life seriously because she has never been given the opportunity. Society offers her false security in her success merely because she is amicable, well dressed and good looking, and indeed these are the attributes that she most admires in herself. She refers to becoming a mother as almost a secondary occurrence that has no great impact on her emotional, spiritual and especially her social life.

At first the feeling of motherhood did take hold of me with such power, and produce in me such a passion of unanticipated joy, that I believed this would prove the beginning of a new life for me. But, in the course of two months, when I began to go out again, my feeling grew weaker and weaker, till it passed into mere habit and the lifeless performance of a duty

The change in Masha is caused by two significant events. The first is her realization, through a new competition with a younger, more attractive and wealthy female, that she has come to base her value on how she is viewed and received by society. The second comes when she totters on the edge of seduction and lust and, on her own, pulls back away from her own desire and selfishness.

What eventually propels Sergey and Masha back together is her understanding of her own identity outside of his, her acceptance of her place as a mother and wife (not lover) and her acceptance of Sergey as a protecting, fatherly figure rather than a young, impetuous lover. Her only real position, in the world in which Tolstoy lived, would be that of a mother and wife, but this is not some degradation to Tolstoy. And we see that Masha has also willingly accepted her place. She dabbled in the occupation of courtesan; she played the games of society--the only occupation for women outside mothering--and
she saw the utter waste produced. She is ready for the bountiful rewards of mothering. We, as modern readers, may not like what we see. We may very much want Masha to run away with the Italian courtier and find true love...but in reality, such a shallow, superficial man could not even offer her a tenth of what Sergey offers her. And what of Sergey? Should he suddenly, quite in the style of the sentimental novels, change his attitude -- his whole demeanor and throw his arms around Masha declaring his ardent love for her? This would be entirely out of keeping with his character throughout the story. Tolstoy must maintain his ideology regarding literature as quoted at the beginning of this section. His brief love affair with sentimental novels quickly becomes overshadowed by his whole-hearted embrace of the realist traditions of which he was a major exemplar.

Many critics merely perceive Tolstoy as having a flat, two-dimensional view of women, but this is inconsistent considering his character as an extremely complex man -- sometimes to the point of being surprised by his own behavior and beliefs. It is not the intention of this work to deny the negative views he espoused regarding women, but it must also be considered that he was all too eager to immerse himself in their presence, not only sexually but also intellectually and emotionally. Evidence abounds revealing some of his closest relationships to be those he had with women: his aunt, his babushka, his wife, his wife's sister.

Ruth Benson's agenda in *Women in Tolstoy* is to discredit Tolstoy's fine perception into the human mind in order to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that Tolstoy's aim in life was to put the woman in her place and identify her as the weaker, less intelligent creature. She states, "*Family Happiness* is a fictionalized treatise on the
appropriate roles and behavior for women" (Benson, 23); this idea clearly follows closely the ideas espoused by Boris Eikenbaum regarding the work.

It could be quite impossible and inclined toward too positive a view of Tolstoy but I wonder if his writings do not reflect a social reformer in his first throws of an issue that has not fully risen to his conscious thought. He encourages others and is inspired to benefit others in some way and to fill his life with a meaningful existence by running this course. For a woman during this period, Tolstoy suggests that she did not, like men, to have the opportunity to find value by the deeds she does for others. She, beyond any hope of change, is shackled in a way to either be defined through her role as mother and wife, which cannot be fulfilling since marriage takes the turn of cool indifference according to Tolstoy, or to emerge onto the social scene where she is appraised not as a human being with good and noble qualities, but by her appearance and her ability to perform in front of an "audience" comprised of the shallow social world Tolstoy adamantly rejects. What is a girl to do? According to Benson's reading of the work, and here I must agree, Masha has every desire to share in the labor and management of the estate with Sergey, but he rejects her offer of help and explains that she needn't bother about such affairs. He is limiting her experiences and, in turn, denying her the satisfaction of productive pleasure.

Benson's absurd notion that Tolstoy has deliberately made Masha out to be the antagonist who has ruined the marriage for the once happy couple while presenting Sergey as the noble, quiet gentleman who has the patience and loving kindness to allow Masha to learn the struggles of life on her own through trial and error is clearly agenda driven; "Masha is clearly the partner who most seriously endangers the marriage. Sergey
Mikhailych is portrayed consistently as sober, rational, and mature—guilty of only too much compassion" (Benson, 40). Sergey’s initial mistake was to offer no guidance and to expect such a young and inexperienced girl of seventeen or eighteen to fortify herself against the pleasures and sins of society. There are a number of instances in the story that point toward Sergey’s mistake in this area, and that would only lead one to assume that Tolstoy was deliberate in focusing the lense of his narration in such a way as for the audience to be able to see Sergey’s failings, his faults. The noble Masha, as she has been presented, especially when she quite willingly wants to go back to the country and is ready to refuse the final party (and a chance to meet the prince), has been exposed as a loving, suppliant wife and in every way still sensitive to the unspoken desires of her husband.

