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"Living for the Soul": Dolly's Heroism in Anna Karenina

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Living for the Soul: Dolly's Heroism in *Anna Karenina*

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Abstract

By employing and integrating both feminist and religious-ethical criticism, my thesis will demonstrate that in “living for the soul” and exemplifying religious virtue, Dolly Oblonsky achieves a sense of independence and purpose in spite of her adherence to traditional gender roles and social structures and is therefore a true hero of Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* (1877). I will validate this thesis through an in-depth evaluation of Gary Saul Morson’s critical studies of *Anna Karenina*, in particular “*Anna Karenina*” in *Our Time: Seeing More Wisely* (2007). Gary Saul Morson is the most important critical voice on the subject of Dolly in *Anna Karenina* and in many ways the most influential Tolstoyan critic in recent scholarship of the English-speaking world. Morson is also the main originator of the idea that one of the novel’s seemingly secondary characters – Dolly Oblonsky – is the true hero of *Anna Karenina*.

Morson offers an analysis and interpretation of Tolstoy’s great novel in terms of his thesis on “prosaics.” He argues that Tolstoy’s work criticizes romanticism in favor of “prosaic,” everyday love and rejects Anna’s narcissistic and romantic nature in favor of Dolly’s “prosaic love and lowly wisdom” (Morson [2007] 189). Unlike Morson, the majority of critics have either viewed Dolly as a somewhat pitiable character who, unlike Anna, submits to the oppressive patriarchal system, or they have neglected her as an insignificant minor character. Morson’s “*Anna Karenina*” In *Our Time: Seeing More Wisely* controversially attempts to establish Dolly as the true hero of the novel by arguing that her “prosaic” love and wisdom align with Tolstoy’s ideas of morality. However, because his theory of “prosaics” has broad applications to *Anna Karenina*, most critical responses focus on its significance to other aspects of the novel and continue to ignore its significance for Dolly and her heroism.

While Morson's "prosaics" thesis illuminates many aspects of *Anna Karenina* beautifully, his analysis almost entirely neglects the religious content of the novel. In my thesis I will show how he fails to address these religious aspects of Tolstoy's novel, will explain why this neglect is problematic, and will strengthen the argument for Dolly's heroism by showing how Tolstoy grounds Dolly's heroism in her spiritual strength, in the fact that she "lives for the soul" (Tolstoy [1877] 794).

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Analysis and Criticism of Morson's "Anna Karenina" In Our Time

Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of Prosaics

Gary Saul Morson is the most important critical voice on the subject of Dolly in *Anna Karenina* (1877) and in many ways the most influential Tolstoyan critic in recent scholarship of the English-speaking world. Morson is also the main originator of the idea that one of the novel's seemingly secondary characters – Dolly Oblonsky – is the true hero of *Anna Karenina*. In his critical study, *"Anna Karenina" In Our Time: Seeing More Wisely* (2007), Morson offers an analysis and interpretation of Tolstoy's novel in terms of his thesis on "prosaics." Morson argues that Tolstoy's work criticizes romanticism in favor of "prosaic," everyday love and rejects Anna's narcissistic and romantic nature in favor of Dolly's "prosaic love and lowly wisdom" (Morson [2007] 189).

Morson derived his thesis on "prosaics" from the theoretical and philosophical ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin, the 20th century Russian scholar and literary theorist; and while "prosaics" is Morson's neologism, the concept behind the term pervades Bakhtin's work. Seventeen years before the publication of *"Anna Karenina" In Our Time*, Morson co-authored *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of Prosaics* with Caryl Emerson, a prominent scholar of Russian literature and professor at Princeton University. In this work, Emerson and Morson analyze the literary-critical approach of Bakhtin, specifically addressing the concept of the "prosaic." This study provides Morson with the theoretical framework for "prosaics," which he later applies to Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and, more specifically, to Dolly.

Emerson and Morson define "prosaics" in terms of its two contexts:

First, as opposed to “poetics,” prosaics designates a theory of literature that privileges prose in general and the novel in particular over the poetic genres. Prosaics in the second sense... is a form of thinking that presumes the importance of the everyday, the ordinary, the “prosaic,” which has ethical as well as aesthetic importance. (Emerson and Morson 15)

In this way, Emerson and Morson’s “prosaics” is at once a theory of literature original to Bakhtin and a system of philosophical thought expanding upon the similar ideas of other thinkers – most notably, Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy.

In the former context, Bakhtin presents “prosaics” as a literary theory, arguing that the theory of “poetics” is unjustly privileged in literary analysis and misapplied to prose in general and the novel in particular. According to Bakhtin, when examined in this tradition of “poetics,” prose works are judged in terms of stylistic standards for poetry, and the style of a novel is determined by analyzing an individual author’s various language choices throughout the text. Bakhtin complains, “Consequently, the sense that novels as a group may have specific stylistic features – that a generic tradition may intervene between language as a whole and the author – escapes analysis” (Emerson and Morson 17). Furthermore, Bakhtin notes that many poetic theorists consider the novel to be a nonliterary form altogether and hold that “artistic discourse is necessarily poetic discourse,” ignoring the novel’s aesthetic value (17). Thus, “all the methods by which prose is analyzed are derived from poetry, and so they cannot reveal the ‘prosiness’ of prose and the ‘novelness’ of novels. Prose must necessarily appear as incomplete poetry” (19-20).

Bakhtin attempts to combat this problematic tradition of “poetic” thought by establishing the “prosaics of prose” in many of his works, including his essays

“Discourse in the Novel” and “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” (Emerson and Morson 19). He maintains that only by analyzing prose in terms of its own specific features, its “prosaics,” can we truly appreciate it as verbal art. As Emerson and Morson note, “Bakhtin means to offer not just a set of detachable terms [i.e. dialogue, polyphony, chronotope], nor even a new set of techniques, but a fundamentally different approach to both language and literary discourse entirely” (20). Bakhtin saw the prosaic, the ordinary, as “the source of all social change and individual creativity” and championed the novel as employing the artistry of everyday speech.

Underlying Bakhtin’s employment of “prosaics” as a literary theory, “prosaics” as a system of philosophical thought stems from a tradition of Russian thinkers, including Tolstoy. As Bakhtin’s literary “prosaics” champions the everyday speech of prose and the novel over “poetics,” the broader philosophy of “prosaics” demands that everyday details are more important to examine than cataclysmic events both ethically and aesthetically. In his essay “Why do Men Stupefy Themselves?,” Tolstoy claims, “True life begins where the tiny bit begins... it is lived only where these tiny, tiny infinitesimally small changes occur” (Tolstoy [1890] 197). He further argues that to assume that only momentous events have significant effects is “like assuming that it may harm a watch to be struck against a stone, but that a little dirt introduced into it cannot be harmful” (196).

As Emerson and Morson note, Tolstoyan “prosaics” have significant ethical implications, and Bakhtin adopts this ethical perspective in much of his work. In light of “prosaics,” ethics is not a field of systemic knowledge; moral and ethical choices and decisions can be made without reference or adherence to a general philosophy because moral wisdom is derived from “living rightly moment to moment and attending carefully

to the irreducible particularities of each case” (Emerson and Morson 25). In this way Tolstoy, Bakhtin, and other “prosaic” thinkers differentiate their philosophical thought from both moral absolutism and moral relativism:

In ethics, absolutism destroys the oughtness of an event by replacing it with rules; relativists agree that ethics is a matter of rules, but deny that nonarbitrary rules can exist. Neither is compatible with ethical action as Bakhtin or Tolstoy understood it. (26)

“Prosaics” holds that ethics cannot be generalized into specific rules. If it could, humans would have decisively determined those rules, and ethical action would require little thought and effort. Instead, ethics and ethical action must be determined by examining the particularities of each situation.

“Prosaics” denies systems and structures and counters what Bakhtin called “monologism” and Emerson and Morson term “semiotic totalitarianism.” Emerson and Morson define this as “the assumption that everything has a meaning related to the seamless whole, a meaning one could discover if one only had the code” (Morson and Emerson 28). Both Tolstoy and Bakhtin question this assumption that an underlying order can explain the totality of all things. In contrast, they argue that the social universe behaves indeterministically, that its natural state is disorder and mess, and that order must be imposed or constructed. Because of this disorder, the ethics and aesthetics of life cannot be neatly aligned or defined by a few systemic principles. Rather, the “prosaics” and the narratives of specific disordered circumstances must be examined to determine ethical actions within each particular context.

As a result, both Tolstoy and Bakhtin consider narratives and novels to be instrumental to ethical education. “Wisdom, Bakhtin believed, is not systematizable”

(Emerson and Morson 27). Moral wisdom is gained by examining the particularities of specific situations, and the “prosaics” of novels allows readers to immerse themselves in those particularities to better understand the ethics, in addition to the aesthetics, of those situations. In light of this, it becomes clear that the length and detail of Tolstoy’s novels are essential to their ethical and aesthetic purpose. His novels examine the “prosaics” of life.

“Anna Karenina” In Our Time

The concept of “prosaics” forms the basis for Morson’s thesis on Dolly’s heroism. In *“Anna Karenina” In Our Time: Seeing More Wisely*, Morson overturns traditional interpretations of the novel and claims that readers misunderstand Tolstoy’s characters and intentions. He analyzes Tolstoy’s great work as a “prosaic” novel, which “redefines heroism as the right kind of ordinary living, and sainthood as small acts of thoughtfulness that are barely perceived” (Morson [2007] 29). As such, he controversially attempts to establish Dolly as the true hero of the novel by arguing that her “prosaic” love and wisdom align with Tolstoy’s ideas of morality.

Morson begins by making the argument that Tolstoy is a “prosaic” novelist. He argues:

Tolstoy could make ordinary people and everyday life interesting...

Tolstoy makes us care when nothing special happens, as in scenes where children play and mothers watch over them. He fascinates with lengthy descriptions of events that contribute virtually nothing to the plot.

(Morson 10)

Morson attributes this skill to Tolstoy’s close observation of the minute, unnoticed phenomena of life, as well as Tolstoy’s philosophical questioning of dominant

worldviews. Morson places Tolstoy in opposition to philosophical rationalists, such as Descartes, Leibniz, and Spinoza, who “favored argument by abstract principles over consideration of particular cases” (14).. Tolstoy’s views align more closely with Aristotle’s and Montaigne’s in that they maintain that particular cases cannot always be encompassed by abstract principles. General principles cannot anticipate the idiosyncrasies of every case – they oversimplify. Morson also places Tolstoy in contrast to Newtonianism, the idea that “a vast number of phenomena could be explained by a very few laws” in psychology, politics, history, and ethics as well as science and mathematics. Tolstoy contends that the world is in a natural state of chaos and disorder, rather than a state of order, where a few, simple laws can explain every complexity. The social world must be examined in terms of its disordered particularities rather than some imagined underlying order. Tolstoy and his novels are suspicious of all-encompassing theories and place importance on examining the particular, ordinary moments of the everyday, contending that “life is an everyday affair, and the sum total of the unremarkable, daily happenings define its quality” (28).

Morson then argues that while many have misread *Anna Karenina* as a celebration of drama and romance, it is, in fact, a model “prosaic” novel in that it “tries to redirect our attention to aspects of everyday living: love and the family, moral decisions, the process of self improvement, and, ultimately, all that makes life feel meaningful or [alternatively] leads us to contemplate suicide” and proceeds to analyze the novel in light of this (Morson 31). In terms of Morson’s “prosaics” thesis, Anna represents the mistaken values of romance and drama, while Dolly, a seemingly minor character, is actually the “prosaic” hero of the novel.

Morson makes the case for Dolly's heroism by arguing that, while she does not occupy the dramatic foreground of the novel, Dolly "most closely embodies the author's values [in that she] lives a life focused on the everyday and on that most ordinary of institutions, the family... and she values most highly those moments that, from Tolstoy's perspective, make a life most meaningful" (Morson 38). As Morson points out, these meaningful, but ordinary, moments are often those of motherhood, citing scenes in which Dolly interacts with her children and derives great joy and value from those moments.

Morson then goes on to characterize what he calls "Dolly's Quandary," namely her husband Stiva's infidelity and Dolly's resulting suffering (Morson 40). He points out that this situation is told mostly from Stiva's and then Anna's perspective, "as if Dolly's hurt feelings were simply a difficulty to be fixed as quickly as possible so that others can get on with their lives" (40). When the reader does finally get Dolly's perspective, it becomes clear that her primary motivation in this situation is the welfare of her children. As Morson puts it, "Since Dolly herself knows she must find some way to return to her activities as a mother, she readily accepts the solution Anna offers: as a Christian, Dolly forgives her apparently repentant husband and so earns a measure of self-esteem" (41). Morson places particular importance on Dolly's motherhood in terms of "prosaics": "A life is lived well or ill largely because of good or bad habits. One reason that child-rearing is so important is that people acquire most habits in childhood" (41). For this reason, Morson argues that "motherhood is more important than any other occupation" in Tolstoy's eyes (43). As a good mother, Dolly is primarily concerned with shaping the habits of her children so that they grow up to lead "prosaically" good lives.

Morson strongly contrasts Dolly's "prosaically" good motherhood with Anna's relative indifference to her children. When Dolly visits Anna and Vronsky's country home, she notices Anna's ignorance of and absence from her daughter: "Dolly wonders that Anna does not know how many teeth the baby has" (46). Dolly witnesses Anna's negligence as well as the seeming frivolity of her and Vronsky's existence. Later, she learns that Anna uses birth control to preserve her looks, and "for Dolly, that reason renders Anna's love and family life as fake" (47). After her visit, Dolly views her own maternal role in a new light. As Morson points out, "However arduous [her maternal cares and worries], they mean something" (47). In this comparison with Anna, Morson demonstrates that Dolly's "prosaic" life of motherhood is truly meaningful compared to the emptiness and superficiality of Anna's existence. Dolly finds true value in her life by living well in everyday, ordinary moments.

Morson goes on to discuss Stiva in light of "prosaics" and in comparison to Dolly: "As Dolly represents good, Stiva represents evil. And the first thing to notice about evil is that it is not grand, Satanic, or alien, but friendly, charming, and ordinary" (Morson 48). Morson's central argument concerning Stiva is that Stiva represents the "prosaics," the banality, of evil. In Morson's view, Stiva's does not commit devilish, catastrophic deeds but rather a more ordinary inaction and negligence. Stiva is passive in his career, his home life, and his social interactions alike; he achieves his ends by *not* doing: not working, not fulfilling his paternal role, not committing to any particular cause. Morson argues that Stiva is aided in this negligence by his "excellent 'forgettery'" (51). Stiva is able to banish from his mind his guilt, his contradictory statements, his responsibilities and, as a result, can comfortably neglect any responsibilities he may have and loyalties he may owe. This "forgettery" further

prevents Stiva from self-reflection and, therefore, self-improvement. Stiva's fatalism contributes to his negligence as well. Stiva is able to deny responsibility for his infidelity because he believes it was inevitable. Morson concludes his arguments concerning Stiva's character by contrasting him with his wife: just as Dolly's "prosaic" goodness is primarily demonstrated in her role as a mother, Stiva's "prosaic" evil is demonstrated in his "neglect of children" (48). Through "forgettury" and fatalism, Stiva absents himself from his responsibility as a father, disregarding his most "prosaic" responsibilities.

Morson then spends the rest of his book applying his theory of "prosaics" to Anna and Levin. Morson sets up his critical reading of Anna by placing it in contrast to what he refers to as "the majority reading" of the novel, a reading to which he had previously subscribed. He concisely summarizes this "majority reading":

Anna undergoes great suffering, and we are expected to sympathize intensely with her. The society that condemns her is utterly hypocritical: the very people who have countless affairs, like Betsy Tverskaya, condemn her because she actually loves and acts on her passion. She loves not wisely but too well, and her tragedy results from the impossibility of transcending a culture of lies. (Morson 57)

Morson also recognizes a second, minority critical view that regards Anna negatively, "often on religious grounds," and acknowledges Richard Gustafson's considerable contributions to this tradition of criticism. However, Morson admits, "I did not see the need for a religious (or otherwise moralistic) reading, which seemed to rely on considerations outside the work itself" (58). It was only after rereading the novel in light of "prosaics" that Morson came to his views on Anna as expressed in his book, "*Anna*

Karenina” *In Our Time*, views which he claims differ from both the minority and majority opinions.

Morson comes to the conclusion that Tolstoy was highly critical of Anna for two significant reasons. First, Anna’s “romantic view and belief in omens contradict Tolstoy’s sense of the ordinary [or “prosaic”] and his belief in contingency,” and second, Anna “teaches herself to misperceive others and herself” (Morson 59). Morson holds that his views differ from the majority view in that he argues for Tolstoy’s criticism of Anna. He further argues that this majority reading is so common because readers overlook Tolstoy’s use of “free indirect discourse” in which the narrator slips in and out of Anna’s consciousness and “presents in the third person perceptions and evaluations that are Anna’s” but are often mistakenly understood to be the author’s (61). Morson claims that his interpretation of the novel also differs from the minority view, as he does not invoke religion. He argues, “Tolstoy seems to disapprove not so much of Anna’s adultery as of her self-deception” (60).