The real problem arises not by fault of one over another or vice versa, but through the equally harsh, hurtful words said by both. The true falling apart of the relationship is the fact that there is no reparation made after the blissful marriage union has been torn and so each continues to tug, being driven in different directions by their emotional burdens, and eventually the tear is so great that it can never be repaired. What so many critics neglect to mention, when reading and analyzing an author once they have become so intimately familiar with his life, is that the work is fiction, and an author is many times propelled not just by his own beliefs of his limited view of the world, but by a force to create and make real for us the characters that have only existed for the author. Isn’t a writer’s sole aim to awaken within his reader the feelings of compassion and empathy so that the characters become real human beings whose stories arouse our most latent thoughts about our own lives? Especially when referring to Tolstoy, who is unarguably
contradictory in his own theories and actions regarding life, one should take his quixotic mind into account when analyzing his writing and not only his emotionally charged beliefs.
"The hero of my tale, whom I love with all the powers of my soul, whom I have tried to portray in all its beauty, who has been, is, and will be beautiful, is truth (quoted in Paggiolini, 12).
--Leo Tolstoy

Anna Karenina encompasses a wide range of ideology that Tolstoy reveals through the action and the characters in the book. To approach the work as a feminist tract by a liberal author or as something perpetuating the misogynistic tendencies Tolstoy held as a man would be doing such a monumental work an injustice. For it is not just the characters like Anna, Dolly, and Kitty whose actions and reactions can define for us, the readers, what Tolstoy may have considered the proper role of women in society, but it is also the society in which these characters must interact, the rules, morals, values and manners they are obliged to uphold as citizens of Russia, and the expectations and reactions of the men and children these female characters influence and by whom they are influenced. Aside from these considerations, one must also consider the above quote that reveals Tolstoy's persistent attitude toward the function of literature and art in a society--to reveal truth. This is why a modern reader can read Tolstoy's Anna Karenina and place himself in the position of any one of the main characters. Tolstoy has removed the restrictions of time and place and created, instead, situations, problems and eternally perplexing questions that are timeless and ageless. Herein lies the difficulty in debating,
discussing and deciding whether this work is, indeed, a treatise promoting rights, the freedom of women, or whether it is a work denouncing women through the ultimate failure and suicide of the heroine Anna. It then seems that the only way to do such a work as this justice, is to continually keep in mind Tolstoy's ultimate aim that was to be an arbiter of truth above all else. As is noted by several critics, even Tolstoy himself had to come to terms with what he wanted to produce in the work versus what would be the most honest rendering of these characters he had created. "Tolstoy approached the world in this anti-historical manner because he did not really believe in progress. Human life seemed unchanging and so the problems that faced him and his contemporaries were not 'topical'--the woman's question, crime...but those that had confronted man throughout history" (Andrew, 119).

It is to Anna that all eyes gravitate, whether within the book or outside the book. Her character is the one who brings depth to the work in terms of her characterization and the omniscient narrator's skilled rendering of her inner thoughts and feelings; she is the one who has perplexed the critics as to what side of the woman question Tolstoy was really on; she is the one who, it seems, even managed to perplex Tolstoy. Troyat goes so far as to make the allegation that Tolstoy, although initially deciding upon a female seductress who was "the devil" herself with an ugly appearance, had begun to fall in love with his seductress, transforming her into the beauty she becomes for the reader; her charms had reached out and even touched the man who had created her (359). As romantic a notion as that may be, what seems more fruitful, when attempting to come to terms with Anna, is to analyze her character through the logical approach reached by the critic Boyd. He contends that it wasn't through some phantasmagoric love affair with his
character that Tolstoy finally reached the pinnacle of feminine characterization, because it is undisputed that her character does reach such a height, but it more likely resulted from a very logical approach to her character, and has to do with that subtle but reliable characteristic Tolstoy strove so consistently to adhere to--truth.

To render Anna believable to a scrupulous audience, her fall into depravity must be convincing. In order for that to occur, she must fall from something, from somewhere, and a sufficient fall does not merely constitute a superficial fall from the pretentious wife to the lying lover but must include a moral decline, a battle of the spirit and will, so that the only possible solution would be suicide; precisely because society lacks the ability to rescue her. "Anna just cannot be the vain, self-indulgent creature who ruins worthy men; despair, which leads to the death of Anna in the context Tolstoy proposes, the context of futility and self-disgust, is not felt by the kind of woman Tolstoy set out to portray. She must (my emphasis) have the qualities which are capable of feeling utter spiritual desolation--honesty, awareness, sensitivity, and intelligence" (Boyd, 96).

Not only must she have these qualities, Tolstoy then demands of Anna that she be the "ideal" moral female character present before us at the beginning of the novel. It could be argued that, to a certain degree, every person has the good qualities Anna possesses, but Anna radiates goodness with every fiber of her being: from the first glimpse of her at the train station chatting about missing her son, when her thoughts and heart are then directed toward the family of the conductor who has just been killed, to her warmth toward Dolly and Dolly's children, and even her ability to captivate the young and lovely Kitty with her radiant beauty and charm. All of these circumstances bring the reader proximally closer to loving and accepting Anna--no matter what.
So, what causes her to fall from such lofty heights so quickly into the book and so easily into the arms of Vronsky? It could be argued that a woman, had she the true moral character we believe Anna to have at the beginning of the work, wouldn't be influenced so easily to move away from the comfortable world of the society and family she has come to know intimately and trust implicitly. But this argument wouldn't stand up to the true force at work in Anna's soul, and that would be love. She has been, as noted by many critics, suppressing latent desires for companionship, affection and love since her earliest union with a man, her husband Alexey.