Morson goes on to argue for his reading of *Anna Karenina* as a critique of the ideology of romantic love rather than an expression of it. Morson claims that Anna believes herself to be the exceptional heroine of a romance novel and that while the romantic views expressed throughout the novel (frequently through “free indirect discourse”) may appear to be Tolstoy’s, closer readings reveal that they are Anna’s own views conveyed ironically and critically by the author. Anna represents the flaws of romantic love; she believes in omens and fatalism and uses these romantic ideas to absolve herself from her guilt: “Under the spell of the romantic myth, many readers apologize for Anna’s abandonment of one child and neglect of another, her failure to care at all about Karenin’s feelings, or her willingness to revenge herself on Vronsky by

committing suicide...[T]he passion to which she succumbs represents an unstoppable overflow of sheer vitality that makes right and wrong irrelevant” (Morson 64). In this way, Anna demonstrates the destructiveness of romantic and fatalistic ideas; her romanticism allows her to abandon morality and responsibility and leads to suffering and death.

Morson characterizes the novel as contrasting Anna’s destructive, romantic love with the “prosaic” love of Levin and Kitty. Anna’s love is motivated by her dramatic, romantic tendencies. Morson argues that, while Anna’s love for Vronsky may be real, it is primarily motivated by narcissism: “More than Vronsky she loves love itself and the act of loving” (Morson 66). Anna does not wish to love Vronsky in an ordinary, marital context; “she prefers to be a mistress” and to love him in a way that promotes mystery, drama, and tragic suffering (67). This romanticism also explains Anna’s indifference to her daughter, Annie, and her idealization of her son, Seryozha. As Morson points out, “She can love [Seryozha] with romantic longing and nostalgia precisely because he is absent. It is not the real Seryozha she loves, but the idealized four-year-old boy of her pictures” (67). Tolstoy places this narcissistic, romantic love in sharp contrast with the “prosaic” love of Kitty and Levin. Morson argues, “Prosaic love thrives not on mystery but on intimacy” (69). Levin and Kitty must work hard to maintain their everyday, “prosaic” love and marriage as passionate mystery is replaced by comfortable intimacy. Through the narrative of Levin and Kitty, Tolstoy demonstrates that, in contrast to the unhealthy dramas that Anna seeks out, “the most significant dramas of life are the ordinary ones,” such as marriage, work, childbirth, death. In this way, according to Morson, Tolstoy promotes “prosaic” love while criticizing Anna’s romantic love.

Morson goes on to analyze Anna, and Tolstoy's criticism of her, in terms of her dishonesty and misperception. He argues, "Anna makes her own destiny. It derives not only from her belief in romance and extremism, but also from the way in which she teaches herself to misperceive" (Morson 79). Morson makes the case that falsity, "studied spontaneity, fake simplicity, and assumed sincerity: these skills characterize the Oblonskys, Anna and Stiva," citing Anna's manipulation of Dolly in encouraging her to forgive her brother as well as her deception and betrayal of Kitty at the ball. Morson points out that, in analyzing Anna's thoughts and narration carefully, it becomes clear that she willfully misrepresents and misperceives her circumstances and, in subtly doing so, convinces the reader that her perspective is truth. This is particularly true in terms of Karenin. When Anna returns from her visit to Moscow, she depicts her husband as she now perceives him, and "Anna, from this point on, *teaches* herself to see Karenin as repulsive and unfeeling" (84). And when the reader mistakes these perceptions as the author's, he or she becomes convinced that Karenin is the monster Anna falsely portrays him to be. Morson argues that in order to ease her guilt, Anna makes a villain out of her husband and ignores his feelings. She misrepresents Karenin, ignoring his virtues and exaggerating his flaws, convincing both herself and the reader of his heartlessness and cruelty. In actuality, Karenin, though socially awkward and unable to express love effectively, repeatedly treats Anna with compassion and generosity, but Anna overlooks this in order to justify her actions. According to Morson, Tolstoy views this self-deception and falsity, more so than her adultery, as Anna's chief evil.

Finally, Morson argues that Anna's death is not the result of fate or of society's condemnation. Instead, he contends that Anna is responsible for her suicide and that her death is a result of her totalism: "Anna is all love, lives only when loving, is unthinkable

except when loving. For Tolstoy, such extremism seriously errs... and the belief that a person can only be one thing cause[s] Anna great harm” (Morson 119). It is Anna’s totalistic revelations, that “nothing is chance, the world is fundamentally simple, and everything says the same terrible thing,” that lead her to jump in front of the train (119). For Tolstoy, however, as a realist novelist, the world is complexity itself, and a person who is only one thing is inhuman. As Morson points out, Tolstoy contrasts Anna’s totalistic revelations with Levin’s “prosaic” ones: “*Levin comes to learn the complexity of things, and Anna the simplicity*” (133). Anna’s totalistic revelations are misguided and lead her to commit suicide, while Levin’s “prosaic” revelations save him from suicide. In this contrast, Tolstoy makes an argument to live “prosaically” rather than to die “romantically.”

Morson ends his book with an analysis of Levin, arguing that Levin’s character serves as a vehicle for Tolstoy’s “prosaic” political ideas. Throughout the novel, Levin struggles with the political question of whether or not to modernize Russian life and the socio-economic question of how to most effectively manage the country’s agriculture – questions involving the future of Russia as a whole, given that agriculture was the livelihood of the overwhelming majority of the Russian population at the time. After exploring various theories and ideas, Levin ultimately recognizes “the folly of all utopian plans and general laws”; he comes to realize, “One needs not a revolution but attention to detail, and one needs to respect local conditions while giving up the hope for a single answer that applies everywhere. Successful change is not sudden and universal but slow and piecemeal” (151).

Morson then applies this analysis to Levin’s philosophical questionings. Levin continuously grapples with philosophical theories explaining “how to live and what is

good and meaningful” (Morson 200). Ultimately, Morson argues, “Levin realizes a Tolstoyan truth quite difficult for intellectuals then and now to grasp: some dilemmas that appear philosophical cannot be answered philosophically” (201). The answer to Levin’s existential despair is not an underlying philosophical theory; “Levin could never have reasoned himself to meaningfulness because meaningfulness is unreasonable” (213). Rather, Levin learns that the answer is in “prosaic” everyday living; Levin does not need an overarching guide to living well because he has the moral knowledge to live rightly from moment to moment. Here, Morson argues that Tolstoy places “prosaics” at the crux of the novel and, so doing, teaches us to see and live “more wisely” (222).

My Criticism of Morson

“*Anna Karenina*” *In Our Time: Seeing More Wisely* is certainly a formative text. Morson offers an entirely new critical view of the novel in light of his theory of “prosaics” and, furthermore, originates the idea that Dolly is in fact the hero of the novel rather than a somewhat pitiable minor character. While I agree with Morson’s assertion of Dolly’s heroism as well as his principles of “prosaics” as applied to the novel, I have significant criticisms of Morson’s work. First, while Morson argues that Dolly is the true hero of the novel, he gives her significantly less attention than Anna and Levin in his book. Morson’s arguments for Dolly’s heroism are covered in a mere fourteen pages of his book, and she is referenced only sparingly thereafter. In contrast, his chapter on Anna covers eighty-three pages, and his chapter on Levin covers eighty pages. If anything, this inconsistency seems to contradict his assertion of Dolly’s heroism. And while it is true that Dolly appears significantly less frequently in the novel than either Anna or Levin, Morson neglects to analyze many of the scenes in which Dolly appears. For example, Morson makes no reference to the scene where Dolly settles her children

into the country and takes them to church or to Dolly's relationship with her sister Kitty. Surely Morson's arguments for Dolly's heroism would be stronger if he addressed her as thoroughly as he does Anna and Levin.