Referring to the passage concerning Anna and Alexey's engagement and betrothal in the previous second section of this paper, we can see that not only was Anna most likely forced into a union with a man for whom she had no desire, but that Alexey, out of guilt, was pushed into a corner to defend his honor and marry the girl he had hitherto unwittingly been pursuing. This passage is crucial if for no other reason than to give the reader the only glimpse into the past of Anna and Alexey in order to more fully understand why they are both in such vulnerable positions at the beginning of the work. Referring to the painting titled *The Unequal Marriage* (F-3) gives the reader a visual representation of the possible age difference between Anna and Alexey. Also *The Major's Betrothal* (F-1), although depicting the major as more bloodthirsty for the flesh of his young bride than Alexey was for Anna, still captures the predicament Anna may have found herself, being forced into a marriage by her guardian aunt rather than choosing for herself the man she would have married. This creates a much more complicated set of circumstances in the marriage than in *Family Happiness*, as neither was too willing to marry the other. For Alexey was forced to marry because it was the
honorable thing to do and not because he desired to share his life with Anna, and for Anna because she was the ward of her aunt and it was expected that she obediently honor the decisions made for her regarding her husband, etc. It could almost be deduced, and indeed most likely was the case, that the one who suffered and sacrificed more for the marriage was Alexey. From his youth as an orphan through adulthood, Karenin had no plans to marry, knowing himself well enough to know it did not suit him. His character is cast as one of very high scruples and one based on social morality, and so, when Anna's aunt alleges his conduct toward Anna and the family would be shameful if he does not marry Anna, he is also trapped. Once resolved on being Anna's husband, he makes the effort, as shown in the work through several passages, to be a good, although impassionate, husband to Anna, and his eventual disgrace due to Anna's infidelity exposes his vulnerable, suffering position.

Anna’s character is also vulnerable, and Vronsky who is a master at the art of social intercourse and making love, most likely senses her suppressed desires. Indeed, when they first meet, we get a glimpse at the influence Anna's presence, both extrovertly displayed and introvert hidden, has on the young officer.

He...felt compelled to have another look at her, not because she was very beautiful nor because of the elegance and modest grace of her whole figure, but because he saw in her sweet face as she passed him something especially tender and kind. When he looked round she turned her head. Her bright gray eyes which seemed dark because of her black lashes rested for a moment on his face as if recognizing him, and then turned to the passing crowd evidently in search of someone. In that short look Vronsky had time to notice the subdued animation that enlivened her face and seemed to flutter between her bright eyes and scarcely perceptible smile which curved her rosy lips. It was as if an excess of vitality so filled her whole being that it betrayed itself against her will, now in her smile, now in the light of her eyes. She deliberately tried to extinguish that light in her eyes, but it shown despite of her in her faint smile (56).
It is interesting that the first thing that draws Vronsky, and something that many critics fail to note, is not the beauty of Anna's face and body but the tenderness and kindness; qualities Vronsky himself lacks, she possesses, which add to the "subdued animation" and "excess of vitality" that so mesmerizes not only Vronsky, but all who come in contact with her. He immediately desires to have tangible contact with these qualities and realizes the only way to do this is through contact with the woman who possesses them. What becomes one of the greatest tragedies of the work is Anna's loss of these qualities. The more of her physical self she gives to Vronsky, the more of her soul is lost in the process.

Anna is kind and tender because she is not focused on her own happiness but rather the happiness and desires of others. She does not, perhaps because she knows no better, desire what she does not possess, at least initially. Her sacrifice to come and attempt to save her brother's marriage is through the leaving of her son. She considers the family of the conductor instead of concentrating on leaving the station. These actions highlight her selfless qualities that were the most noble and highly esteemed qualities in Tolstoy's view.

As selfless as she may be at the beginning of the work, it is evident within the first few chapters after her arrival in Moscow and the initial meeting with Vronsky, that Anna begins to become aware, unconsciously at this point, of some slight threat that has gained access into her small, securely locked world. Vronsky pursues her first at the ball, at which young Kitty's heart is broken upon seeing the two together, and then the very next day, he appears on the landing at a train stop as she steps out to get some air while traveling on her way back to Petersburg.
Though she could not remember neither his nor her own words, she instinctively felt that that momentary conversation had drawn them terribly near to one another, and this both frightened her and made her happy (95).

This section of the work details Anna's struggle--her realization that Vronsky has gained some sort of power over her. He is not just the charming but harmless courtier she had armed herself against; Vronsky's presence now interferes with Anna's perceptions of her husband and even her child whom she adored above all else. Things sour for her once she comes back to Petersburg, and she can no longer deny the change that has occurred.

She notices for the first time the aberrations apparent in her husband that had gone unnoticed by her until this point; the image of his unattractive ears protruding from underneath his top hat is the first we get of Anna's changed perception of Karenin. When she finally reaches home, her son's embrace has a strange effect on her.

The first person to meet Anna when she reached home was her son. He ran down the stairs to her regardless of his governess's cries, and with desperate delight called out: 'Mama! Mama!' When he reached her he clung round her neck... Her son, like his father, produced on Anna a feeling akin to disappointment. Her fancy had pictured him nicer than he was in reality (98).

The implication of those three brief meetings says everything about the state of Anna's happiness prior to her meeting Vronsky. She is lonely, and begins to see, through the dim light that begins to shine from the flame of discontent that has been kindled within her, how evidently superficial and fantastic her life has been up to this point. It should not be counted against her character that she finds her son less than she had imagined him, but rather one should realize that now that a man has touched these places that have been buried within, the feelings and needs that have been superimposed on the love and affection of her son, now are fixing themselves on Vronsky.
Another sign of her psychological state is her disenchantment with her son. Although still a loving and doting mother, she also becomes disenchanted with her previous work in society. In a satirical way, Tolstoy introduces the Princess Lidia Ivanovna as one of the leading "moral" figures in Anna's intimate social circle. The brief dialogue between the two women reveals not only Anna’s heightened sense of hypocrisy latent in Lidia Ivanovna but also Tolstoy's personal resentment of this type of "moral socialist." Anna wonders to herself as Lidia Ivanovna is speaking, "This is all as it was before, but how is it that I never used to notice it? said Anna to herself. 'Or is it she is specifically irritated this morning? But it is really funny; her aim is to do good, she is a Christian, and yet she is always angry and always has enemies—all on account of Christianity and philanthropy" (99). These reflections, first when meeting her husband, then upon seeing her son, and lastly when meeting with a close friend and fellow "sister" of the church, reveal to the reader that Anna is beginning to see for herself the web she has constructed in order to avoid facing her own feelings of loneliness and worthlessness. Thus, one can gather, from Tolstoy’s negative characterization of the husband and the princess, that neither are as estimable in his eyes as the narrator so one must conclude that Anna's realizations, although influenced by her new relationship with Vronsky, are not because of Vronsky’s presence in her life but merely a thoughtful recognition of the truth of her situation.