Additionally and more significantly, Morson's analysis almost entirely neglects the pervasive religious content of the novel, in spite of the fact that this religious content strengthens the argument for Dolly's heroism. In his chapter on Levin, Morson addresses the scene where Levin visits his half-brother Sergey Ivanovich in Moscow and finds him and a professor debating a question: "Is there a borderline between psychological and physiological phenomena in human activity, and where does it lie?" (Tolstoy [1877] I.vii.23-24). In listening to this debate, "[Levin] noticed that they connected scientific questions with the inner, spiritual ones, several times almost touched upon them, but that each time they came close to what seemed to him the most important thing, they hastily retreated" (Tolstoy I.vii.24). Morson addresses this passage to point out that "such evasions are always with us...[as] academic discourse comes to resemble an intellectual game" (Morson 170). Ironically, however, Morson himself is guilty of the same academic evasion as Sergey Ivanovich and the professor. He almost touches upon but never fully addresses the "inner, spiritual questions," the religious content of the novel. Instead, he frames everything in terms of ethics or morality and only discusses religion briefly or abstractly in terms of its significance to "prosaics." Morson attempts to justify this neglect of religion in his chapter on Anna, in which he contrasts his views of the novel with the minority critical tradition that views Anna negatively on religious grounds. Morson argues that such religious readings "seemed to rely on considerations outside the work itself" (Morson 58). Such a claim, however, is clearly negated not only by the passage that Morson references above but also by the pervasive religious content

of the novel, which Morson cannot avoid discussing, if only in passing. Morson further rationalizes this lapse, arguing that “Tolstoy seems to disapprove not so much of Anna’s adultery as of her self-deception,” as if adultery is somehow more in the realm of religion and spirituality than falsehood. No matter Anna’s “sin” or flaw, she (along with the entirety of the novel) cannot be separated from Tolstoy’s religious thought.

That said, perhaps Morson’s hesitation to address the religious concerns of the novel is understandable. After all, how does one reconcile the “prosaic” with the religious and spiritual? Can “God” ever be “prosaic”? If anything, God seems to be more romantic than “prosaic” in nature. The concept of God and the essential questions of religion and spirituality seem to deal with the immense, universal, overarching aspects of existence. How, then, can Tolstoy espouse both “prosaics” and religion and spirituality in his novel?

Arguably, Christianity offers a solution to the problem of “prosaics” and religion. In Christianity, God is made human, made “prosaic” through Jesus Christ. God is not removed in some distant, unreachable realm; rather, God is encountered through Jesus walking on the dusty roads of first-century Palestine. Morson seems to take issue with this idea, arguing that “Christian love, though initially beautiful, leads to moral disaster because it cannot be reconciled with ordinary life... [F]ar better the sort of prosaic love and lowly wisdom we see in Dolly” (Morson 189). I would argue, however, that Morson reconciles religion with “prosaics” in the same sentence where he declares such a reconciliation to be impossible. Dolly’s “prosaic” love and lowly wisdom is in fact Christian love. Dolly’s “prosaic” goodness is founded upon her religious and spiritual beliefs, and by “living for the soul,” Dolly exemplifies religious virtue in her everyday life. She does not demonstrate this virtue through grand, romantic action. Rather, Dolly’s

Christian love can be seen in “prosaic” living, in the everyday sacrifices she makes for her children and for her soul. As such, the religious content of the novel only serves to strengthen the argument for Dolly’s “prosaic” heroism.

Arguments for Dolly’s Heroism (I)

Support from Gustafson’s Leo Tolstoy, Resident and Stranger

Morson is not alone in overlooking the religious content in *Anna Karenina*: much academic scholarship concerning Tolstoy regards him dichotomously as “Tolstoy the artist” and “Tolstoy the religious moralist.” In this vein of thought, Tolstoy’s religious contemplation is considered to be separate from and marginal to his artistic genius. As a result, while criticism of *Anna Karenina* is ongoing and varied, religious criticism of the work is in many ways neglected. Although questions of religious faith and religious thought are central to Tolstoy and pervasive in *Anna Karenina*, Western critics for the most part avoid religious analysis in order to escape accusations of subjectivity or doctrinarism. This is clearly evidenced by *The Cambridge Companion to Tolstoy* (2002), which examines aesthetics, history, autobiography, gender, family, and many other facets of Tolstoy but neglects religion entirely. The criticism section of the Norton Critical Edition of *Anna Karenina* (1970) reveals this same neglect.

Richard Gustafson is an exception to this secular trend in criticism. In *Leo Tolstoy, Resident and Stranger: A Study in Fiction and Theology* (1986) he argues for the predominance of a religious viewpoint in all of Tolstoy’s writings. Gustafson criticizes Isaiah Berlin’s essay, *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (1953), which advances the widely accepted but problematic thesis that Tolstoy the moralist (a hedgehog) was marginal to Tolstoy the artist (a fox), creating the foundation for the enduring dichotomous view of the novelist. Instead he argues, “Tolstoy’s literary works cannot be

separated from his religious worldview; they are the verbal icons of it... Tolstoy is not two, but one” (Gustafson xii,xiv). Rather than hedgehog and fox, Gustafson contends that Tolstoy continuously fluctuated between his identity as Resident, in communion and love with all others, and his identity as Stranger, tormented by his alienation from those he loved. In this way, Tolstoy was in a near-constant state of religious and spiritual striving, and, according to Gustafson, this religious struggle is reflected in his work. *Resident and Stranger* traces this religious worldview throughout Tolstoy’s earlier and later writing and demonstrates a consistency of theological thought in Tolstoy’s artistic works throughout his lifetime.

While Gustafson sets a significant precedent for religious criticism of Tolstoy’s works, nevertheless his extensive study almost entirely neglects Dolly. In the only passage where Gustafson does briefly characterize Dolly, he does so in an arguably reductive and misguided way:

Dolly stands out from [other] secondary female characters because she is both a discontented wife and a dissatisfied mother. The significance of these failures surface on her way to visit Anna, which is Dolly’s journey of discovery. What Dolly discovers in her fantasy is her desire for a romance that has as its source resentment and as its goal revenge. In this she resembles Anna. (Gustafson 118)

Here, Gustafson falsely attributes “resentment” and “revenge” to Dolly, suggesting that she resembles Anna in ways she does not. In fact, Dolly’s visit to Anna arguably highlights the differences between the two women much more than their similarities. Gustafson’s reading of Dolly completely ignores Dolly’s perspective after her visit. After observing Anna, Dolly is grateful to return to her own valuable life and work as a

mother, and “that world of hers now seemed so precious and dear to her that she did not want to spend an extra day outside it for anything” (Tolstoy [1877] VI.xxiv.641).

In light of this neglect, I will use Gustafson’s work as the inspiration for my own study to justify a religious-ethical reading of the novel, specifically in regards to Dolly. I will examine two analogous texts that demonstrate a continuum in Tolstoyan fiction:

Family Happiness (1859), which serves as a prelude to the themes of marriage, love, and sexuality dealt with in *Anna Karenina*, and *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889), which serves as a postlude to those themes. Both texts address these themes in relation to a religious context, demonstrating that Tolstoy’s works deal with religion throughout his career.

Evidence from Family Happiness

Family Happiness, published eighteen years before *Anna Karenina*, is commonly viewed as a precursor to the novel, as it deals with many similar themes. The story follows the love and marriage of a young woman, Marya Alexandrovna, or Masha. Following the death of her mother, the seventeen-year-old Masha lives with her younger sister, Sonya, and governess, Katya, at the family’s country estate, Pokvrovskoe. Secluded from society and the city, Masha grows despondent and listless. However, the arrival of Sergey Mikhaylych, a much older family friend, inspires Masha back to life. The two fall in love, overcome Sergey Mikhaylych’s concerns about their age difference, and marry. After beginning their married life happily but uneventfully in the country, Masha becomes restless, and Sergey Mikhaylych agrees to spend a few weeks in St. Petersburg. Masha adores life in St. Petersburg and becomes a society darling, but Sergey Mikhaylych becomes increasingly concerned about his wife’s enchantment with what he views to be the emptiness and vanity of that existence. Eventually, their differences lead to a separation; Masha spends most of the next three years in the city

and then abroad in a spa at Baden-Baden. While abroad, Masha is nearly seduced by an Italian marquis, but when confronted by the marquis' advances, Masha feels ashamed and desperate to return to her husband and restore the love they once had. Masha and Sergey Makhaylych reconcile, return to the country, and find family happiness if not rekindled romantic love.

The parallels between Masha and Anna are obvious, and if Masha had chosen to go through with an affair, she arguably may have shared Anna's fate. This analysis is particularly relevant when viewing *Family Happiness* in terms of romantics and "prosaics," or, as Joe Andrew does, in terms of the house/anti-house opposition. In his book, *Narrative, Space and Gender in Russian Fiction: 1846 -1903* (2007), Andrew devotes a chapter to the novella and argues that Tolstoy's narrative contrast between the house and the anti-house is "one of the most important structuring principles of *Family Happiness*" (Andrew 85). Andrew contrasts the intense depiction and Edenic portrayal of life at Pokvrovskoe in Part I with the striking lack of concrete descriptions of St. Petersburg and Baden-Baden in Part II. He argues:

[In Part I] not merely is [Tolstoy] seeking to infuse his work with Turgenevan lyricism, but, rather, he is attempting to bring this scene vividly to life... And this is because Masha, as her feelings for Sergei develop and overflow, becomes more intensely alive. (89)

In contrast with that vividness and heightened reality, the lack of concrete details in the narrative style of Part II "almost seems to suggest a disembodied, immaterial space," and Andrew "see[s] this blanching of reality as an authorial strategy which has the effect of rendering this space unreal... [Masha] tells us only what she felt, what her experience was, but *external reality* has, as it were, disappeared behind her almost complete self-

absorption” (93). In this way, Andrew sees Tolstoy’s contrasting narrative styles as a representation of the liveliness, vivacity, and realism of Masha’s experience in the home and the vapid and distorted reality of her experience outside the home.