So why Vronsky? He is no more an ideal man for Anna than Alexey Karenin in terms of his ties to society, his eccentricities and his shallowness. For Vronsky, the conquest of Anna is a game. No matter how attractive she may appear, he is testing his skills as a courtier to appeal to his machismo desire for conquest, conquering a beautiful,
married woman, and the desire to be recognized and admired by his fellow officers and friends. Vronsky is merely an incidental for Tolstoy, who utilizes this shallow, immature character to illuminate Anna’s presence within the work as a character with the undisputable noble quality of sincerity and honesty. He places her above the reach of any other character because her destined plight of suicide cannot be so easily dismissed as a bad woman’s escape from her own sins, but rather becomes the only salvation for her from a world that does not understand her nor have pity on her.

Anna’s portrait, painted when she and Vronsky were in Italy, gives a visual referent to the spiritual, metaphysical quality of beauty and truth which reside in the inner depths of Anna’s soul. This "sweetest spiritual expression of hers" is briefly alluded to by Vronsky when the portrait is initially being executed by Mikhaylov.

After the fifth sitting the portrait struck everyone not only by its likeness but also by its beauty. It was strange then to be able to discover that special beauty. ‘One needed to know and love her as I love her, to find that sweetest spiritual expression of hers,’ thought Vronsky, though he himself had only learned to know that ‘sweetest spiritual expression’ through the portrait (433-34).

And, then again, when Levin gazes upon Anna’s portrait toward the end of the work, her haunting beauty and sincerity are the first impressions she makes upon Levin, even before he has gazed upon her living form. This quality of Anna’s indeed marks her, sets her above in many ways from the rest of womanhood, especially from Levin and Anna’s circle, precisely because this quality is so rare in any person. The fact that Levin, the most credible and honest male character in the work, can recognize almost instantly the quality of sincerity in Anna, solidifies for the reader her remarkable nature.

Another reflector-lamp fixed to the wall illuminated a large full-length portrait of a woman, which attracted Levin’s involuntary attention. It was Anna’s portrait painted in Italy by Mikhaylov. . .Levin looked at the portrait, which in the bright illumination seemed to step out of its frame, and he could not tear himself
away from it. He forgot where he was, and without listening to what was being said gazed fixedly at the wonderful portrait. It was not a picture, but a living and charming woman with curly black hair, bare shoulders and arms, and a dreamy half-smile on lips covered with elegant down, looking at him victoriously and tenderly with eyes that troubled him. The only thing that showed she was not alive was that she was more beautiful than a living woman could be (630).

This affirmation by Levin has the effect for the reader of showing how remote and isolated she is from the social world which heavily influences the successes and failures of the life of these characters, but in the same turn creates a sympathetic character precisely because she is sincere and honest.

Anna is on a journey, much like Levin, to find the true meaning of life for her. She clings to her role as a mother to Seryoga at the beginning of the book because she lacks any other source of mutual love and affection, but this type of relationship can only fulfill the emotional and spiritual needs of Anna, and not even completely because Seryoga is only a young child. Vronsky represents a more mature emotional fulfillment and certainly a physical one. In both cases it is apparent that Karenin should be the one fulfilling Anna but he simply does not have the ability to initiate such a union.

No matter how noble a character Anna is at the beginning of the book, and no matter how sympathetic a character he creates in her, it is no surprise that Tolstoy did not condone the action and behavior of Anna the lover. Once she takes the plunge of sexual relations with Vronsky she is left lifeless internally and emotionally. During the consummation scene between Vronsky and Anna, Tolstoy uses the term murderer when referring to Vronsky and victim when referring to Anna. This language suggests that Anna's spiritual and mental death has already begun to take place; indeed she herself recognizes what she has sacrificed for the sake of their affair and what ultimately will become of her in the long run.
That which for nearly a year had been Vronsky's sole and exclusive desire, supplanting all his former desires: that which for Anna had been an impossible, dreadful, but all the more bewitching dream of happiness, had come to pass. Pale, with trembling lower jaw, he stood over her, entreating her to be calm, himself not knowing why or how.

She felt so guilty, so much to blame, that it only remained for her to humble herself and ask to be forgiven; but she had no one in the world now except him, so that even her prayer for forgiveness was addressed to him. Looking at him she felt her humiliation physically, and could say nothing more. He felt what a murderer must feel when looking at the body he has deprived of life. The body he had deprived of life was their love, the first period of their love. There was something frightful and revolting in the recollection of what had been paid for with this terrible price of shame. The shame she felt at her spiritual nakedness communicated itself to him. But in spite of the murderer's horror of the body of his victim, that body must be cut in pieces and hidden away, and he must make use of what he has obtained by the murder.

Then, as the murderer desperately throws himself on the body, as though with passion, and drags it and hacks it, so Vronsky covered her face and shoulders with kisses (135-6).