Andrew’s reading has clear applications to the theory of “prosaics.” When within the home, experiencing the “prosaics” of everyday living, Masha inhabits a world that is colorful, happy, and real. However, she becomes bored with routine, seeks a more romantic life in the city, and instead finds herself leading a meaningless existence dominated by her own self-absorption. She returns to “prosaic” living in order to find family happiness. In this way, Masha, like Anna, misguidedly and destructively pursues romanticism, but she stops short of her downfall.

While these readings are useful in demonstrating the parallels between Masha and Anna, they neglect the religious content of *Family Happiness* and the implications of that content. Andrew contends that Sergey Mikhaylych moves the plot forward: his arrival revives Masha from her stupor and motivates the subsequent events of the novel. He also notes that “almost all the dialogue is exclusively between Masha and Sergei” and argues that “the effect of this narrative strategy is to confirm the impression that, narratively, she is only alive when he is with her” (Andrew 98). While Andrew’s observations about dialogue are accurate, he overlooks the significant portion of the story in which Masha develops a rich religious life, independent from Sergey Mikhaylych. When Masha realizes her and Sergey Mikhaylych’s mutual but undeclared love for each other, she immerses herself in her religion: “I resolved to begin fasting on that day, to take the Communion on my birthday, and on that same day to be betrothed to him” (Tolstoy [1859] 34). And while Masha’s religious fervor is inspired by her love for Sergey Mikhaylych, her religious life is separate from him: he does not visit during this

time. In spite of his absence, though, Masha is very much alive. After attending mass, she “seemed to feel an immediate sensation of well-being, of a mysterious light and warmth that instantly filled [her] heart” (Tolstoy 36). She performs acts of kindness and self-sacrifice, feeling “a burning love for all the world” (Tolstoy 37). Furthermore, this religious inner-life changes her relationship with Sergey Mikhaylych. She reflects, “He seemed to me now like a second self... [T]he inferiority which I had always felt in his presence had vanished entirely: I felt myself his equal, and could understand him thoroughly from the moral elevation I had reached” (Tolstoy 38). Through this religious life and moral self-improvement, Masha is no longer dependent on and inferior to Sergey Mikhaylych. Gustafson also acknowledges the power of this religious life, arguing that “Masha discovers a new world within herself and for a moment attains a love she did not seek... [In doing so] Masha has soared past her ‘guardian’ [Sergey]” (Gustafson 112-113). Masha’s religious faith is the force that allows her to achieve “equality” with Sergey, to transcend the gap between them generated by such factors as age, gender and experience. In “living for the soul,” she becomes her own person.

The religious content of *Family Happiness* reveals parallels between Masha and Dolly. Both Masha and Dolly have full, inner spiritual lives, and both women achieve a sense of independence and self-worth through their spirituality. In light of this, Masha can be viewed, not simply as a precursor to Anna who narrowly avoided her fate, but as a precursor to Dolly – a woman who chooses to give up romanticism for “prosaics,” to “live for the soul” and for her children. During her religious fervor, Masha imagines her future life with Sergey Mikhaylych: “a quiet family life in the country, with constant self-sacrifice, constant mutual love, and constant recognition in all things of the kind hand of Providence” (Tolstoy 39). In many ways, this is an idealized description of

Dolly's "prosaic" life as wife and mother. Masha's mistake is that she romanticizes "prosaics," and when actually confronted with the tedium and self-sacrifice of that existence, she craves the "eventfulness" of society living: "I wanted excitement and danger and the chance to sacrifice myself for my love... I might have realized ... that the sacrifice I desired was there before me, in the task of overcoming these feelings... I suffered most from the feeling that custom was daily petrifying our lives" (62-63). It is only when confronted by the emptiness of her life in society, with the potential of a sexual affair, that Masha desires to return to a more "prosaic" way of living. She faces a dilemma: "Once it seemed so plain and right that to live for others was happiness; but now it has become unintelligible. Why live for others, when life has no attraction even for oneself?" Masha is able to overcome this dilemma, as Dolly does, by deciding to live for others, for the soul, and, specifically, for her children. When Sergey Mikhaylych and Masha reconcile but recognize that the romance of their relationship is over, they shift their dedication and love to their children. Holding her son, Masha thinks to herself, "A new feeling of love for my children and the father of my children laid the foundation of a new life and a quite different happiness" (106). In this way, Masha is able to embrace true, "prosaic," sacrificial love as Dolly does and, in doing so, find some happiness.

There is a clear difference between Masha and Dolly in that Masha eventually finds true family happiness while Dolly struggles with family unhappiness. Sergey is certainly not Stiva. Masha is able to return to a loving and faithful husband while Dolly is not. Perhaps this difference is what distinguishes Dolly as more of a hero than Masha. While both ultimately choose "prosaic" love and "living for the soul," Dolly does so in the face of indefinite unhappiness and hardship. When deprived of family happiness,

Dolly finds some semblance of personal happiness and independence (and works for the happiness for her children) by pursuing the “prosaic” heroism of “living for the soul.”

Family Happiness is certainly a prelude to *Anna Karenina* in that it addresses themes of love, marriage, and sexuality, but, beyond that, it is a prelude to *Anna Karenina* in that it examines these themes in correlation to religion and spirituality. Masha’s religious life presents her with a guideline for family happiness: live for others, “live for the soul.” It is only in returning to this life that Masha can find happiness, and, in doing so, she is a precursor to Dolly. Furthermore, the religious content in *Family Happiness* demonstrates that Tolstoy the moralist is not separate from, and marginal to, Tolstoy the artist. From the beginning of his career, Tolstoy addresses and incorporates religious questions and content into his art because those questions are central to his thought and relevant to life and love.

Evidence from The Kreutzer Sonata

The Kreutzer Sonata, published in 1889, can be considered a postlude to *Anna Karenina*, on the themes of love, marriage, and sexuality. However, most critics consider the later work to be that of “Tolstoy the religious moralist” rather than “Tolstoy the artist.” In the story, the narrator encounters an aristocrat, Pozdnyshev, while journeying on a train. Overhearing the other passengers’ conversation concerning marriage, divorce, and love, Pozdnyshev agitatedly interjects extreme indictments of sexual and marital relationships and recounts the story of his own marriage. He describes his and his wife’s oscillation between states of passionate love and vicious animosity. Ultimately, Pozdnyshev confesses that he was driven to murder his wife as a result of his jealousy over her intense, but nonphysical, relationship with a violinist, Troukhatchevsky. Where many view Tolstoy’s earlier works, such as *Family Happiness* and *Anna Karenina*, to

have primarily artistic concerns and motivations, *The Kreutzer Sonata* has been commonly regarded as a moralistic rant, arguing for the ideal of complete sexual abstinence, with very little artistic merit. When viewed in this light, the novella arguably serves as a renunciation of Tolstoy's earlier, appreciative depictions of women and motherhood through characters such as Masha and Dolly, as an expression of extreme moralism and misogyny, and as a justification of the dichotomous view of Tolstoy.

However, while seemingly justified at first glance, conflating Tolstoy's ideas and convictions with Pozdnyshev's overlooks some key artistic features employed by Tolstoy as well as moments of continuity between *The Kreutzer Sonata* and the author's previous works. In "*Anna Karenina*" *In Our Time*, Morson argues against the majority reading that Anna is the tragic, romantic heroine of her novel by pointing out that many readers fail to notice Tolstoy's use of "free indirect discourse" in which he slips in and out of Anna's consciousness and "presents in the third person perceptions and evaluations that are Anna's" but are often mistakenly understood to be the author's (Morson 61). Similarly, Tolstoy's narrative style in *The Kreutzer Sonata* leads to the conflation of author and character. The story is presented almost in monologue by Pozdnyshev, while Tolstoy's narrator makes very few, subtle observations and judgments. So it is understandable that many take Pozdnyshev's moralistic and misogynistic ideas to be Tolstoy's own. However, the observations that the narrator does offer, reveals Pozdnyshev's unreliability. The narrator notices Pozdnyshev's "unusually glittering eyes dart[ing] quickly from object to object" and "that from time to time he emitted strange sounds, similar to clearing his throat or to a laugh begun and then broken off" (Tolstoy [1889] 4). Frequently throughout their conversation, Pozdnyshev jumps up or exclaims in agitation. This depiction seems to portray, if not a madman, at least an

extremely disturbed person – surely not an effective choice if Tolstoy is conveying his own personal convictions. Furthermore, if the narrator makes any evaluation of Pozdnyshev at all, it is one of pity rather than admiration or conversion to his views. He notes, “[Pozdnyshev] seemed oppressed by his loneliness,” and as they part, he describes Pozdnyshev as smiling “so pitifully that I felt like crying” (Tolstoy 4, 70). Even Pozdnyshev himself seems unconvinced by his own assertions and racked with guilt over his actions. The novella ends with his plea for forgiveness: “‘Yes, forgive me,’ he said, repeating the same word with which he had ended his story [the story he has just recounted to the narrator]” (Tolstoy 70). If Pozdnyshev truly believed that his views on women, sexuality, and marriage – and subsequent actions – were justified, he would not feel such guilt and such a need for forgiveness.