The murder here is not of course the physical murder of Anna, but her spiritual and emotional murder. Vronsky has succeeded in reducing Anna to nothing but an object of sexual pleasure; her body has become the primary target for conquest and in order to obtain the pleasure now through the body, he must destroy the soul thriving within the body; for that is the one obstacle preventing him from obtaining his spoils. Anna's moral and spiritual characteristics must be supplanted for her to be able to live with the shame and conflict of committing such a vile, loathsome sinful act. So here we see that not even in the very act of committing adultery can Anna accept the choice she has made. She realizes intuitively what she must sacrifice in order to have Vronsky's love and is depicted as being so lonely and desperate that she willingly makes the sacrifice.

I would argue that from this point, the death of Anna's morality, emerges the second Anna of the novel. She is transformed into something not unlike the other upper-class female adulterers, the only difference for her is that she refuses to hide her affair--
refusing to simply enjoy it more like a recreational activity and instead treats her union with Vronsky as a full-fledged quasi-marriage. She becomes obsessed with her appearance under the illusion that this, which initially drew Vronsky to her, will keep him with her indefinitely. Her attitude toward her husband transitions from a type of forced but arguably honest admiration, "Anna smiled. She knew he [Karenin] had said that in order to show that no consideration of kinship could hinder the expression of his sincere opinion. She knew that trait in her husband's character, knew and liked it" (101), to a complete and utter loathing of his whole person. And finally her jealousy, which begins to emerge around the time of her pregnancy with Vronsky's child, becomes one of the most powerful antagonistic forces working in the novel toward Anna's destruction.

Anna's pure and innocent nature has died with the physical consummation only to be resurrected as a jealous, dependant, unhappy adulterer. This type of female emerges as the main subject in *A Village Sermon* (Figure F-2). The woman in the painting has succumbed to the whispering flirtations of her admirer, and in this instance is made to appear as a shallow, mischievous wife ignoring the moral principles of marriage by openly embracing his behavior. Of course, Anna's qualities far out way any that would be apparent in the female subject on the painting, but the vision of utter reproach for her husband and complete embrace of her seducer is one vividly depicted by Perov.

Although the prior scene is telling enough if we accept the implications present within the work, Tolstoy seems to think it necessary to once again portray Vronsky as the killer in the symbolic death scene: the steeple chase. In his article "Incarnation," R.P. Blackmur comments on the arrangement of events and circumstances which take place in a Tolstoy novel. He writes,
He [Tolstoy] exposes his created men and women to the 'terrible ambiguity of immediate experience'... and then, by the mimetic power of his imagination, expresses their reactions and responses to that experience. Some reactions are merely protective and make false responses; some reactions are so deep as to amount to a change in the phase of being and make honest responses (99).

Blackmur refers to this "terrible ambiguity of immediate experience," also known as fate to the less Jungian educated, as evolving from some greater force, like God or Nature. He then poses the argument that this force is used to shape and build or tear down and destroy depending on the willingness of the responder to "apprehend...the direction of that force" (99).

As we know, from much that has already been said regarding the nature and beliefs of Tolstoy, the family and marriage were considered a sacred institution to be esteemed, protected and highly revered in order to further strengthen both the individual existing within that family and the society which benefits from the individuals who are a product of that structure. Bearing these ideas in mind, Vronsky and Anna have then ultimately traversed in opposition to the force, or forces, which are there to shape and build the individual regarding the necessary patterns of growth inherent in all human beings. They traversed when they willfully went from the unsaid but understood emotional liaison to the physical consummation of that union.

At this point in the work Tolstoy has masterfully juxtaposed Anna and Vronsky's characters to highlight Anna's suffering and Vronsky's ambivalence. Vronsky is in the ideal position for a man of his station. His career has begun to move in a positive
direction, although he refuses to accept the new position due to his affair with Anna, he is still admired and respected by his colleagues. He has conquered both Anna's body and heart, and for that, too, he is praised by other males of his class. He has financial freedom and physical freedom, not being tied down to any one or anything. He is poised now on the edge of another almost sure-fire success in the steeple race. He has the better horse and is the better rider and has mentally been preparing for weeks for the event. He is the ideal male according to social definitions, but if the reader is careful we will find nothing but a self-appeasing narcissist, or at least that is what Tolstoy would have concluded. In a sense, Vronsky is trapped in much the same way as Anna by the social conditions which have molded him into the man he has become: "Just as it (society) denied her (Anna) any role other than wife, sinister, or courtesan, Vronsky lives by a code of imbibed conventions which have molded his reactions and stopped any ability to resist" (Boyd, 101).

What of Anna? She has been forced to endure the chilly reception of her husband who suspects her infidelity but refuses to acknowledge or even question its validity. She is pregnant with Vronsky's child. She is already the mother of another man's son. Her position in society, if it were made known, would be disastrous--would ruin her interminably. And she has begun to realize, all too unfortunately for herself, that the man she believed to be her equal as a partner and companion, Vronsky, is basically clueless as to her feelings and her predicament--being prepared to carry on this liaison indefinitely under the guise of friendship. She is not only alone willingly by severing the weak but present emotional ties linking herself to her husband, but now unwillingly, realizing that
she cannot depend on the strength and wisdom of Vronsky—she has failed to live up to her expectations. She is utterly alone.

The race is framed beforehand by her admission to Vronsky of her pregnancy and afterward by her admission to her husband about her affair with Vronsky and the hatred she feels toward Karenin. Perhaps Anna's hopes are resting on Vronsky's success at the races. She characteristically views external events as shaping her own internal circumstances; i.e. the train death at the beginning of the novel she sees as an ominous sign about some event over which she will have no control. Vronsky's triumph could signify a victory not only for Vronsky, but for Anna as well. But, as Blackmur has nicely stated, the force of God/Nature has already been thwarted by Anna; she cannot hope for success in the midst of self-destruction. The race ends in tragic defeat for Vronsky; a slight mishap in the saddle causes him to break the back of his mare Frou Frou. He has been defeated both literally and symbolically; for there is the obvious connection between the mare and Anna, and Vronsky's inability to handle a force (referring here to the horse and that which is in Anna) that moves too quickly for him to reign in or keep pace. In his article "Narrate or Describe," Lukacs highlights the horse race from *Anna Karenina* to illustrate this idea of narration used to further elaborate a character's individual and social actions and reactions to reach a higher level of characterization. He states, "Where and how is this truth revealed? It is clear...in man's everyday practical commonsense that truth is revealed only in practice, in deeds and actions. Men's words, subjective reactions and thoughts are shown to be true or false, genuine or deceptive, significant or fatuous, in practice—as they succeed or fail in deeds and action. Character, too, can be revealed
concretely only through action. Who is brave? Who is good? Such questions can be answered solely in action" (123).

The fact that Vronsky is in the position of leader, being symbolically "in the saddle" leaves nothing left for the reader than to assume Anna's place as the mare being driven. Because of her fragile place within society, she must rely on the support of others to facilitate her life within her present conditions. She, like Frou Frou, does not have the capacity nor the capabilities to take action for herself regarding her fate and thus must be driven by those whose position in society allows freedom of movement and action. But Vronsky, as we see in the steeple race, is not prepared to be a leader or guide for Anna, and if she hands him the reigns of her life, the weight of his stagnation will eventually break her back, and does. "What Vronsky wanted was Anna like the horse. But like the horse, Anna must be used in reckless pastime, or not at all. Take away the pastime, and the recklessness becomes uncontrollable and all the beautiful anarchy in the animal--all the unknown order under orders known--is lost. So, as with Anna, Vronsky failed to keep pace with Frou Frou and broke her back" (Blackmur, 106).

Anna is haunted by dreams of death: a small man in the corner of a room, hunched over and whispering. Nabokov says, "Vronsky does not catch the sense of those words; Anna does, and what these French words contain is the idea of iron, of something battered and crushed--and this something is she" (182). As Nabokov so brilliantly portrays throughout his lecture, Anna and Vronsky's relationship is tainted from the initial meeting by death. It is death that brings them together--the death of a train conductor. Anna, because Tolstoy has made her acutely aware of her spiritual and physical weaknesses and the precious balance of her soul, realizes that if she gives in to
her desires for Vronsky her life will surely end in death. Throughout the work, the recurring dream images and her own self-fulfilling prophecy foreshadow for the reader that her ultimate fate will be death, but it is more complex than a fate sealed by sin. Some critics assume the easy conclusion that Tolstoy is serving Anna her just punishment. Anna could have chosen an easy life, to live openly as the wife of Alexey Alexandrovich and secretly carry on the love affair with Vronsky, but she is more complex than that.

Immorality is Anna's nemesis. Whether an inherent code of manners or rule of ethics is something internal, being part of Anna's own soul, or whether her perception of her actions is guided by societal pressures is debatable. It would seem that Tolstoy positions Anna as being the victim of the latter while being rebellious to the former. She fears the repercussion of her adulterous action because she can see not only the external effect it would have on her family and herself, but she is able to understand, through the very perceptive and complex nature of her soul, the dangerous precipice from which she hangs. Thus, the dream affects Vronsky and Anna so very differently. Vronsky only has the ability to decipher the dream through the signs in language or the tools he has innately been given or has adopted from society.

Perhaps the most tragic choice Anna must make, even more tragic than her choice to end her life due to the very nature of the telling and how it was told, is her decision to leave her son Seryoga. As her relationship with Vronsky builds in intensity and physical contact, and most certainly once she has become pregnant with Vronsky's child, her hatred for her husband becomes magnified. The connection is that this hatred is not due to action directly relatable to her husband. Not with standing a cold demeanor (this trait
being present certainly from the time Anna met him) he has tried to solve the issue of his wife's infidelity the only way he can, by laying down a specific set of guidelines for Anna to follow while expecting her to verbally agree to his contrived and imaginary marriage contract. What Anna wants and what Vronsky expects is a challenge in the form of a duel. But why does Anna crave this form of confrontation and why is she not happy with the freedom Alexey has chosen to give to her? Perhaps she wants to be saved from herself and believes her husband possesses the ability to save her if he openly challenges Vronsky. Aside from this, it becomes unbearable for Anna to continue living with her husband. She not only hates him but fears him, and all this is taking place at a time when Alexey has uncovered, if only for a brief moment in the work, something translatable to true feelings of love, compassion and forgiveness not only for his wife but for her lover as well. Alexey relates his feelings to Vronsky:

On receiving the telegram... I came here with the same feeling---more than that, I wished for her death... But I saw her and forgave her... That is my position. You may trample me in the mud, make me the laughing stock of the world,--I will not forsake her and will never utter a word of reproach to you (377).

His transformation, in the face of Anna's disintegration, reveals the nature of the Tolstoyian narrative, the psychological narrative, to unearth through a series of external events the inner workings of man's soul. As we see this element of the forces outside the realm of man's control, whether that be God or Nature, working to build and shape; we can conclude that this transformation could only have been possible within the framework of these unfortunate events when Alexey has essentially lost all that he has, in his own vain and arrogant way, built with his own hands. His family, his reputation, and
his wife have crumbled underneath him and he is faced with only the image of his naked, unpretentious self.

Anna's decision to leave Seryoga is spurred on by her hatred for Alexey, but this failure to stay and protect her son from his father's cold, unloving gaze, shows that "she abandons her duty to protect" (Segal, 98). Once she and Vronsky's relationship begins to diminish in passion, and she senses his growing apathy toward her, she then returns to her first and truest love: that of her son. Her love for her son gradually shifts into a type of dependent love, for Seryoga will always love and accept his mother, and his innocence acts as a soothing balm to her sin. As a child he has the capacity to love his mother without judging her; he loves her because she is.