In *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature*, Barbara Heldt offers an “against the grain” feminist reading of *The Kreutzer Sonata* that acknowledges this distance between Pozdnyshev and Tolstoy. Noting that the novella “is often dismissed as an extreme example of Tolstoy’s misogyny, without any redeeming artistic virtues,” Heldt instead argues, “Far from being misogynistic, it takes men’s hatred of women and lays bare its roots, finding them in a social and economic universe entirely of men’s making” (Heldt 44-45). Heldt agrees that Tolstoy’s views are not Pozdnyshev’s and that, instead, he is criticizing such extremism: “It would seem that misogyny rules throughout. But Tolstoy is attempting a more difficult feat: without giving woman her say...and without giving us any example of admirable behavior in women, he clearly shows how she has been deprived of her humanity” (45). Ultimately, she argues that Tolstoy presents Pozdnyshev as an example of men’s baseness and “comes to blame men for creating women in the image that suited them, in life as in art” (48). As a result,

Heldt views *The Kreutzer Sonata* to be a “description of sexual politics...the same as those made by feminists today,” a story that does not repudiate Tolstoy’s respect for women but rather upholds it (47).

Heldt’s acknowledgment of Tolstoy’s distance from Pozdnyshev and, consequently, his criticism of male idealization and commodification of women is in many ways unique and illuminating. Arguably, however, *The Kreutzer Sonata* is not merely a subversive critique of misogyny, but a critique of extreme moralism generally. Just as in *Anna Karenina* Tolstoy uses Anna to demonstrate the dangers of extreme romanticism and passionate, sexual love, in *The Kreutzer Sonata* Tolstoy uses Pozdnyshev to demonstrate the dangers of radically moralistic views of marriage and love. Before Pozdnyshev expounds upon his views and his past, the other passengers on the train engage in an argument about love, marriage, and divorce. A lady present argues that marriage without “true love” is not actually a sanctified marriage. This remark incites Pozdnyshev to interrupt, asking the lady what she means by “true love.” With some difficulty, the lady argues that “true love” is “the exclusive preference for one man or one woman over everyone else...for a long time, sometimes one’s whole life.” To this, Pozdnyshev replies, “That only happens in novels” (Tolstoy 9-10). This exchange reflects the anti-romantic content of *Anna Karenina*. The other passengers object to Pozdnyshev’s assertion, arguing that many lifelong marriages do exist and that love can be based on spiritual affinity rather than merely physical attraction. In response to this, Pozdnyshev expresses his doubt in the existence of any love other than sensual love. While he acknowledges successful marriages exist, he adds a crucial qualification. Such marriages:

have existed and do exist among those people who see something mysterious in marriage, a sacrament that binds them before God. Among some people marriages exist, but not among us. Here people get married without seeing anything in it other than copulation and the result is either deception or coercion. (Tolstoy 10-11)

In this single statement, Pozdnyshev presents but immediately dismisses the solution to his problems with marriage and sexuality. He acknowledges that the only successful marriages are those based on spiritual love, a love that “binds before God,” but he then argues that such spiritual love does not exist “among us.” By “us” he means the modern, westernized, secularized stratum of Russian society. He separates that segment of society, himself included, from the more traditional, religious segment. In other words, he separates himself from people who, like Dolly, “live for the soul” and find spiritual importance in their everyday “prosaic” lives.

Although Pozdnyshev is disgusted by the failure of marriages based merely on sensuality and copulation, he does not acknowledge spiritual and religious love, “living for the soul,” as a viable path. This is further represented by his response to music. When speaking to the narrator about Beethoven’s *Kreutzer Sonata*, the piece his wife and Troukhatchevsky play together, he becomes agitated, saying, “They say that music has a sublime impact on the soul – that’s nonsense and not true... It affects the soul neither in an elevating nor in a debasing way, but in an irritating way.” However, he goes on to describe this effect:

How can I explain it? Music forces me to forget myself, my actual situation, and transports me to some other state, not my own; it seems to me that under the influence of music, I feel something more than what I

really feel, I understand more than I really understand, and I can do more than I really do. (Tolstoy 54)

This description of music's impact on him seems to be a spiritually elevated one. That is to say, music seems to represent spiritual life and spiritual love. However, Pozdnyshev is resistant to and irritated by the spiritual experience of music, just as he is resistant to and dismissive of the idea of spiritual love. Instead of acknowledging and embracing spiritual love and "living for the soul," he moralizes in support of complete sexual abstinence and chastity. In this way, Pozdnyshev represents extreme moralization when it comes to love. Just as Anna misidentifies love as a purely romantic, passionate experience, Pozdnyshev, in the opposite extreme, misidentifies love as a completely base and animalistic experience and decides to renounce it. Neither Anna nor Pozdnyshev understands the spiritual aspect of "prosaic" love in marriage, and that is their downfall.

Support from the Stories of Sofiya Tolstaya

The American Slavist Michael Katz recently published *The Kreutzer Sonata Variations*, an unprecedented volume containing a new translation of Tolstoy's novella accompanied by stories written by the author's wife and son in response to *The Kreutzer Sonata*. The two stories by Sofiya (Sonya) Tolstaya, "Whose Fault?" and "Song Without Words," have considerable relevance to *Anna Karenina* since both depict unhappy marriages. The originality of the stories lies first of all in the fact that Tolstaya tells her stories from the point of view of the unhappy wives.

Katz presents Sonya Tolstaya's counterstory "Whose Fault?" as a challenge to *The Kreutzer Sonata*, in which she "express[es] her profound disagreement with her illustrious husband's long-held ideas about the nature of women, the institution of marriage, and the causes of adultery" (Katz xvi). This interpretation appears to provide

some justification for the common reading that Pozdnyshev's ideas and Tolstoy's ideas are one and the same. However, a close examination reveals that Tolstaya's story is more aligned with her husband's novella than it seems to be at first glance. In it, she seems to draw the same conclusion that spirituality and spiritual connection are necessary components of successful love. However, rather than doing so through the depiction of the flaws of an extreme moralist such as Pozdnyshev, Tolstaya offers, unironically, the portrait of a wife who seeks to "live for the soul" in life and in love.

"Whose Fault?" follows the courtship and marriage of the thirty-five-year-old Prince Prozorsky and the eighteen-year-old Anna Aleksandrovna Ilmenev. Throughout their marriage they experience many of the same difficulties described in *The Kreutzer Sonata*: passionate, sensual love followed by intense quarreling and jealousy, as well as disagreements over the role of wife and mother. Eventually, Anna comes to realize that her husband loves her with a sensual, destructive love rather than with a spiritual affinity, and as a result, she seeks out spiritual fulfillment and connection through motherhood, art, philosophy, and a friendship with an acquaintance, Bekhmetev. Eventually driven to a jealous rage by his imaginings of his wife's infidelity with the would-be artist, Bekhmetev, Prozorsky kills his wife. The story clearly parallels the plot of *The Kreutzer Sonata* but is told from the wife's perspective. While Prozorsky represents the same extreme views as Pozdnyshev, Anna, through her understanding of spiritual love, represents the merits of "living for the soul."

From a young age, Anna is very much concerned with the study of philosophy and, perhaps more importantly, with a spiritual and religious life. She tells her sister Natasha, "One must live through spiritual life alone... I feel that I can elevate myself to such a level of spiritual development that I'll never even want to eat... [One's soul] must

always be ready to soar off into the infinite” (Tolstaya 76). And while, Anna must eventually learn to reconcile these idealistic views with the realities of everyday worries and “prosaic” living, she never relinquishes her longing for spiritual life and fulfillment: “I won’t surrender that, do you hear?... If there’s no God, then I don’t exist and there’s nothing, nothing at all” (77). In contrast, Prozorsky views her spirituality with irony and condescension and urges Anna to “live more by social and earthly interests, live by participating in human affairs and not bother about your inner frailties” (77). In spite of this marked difference in their worldviews, Anna, perhaps somewhat in deference to Prozorsky’s age and experience, agrees to marry him in the hopes that she will return his love eventually.