Seryoga also exhibits the passion in love that has so manifested itself in Anna's own soul; Seryoga needs her love in return for his happiness, much the same way she needs the love of Vronsky (or a love equivalent to the love she has the capacity to share). It is to her son that she will continually return in her thoughts when she is abroad with Vronsky and even when she is traveling to the train station to kill herself—her thoughts continually return to her son.

Some critics argue that Anna's love for Seryoga extends only so far as she can receive in return, but the scene between the mother and young son is by far the most passionate and eloquent in the work and reveals Tolstoy position in support of Anna's actions regarding this fragile and beautiful mother and son relationship. Anna is, of course, greedy to see her son; she has traveled from Italy only just to see him. Her thoughts are bent upon meeting him. Seryoga's father and his guardian, Lidia Ivanovna, have told him that his mother is dead, but as Naomi Segal points out in her work The
"Adulteress's Child," "Seryoga... does not believe his mother is dead; he looks out for her on his daily walks, rehearsing the joy of their reconciliation" (99). When Anna finally does see him for the first time in two years, their reunion is sublime:

'Seryoga, my dear little boy!' she uttered, catching her breath and embracing his plump little body.
'Mama!' he muttered, wriggling about in her arms so as to touch them with different parts of his body.
Sleepily smiling with closed eyes, he moved his plump hands from the back of his bed to her shoulders, leaning against her and enveloping her in that sweet scent of sleepiness and warmth which only children possess, and began rubbing himself against her neck and shoulder.
'I knew!' he said, opening his eyes. 'To-day is my birthday. I knew you would come! I'll get up directly....'
While saying this he was again falling asleep (485).

The exchange between the two offers a glimpse into Anna's dilemma, for it is with agony and shame that she must choose to live without her son. According to the law regarding marriage and divorce in Russia during that time, a woman's choices were very limiting especially if she was the one instigating the divorce. Anna has no legal right to her son if she chooses to divorce Alexey in order to marry Vronsky, and this single fact creates the barrier for her to freedom. "Anna's love for her son Seryoga is the cornerstone of her moral condemnation" (Segal, 90). Although she has separated herself from her son by living with Vronsky, thus severing all ties to her former family and her life, she will not sacrifice her son for the sake of her happiness or her freedom. Her refusal to request a divorce, up until the very end of the book when all hope is lost of actually securing one, is perplexing if we look at it solely as a response to her fear that she will lose her son if she divorces her husband. But, it becomes one of her best and most noble qualities, that of her devotion and love for her son, that creates the sympathetic character in Anna.

70
This meeting, the final one between the two, is as much a goodbye for Anna, for she knows deep in her heart that there is no chance she will ever have in securing custody of her son. She is faced with the utter truth of her complete isolation from not only society, but from any human contact. This isolated existence, when she has succeeded in ostracizing herself from the very society that cheered her on when she initially embraced her relations with Vronsky, now has turned its back on her because she no longer hides her shameful position as adulteress but openly challenges the rest of her circle to criticize her actions when they are in fact playing at the same game. In this solitary despair she ends her life.

We cannot condemn Anna for her actions just as Tolstoy could not condemn her. Yet, her life ends by suicide and thus is considered a failure, but it can be argued that even through this death her actions are forgiven her. Her pursuit of the truth in life, not only to find what it means to live but to live according to principles that are honest and clearly distinguishable excuse Anna's actions. Tolstoy does not elevate her to the status of the "ideal female," but he certainly implies through her characterization, that her honesty, her love for her child (the legitimate one), and her recognition and loathing of her position as an adulteress reveal that her innate qualities parallel those as defined in an ideal female character. Anna has the tragic flaw that is necessary in fiction to reveal the inner workings of man's spirit. Her battle against herself, the flesh against the spirit, morality versus immorality, society versus individualism--these challenges effectually peel off the layers of her personality so that Tolstoy can reveal the inner workings of her heart. He chooses not to stigmatize her just as a stereotypical adulteress so that he can succeed in showing the evils of woman's emancipation, yet he also does not condone her
actions as a legitimate response to her situation as a young, inexperienced girl being betrothed to a man decades her senior. Rather, he chooses to expose her, to expose her soul, so that the deeper questions of life, both the present and the eternal ones, can be brought forth—engaging the reader in his dialogue of action and reaction.
The second half of the nineteenth century in Russia was a time of immense transition. Freedom, that concept which had been so stifled in the social and political circles of Russia during the first half of the nineteenth century, had erupted with such great force that the world of artistic expression found pressure from all sides to represent the failings of the political, social and economic systems in Russia. With the death of Tsar Nicholas I came the birth of emancipation and with the inauguration of Alexander II to the throne came the literary and artistic movements that directly influenced the modern world--the world of the twentieth century--in a direction more geared toward the inevitable rights and freedoms of all people.

Insistent upon having a voice in the cacophony of voices resounding freedom, were women. Issues facing women such as: what is woman's role in society, should she have the same rights and privileges as man, should she have the right to choose her husband, how can the education of women be improved upon, etc., became a central theme to the intellectual and political thinkers in Russia. Leading the group of young intellectuals emerging in the 1860's and '70s were figures such as Chernyshevsky, Alexander Herzen, and Turgenev, to name a few. Their ideas regarding the treatment and freedom of women appeared in their literary works so that their position could and would
be heard by a multitude of other intellectuals facing the same situations and social
dilemmas in other areas of Russia and abroad. The reign of Alexander II allowed a
relatively unfettered ferment of ideas that had the effect of creating the necessary ripples
in the water so as to engage more artists and writers on the subject of the woman
question.

Visual artists such as Fedotov were the forefathers of the generation emerging in
the 1860's who integrated in their work the founding ideologies of the Russian past--the
principles of Russian tradition that gave uniqueness to their work, while advancing the
leading ideas being introduced by the younger, more westernized generation. This
synthesis helped to solidify, for the next generation of Russian artists, subjects that were
specifically Russian and themes that were at the same time universal. Although Fedotov
did not specifically intend his art to reform the political and social structures of
nineteenth century Russia, his work examines the inner workings of social intercourse in
order to reveal the incongruities between reason and action.

Perov followed Fedotov's lead but also adopted a more vocal position as a critical
social artist--echoing his liberal brothers in the literary and intellectual world. His work
had specificity, purposefully targeting certain religious and political groups, social
practices, and traditional values that could be portrayed as hypocritical and ironic. He
specifically targeted the Russian Orthodox church, as this is the subject of much of his
work, but he also included in the highlighted painting *A Village Sermon* (F-2), the
incongruous marriage relationship between the older man and the younger woman,
revealing the inconsistencies in traditional marriage practices through the husband’s
physical appearance and emotional apathy contrasted to the freshness, youth, and beauty
of the wife. By including the young, seducing playboy, Perov has successfully captured the problems such unsuitable marriages create in a society.

Pukirev's work, *The Unequal Marriage* (F-3), provides a raw examination into the issue of women’s rights and freedoms. Before a priest, with all the eyes of society resting upon the bride, and more importantly bearing witness to an event that is more representative of sanctioned molestation than marriage, a young girl has no choice but to accept her position in life and marry a man old enough to be her grandfather. Here there is no ambiguity; the light of innocence and helplessness cast upon the young girl while the future groom’s face is a distorted representation of his dominance over his future bride.

The mismatched marriage, the older man and the younger wife, emerges again in one of Tolstoy's earliest works, *Family Happiness*. Here, as many critics will argue, Tolstoy is not so diplomatic and certainly not as liberal as his fellow artists and intellectual companions when he characterizes the young, inexperienced Masha as a pleasure seeker who eventually learns her place, within the world of men, as a dutiful and obedient wife and mother. Sergey, whose age and maturity give him both intellectual and emotional advantages over his young wife, loses his interest in her once he sees her for what he had feared her to be, a shallow female. But to approach the work in this fashion would be denying the poetry behind Tolstoy's characterization and thematic arrangements. The most telling scene, the one between the two newly weds preparing to leave from the city to the country, the scene in which the rift in their relationship occurs, shows a writer whose intention was not to address the transient issues of women’s place
in society in the nineteenth century, but to try and come to terms with—-to reconcile--these eternally emerging problems which face all men and women, which face all families.

Tolstoy carries the theme of the family further in his psychological analysis of family life in the work *Anna Karenina*. The major families in the work have all been portrayed as having struggles that impede their happiness. Anna’s struggle for happiness and her search for truth in the midst of a society bred and sustained on deception is what eventually tear her family apart. Anna’s marriage to Karenin, a very young woman (from what is revealed through the text though no age is specifically stated) to a much older, rigid man carries on the theme present within *Family Happiness* and the artwork studied. This arrangement, as the reader gathers from the text, forces Karenin into a marriage he did not choose willingly and traps Anna in a relationship with a man who does not have the capacity for passionate love. Anna’s character is revealed, through the first depiction of her in the text, to possess a fervent energy latent within her spirit but an energy not completely out of reach to someone perceptive enough to recognize its existence.

Vronsky, the younger, more perceptive and keenly intuitive man achieves his desire, to seduce Anna, and this marks her downfall. And although her actions are not condoned by the narrator (Tolstoy), neither is she ridiculed for her actions and behavior in the work. Tolstoy creates sympathy for his adulteress through the amplification of certain traits Anna possesses like sincerity and genuine love. Her isolation, which begins in the initial phases of her relationship with Vronsky and escalates to a point that she is separated even from herself, gives the reader insight into her personal, emotional, and spiritual struggle. Anna is unable to function in the society in which she lives because that society cannot understand or accept the raw passionate honesty that fuels the light in Anna’s eyes.
What surfaces as one of the prevailing themes characteristic in any work by Tolstoy is the absence of certainty and the presence of the question—of the examination of reaction and response resulting from situations without the resolution of finality—that comes with a complete understanding of an issue. When we examine works like *Anna Karenina* or *Family Happiness*, the problems facing society, and perhaps more compelling, those facing the individual, become the driving force in the work and not so much the answer, masqueraded with romantic ideals about love and life so often seen in literature that tries to take a stand and show a specific position/response as being the ideal.

There could be no simple solution to the woman question according to Tolstoy's work. Characters, situations, and the results of social class and influence all work together to guarantee that no one solution is be suitable for every situation. What Tolstoy's work does reveal, from examining Masha's painful transition from girlhood to womanhood, to how the psychological impact of adultery affects Anna, is that the search for truth is the guiding light by which all characters, all human beings are propelled.
Pavel Fedotov's *The Major's Betrothal*
Vasily Perov's *A Village Sermon*
Vasily Pukirev *The Unequal Marriage*


Bowlt, John E. “Russian Painting in the Nineteenth Century.” *Stavrou* 113-139.


- - -. “Tolstoy and the Attempts to go Beyond the Social Forms of Life.” Bloom, Leo Tolstoy 9-14.


- - -. “An Image of Their Own?: Feminism, Revisionism and Russian Culture.” Marsh 2-41.


Bibliography