However, Anna and Prozorsky’s differences manifest themselves in their love and marriage. Prozorsky’s love for Anna is continually described as sexual, possessive, and “animal-like” (Tolstaya 83). While Anna “trie[s] as much as possible to enter into his life and interests and to help him,” Prozorsky seems primarily concerned with Anna’s physicality and sexuality and uninterested in Anna’s inner and spiritual life. There is a moment in the story when Anna is praying, and Prozorsky, seeing her bare shoulders, comes up behind her to kiss them. Upset, Anna reflects, “Once again, it’s only that: it all leads to the same thing” (99). Later, they quarrel, and when Anna seeks to reconcile, Prozorsky begins kissing her; “Anna realized that the reconciliation was proceeding in a different way than the one she had been hoping for, that there would be no communion of their souls... but that it would be a reconciliation of kisses” (101). Thus in her husband, Anna has a lover but not a soul mate. Prozorsky only engages in the sensual, and therefore tenuous and fleeting, aspects of love, while Anna seeks a spiritual connection.

Unable to find this connection with Prozorsky, Anna seeks spiritual fulfillment in her relationship with her children, in her artistic pursuits in sketching and painting, and in her reading of philosophy and poetry. When Prozorsky's ill friend, Bekhmetev, comes to visit and stay in the country, Anna finds a companion with a spiritual affinity to her and an interest in her children, her artwork, and her reading: "He took walks with her and the children, played with them, and spent time with them, recounting interesting stories or drawing... Bekhmetev and Anna took turns sketching portraits[, and] alternated reading aloud the books of Jules Verne" (Tolstaya 119). While Prozorsky refuses to enter into his wife's world or understand her interests, Bekhmetev engages with Anna's inner and spiritual life. In this way, though she has no physical relationship with Bekhmetev and remains faithful to her husband, Anna finds spiritual connection with Bekhmetev where she cannot with Prozorsky.

Prozorsky, however, imagines not a spiritual relationship but a physical one between his wife and Bekhmetev, and, tormented by this imagined infidelity, grows insanely jealous. Eventually, he accuses her of having an affair, and, in a fit of rage, strikes her with a paperweight. It is only after her death that Prozorsky recognizes his mistake:

He understood that the kind of love he had given her was the kind of love that had killed her, and that it was not the way he should have loved her.... And now, only after her body had disappeared, had he begun to understand her soul.... More and more he came to value the pure, tender loving soul that had left him... All the more did he want to join his soul with hers. (Tolstaya 164)

However, it is not Prozorsky who joins souls with Anna, but Bekhmetev, who dies a month later from his illness while abroad, eternalizing his and Anna's relationship in death and the afterlife. This seems to justify Anna's belief in the endurance of spiritual love, which she expresses earlier in the story: "Such love is eternal: death does not exist for it" (131). Thus, "Whose Fault?" depicts through Prozorsky the same destructive, sensual love that Pozdnyshev experienced, the same murderous jealousy, and the same eventual remorse. And while it seems clear that Tolstaya is criticizing both Prozorsky and Pozdnyshev, it is not obvious that Tolstaya is criticizing Tolstoy's views on love. In fact, both stories seem to have similar intentions if different executions, and Tolstaya's more explicit criticism of Prozorsky seems to echo Tolstoy's more subtle criticism of Pozdnyshev.

This is not to say that Tolstaya merely echoes Tolstoy's views in her stories. She shows that she was perfectly capable of thinking for herself. For example, she explicitly criticizes Tolstoy's well-known contempt for doctors and medicine in her depiction of these same views in Prozorsky. Anna cites Prozorsky's contempt as foolishness and even madness and continually contrasts this misguided contempt with the doctors' successes (Tolstaya 134, 138). However, the fact that Tolstaya directly criticizes this view of her husband's, suggests that she would be capable of more directly criticizing his views on love, should she wish to. Instead, she seems to tell the same story and come to the same conclusions about sensual and spiritual love, simply utilizing a different narrative style and perspective. In her story, Anna exemplifies the spiritual dimension of love that both Pozdnyshev and Prozorsky tragically neglect. In *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Tolstoy only addresses the spiritual dimension indirectly and discursively through Pozdnyshev's monologizing. Tolstaya advocates for it openly and explicitly.

Although it was not written directly as a response to *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Tolstaya's other story, "Song Without Words," deals with the same issues of spirituality, moralism, and romanticism in relation to love. In this story, the main character, Sasha, struggles with depression after the death of her mother. She finds little comfort in her relationship with her son, Alyosha, and her husband, Petr Afanasevich, and is tormented by their life in the country. It is only once Sasha forms a friendship with Ivan Ilych, their neighbor in the country and a talented musician and composer, that she recovers from her intense grief, consoled by the beauty of Ivan Ilych's music. However, Sasha soon falls in love with Ivan Ilych. Her unrequited love and the subsequent guilt she feels, eventually strains Sasha's mental health to the point where she admits herself to a "nerve clinic" (Tolstaya 254).

In "Song Without Words," Tolstaya seems to demonstrate the dangers of extremes in love through the three main characters. Petr Afanasevich, Sasha's husband, loves *too* "prosaically." Petr Afanasevich's chief interest lies in gardening and botany, and little else can fully capture his attention. While he loves Sasha for the care and order she brings to his life, his love is neither romantic nor spiritual. When Sasha suffers from depression after her mother's death, she seeks spiritual solace but cannot find it with her husband:

Did he understand her? Did he ever penetrate her internal life; did he ever see that his interests in the Insurance Company or in the cultivation of the largest possible onions, in both of which she had always shown interest, couldn't really absorb her completely? And now, in her grief... was he capable of rousing her interest, giving her something, explaining to her

the whole horror of death or the entire meaning of life that lay ahead?

(Tolstaya 180)

Petr Afanasevich is not Sasha's lover and neither does he understand her soul. Just as Pozdnyshev cannot bear the spiritual elevation of music in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Petr Afanasevich "suffers from the noise" in "Song Without Words" (190). The "prosaics" of everyday life are essential to existence, but Sasha's husband is so entrenched in "prosaics" that he cannot bear or understand the elevated aspects of life and love.

In contrast, Ivan Ilych is so absorbed by the spiritual elevation of his music that he cannot seem to engage with, or even fully recognize either romantic or prosaic love. As soon as Ivan Ilych stops playing his music "it [is] as if the flame suddenly went out of him; fire, energy, and strength" (Tolstaya 192). And when Sasha suggests that music without romanticism is boring, he replies, "No, everything becomes more spiritual, and that's better... the musical impact of such new works is perceived not by the nerves but by the spiritual, rational side of the human soul" (200). Thus, Ivan Ilych represents an extreme, abstract spiritualism, a spirituality without passion, that hinders love. He refuses to fully acknowledge Sasha's obvious love for him and treats her with relative indifference and little more than friendship. Even when his compositions seem to betray some passionate feelings inspired by Sasha, Ivan Ilych cannot recognize those romantic feelings in himself. He writes Sasha a romance in which "the stormy accompaniment [goes] along with a lovely, impassioned melody, transitioning into the tender sounds of a soul in love" (213). However, when recollecting this piece later, Ivan Ilych wonders if he could have really composed it. Ultimately, he is able to forget Sasha and separate himself from the possibility of love. He thinks to himself, "To forget, forget everything except for music; music alone will be my mission, my life, my interest" (254). Ivan Ilych

forgets everything but the spiritual elevation of music and, as a result, cannot fully experience love.

Sasha is unable to fully connect with either the extremely “prosaic” Petr Afanasevich or the extremely spiritual Ivan Ilych; she is a romantic. When Sasha’s mother dies, she gives herself over to her depression and grief. This grief prevents her from engaging with the “prosaics” of existence; she feels disconnected from her husband, her son, and her entire domestic life. Sasha briefly finds a remedy for this intense depression in the spiritual experience of Ivan Ilych’s music. When she hears him play Mendelssohn’s *Song Without Words*, she finds spiritual solace:

She raised her eyes to the icon and her thoughts to God... All of these thoughts were joyfully resolved by her: both the pain of loss and the chaos of tormenting doubts about human life and death, with all the sufferings, temptations, and evil – all this became clear like the bright sky after a storm. (Tolstaya 191)

However, Sasha allows romanticism to overshadow this. She allows Ivan Ilych to supplant God and “want[s] to fall on her knees before this man... like an ancient pagan before an idol” (192). In this way, like Anna in *Anna Karenina*, Sasha allows her romanticism to eclipse both the “prosaic” and spiritual aspects of life and love. While Sasha, unlike Anna, remains faithful to her husband, her romanticism leads to her downfall, and her mental health disintegrates. She soon feels tormented by her love for Ivan Ilych. She thinks to herself: “You love music and you fall in love with a man – then the music vanishes, defiled by human passion... There is no music, no; it’s all muddled, dirty, it died” (248-249). Sasha becomes obsessed with obtaining cleanliness, which she feels represents spiritual purity, and with ridding herself of dirt, which she feels

represents passion and romanticism. Ultimately, Sasha admits herself to the nerve clinic, unable to endure the destructive effects of her romanticism.

In “Song Without Words,” as in “Whose Fault?,” Tolstaya demonstrates intellectual independence from her husband. In “Song Without Words,” she openly criticizes Tolstoy’s vegetarianism and pacifism. Like Tolstoy, Petr Afanasevich is a vegetarian. Sasha objects to this and orders the Nanny, “Please feed him well, since Petr Afanasevich will ruin his stomach with his vegetarianism” (Tolstaya 167). Later in the story, Sasha visits her young friend, Kurlinsky, who has refused to enter into the military service on the grounds of pacifism – an allusion to Tolstoy’s similar beliefs. During her visit, Sasha argues against such pacifism, saying,

What childish reasoning... You’re committing violence against the person who’ll be drafted instead of you; you’re coercing those who have to keep you locked up here; you’re committing violence against those who’ll be compelled to punish you, torment you and force you to bear arms. (227-228)

This again proves that Tolstaya was capable of disagreeing with and criticizing her husband. That said, much of the essential content of “Song Without Words” seems to align with Tolstoy’s own depictions of love. Petr Afanasevich, Ivan Ilych, and Sasha represent the failure of extremism in love, just as Anna does in *Anna Karenina* and Pozdnyshev does in *The Kreutzer Sonata*.

In “Whose Fault?,” Anna, like Dolly in *Anna Karenina* and Masha in *Family Happiness*, finds spiritual fulfillment and strength in her philosophical and religious life and “pure happiness” and “purpose of life” in her children, remaining “unwaveringly faithful to the obligations of motherhood” (Tolstaya 105). All three women “live for the soul” and learn to find some “prosaic” happiness and satisfaction in spite of difficult

circumstances, though Anna eventually meets her tragic end at the hand of her husband. Similarly, Sasha in “Song Without Words,” Anna in *Anna Karenina*, and Pozdnyshv in *The Kreutzer Sonata* – as a result of their extremism – fail to “live for the soul” and to find “prosaic” happiness. Taken together, all six of these stories demonstrate the continuity in Tolstoy’s work on issues of marriage, love, and sexuality in relation to religion and spiritual ideas. This continuity challenges the dichotomous view of Tolstoy as “artist” and “moralist” and justifies attention to the religious content of *Anna Karenina*, particularly in regards to Dolly and her “living for the soul.”

Arguments for Dolly’s Heroism (II)

Selected Close Readings of Anna Karenina

Morson’s theory of “prosaics” has two significant shortcomings. First, his analysis almost entirely neglects the pervasive religious content of the novel, in spite of the fact that this religious content strengthens the argument for Dolly’s heroism. Second, Morson’s analysis can be open to feminist criticism. Morson proves Dolly to be a Tolstoyan “prosaic” hero, but many feminist scholars might suggest that Tolstoy’s own perception of this “prosaic” female heroism and morality is in fact misogynistic and limiting to women. By employing and integrating both feminist and religious-ethical criticism, I will address both of these shortcomings and demonstrate that in “living for the soul” and exemplifying religious virtue, Dolly Oblonsky achieves a sense of independence and purpose in spite of her adherence to traditional gender roles and social structures and is therefore a true hero of Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* (Tolstoy [1877] VIII.xi.794).

The limitations of Morson’s theory are evident when one examines the “prosaics” of arguably less virtuous characters than Dolly. Morson defines the prosaic

novel as a work that regards everyday particularities and ordinary events as the locus of value and prosaic heroism as “the right kind of ordinary living” (Morson [2007] 29).

And while he argues that Dolly exemplifies this prosaic heroism in her everyday goodness, he fails to fully address the distinctions between prosaic goodness and prosaic degeneracy or even depravity. At the opening of the novel, Stiva, though not repenting his infidelity with his children’s former governess, laments the disruption Dolly’s discovery of the affair has brought to their household. Unable to think of a solution for the trouble, Stiva reflects, “There was no answer except the general answer life gives to all the most complex and insoluble questions. That answer is: one must live for the needs of the day, in other words, become oblivious” (Tolstoy I ii.4). Stiva’s solution seems disturbingly similar to Morson’s definition of “prosaic” heroism. As Morson notes, Dolly, too, “lives a life focused on the everyday” (Morson 38). Morson does argue that “as Dolly represents [ordinary] good, Stiva represents ordinary evil” in that Dolly lives for her children and Stiva neglects them (Morson 38). However, he fails to make a clear distinction between prosaic heroism and what may be called “negative prosaiacs.” “Negative prosaiacs” is living for the everyday, the ordinary in a selfish manner without either virtue or goodness. How does one live for the day virtuously and avoid falling into “prosaic” vice?

Stiva is not the only character to fall into “negative prosaiacs.” When Levin and Kitty first relocate to Moscow for Kitty’s confinement in expectation of the baby, Levin is ill at ease with city life: “During his very first days in Moscow Levin had been struck by those unproductive but inevitable expenses, so strange for a county-dweller” (Tolstoy VII.ii.676-677). Soon, however, Levin grows used to such things so that “only one thing was required: to have money in the bank, without asking where it came from, so as

always to know how to pay for the next day's beef" (VII.ii.677). Similarly, Levin is initially uncomfortable with seemingly arbitrary social obligations but soon fills his day by visiting his friend Katasov, his step-sister Natalie and her husband Lvov, repaying a call to Countess Bohl, spending time at the club with Stiva, and afterwards going with him to see Anna. Upon returning home from these social engagements, Levin feels guilty for having failed to complete some business for his sister but convinces himself that he had no time. He reflects, "The days events were all conversations... They had all been about subjects which he, had he been alone and in the country, would never had bothered with, but here they were very interesting" (VII.xi.702). And later, when Kitty tearfully accuses him of falling in love with Anna, "the one thing [Levin] confess[es] most sincerely of all [is] that, living so long in Moscow, just talking, eating and drinking, he had got befuddled" (VII.xi.703). Thus Levin succumbs to the "negative prosaics" of life in Moscow; he lives only for the needs of every day and, in doing so, forgets to live well.

Dolly's "prosaic" heroism is distinguishable from this "negative prosaics" in that she lives out the kind of good, everyday spirituality that Levin later discovers when talking with Fyodor, one of his employees, in Part VIII of the novel. Levin asks Fyodor about two different muzhiks who rent out land, Kirillov and Platon. In characterizing their differences, Fyodor says, "[Kirillov] pushes till he gets his own. He takes no pity on a peasant. But [Platon] won't skin a man...He lives for the soul. He remembers God." Just like the muzhik Platon, Dolly "lives for the soul... remembers God" (Tolstoy VIII.xi.794). She lives for others, for her family, rather than for her own needs. It is Dolly's religious and spiritual life that defines her "prosaic" goodness; she does not

simply live for everyday concerns, but allows her religious convictions to inform her everyday life.

Morson only briefly addresses Dolly's religious motivations for her actions, saying, "As a Christian, Dolly forgives her apparently repentant husband and so earns a measure of self-esteem" (Morson 41). This seems to simplify the momentous sacrifice that Dolly makes. When she first learns of Stiva's infidelity she is nearly inconsolable. Undeceived of Stiva's true character, she feels it is unbearable to remain in the same house with the man who has caused her so much humiliation and pain: "Dolly was crushed by her grief and totally consumed by it" (Tolstoy I.xix.66). As such, Dolly does not immediately find Christian forgiveness easy or even possible. As she waits for Anna to arrive for her visit, she thinks to herself, "All these consolations and exhortations and Christian forgivenesses – I've already thought of it all a thousand times and it's no good" (I.xix.66). Forgiveness is a great sacrifice for Dolly, and ultimately she forgives Stiva for the sake of her children, putting their needs above hers. She tells Stiva that the children's welfare is her primary concern: "I think of the children and so I'll do anything in the world to save them; but I don't know how I can best save them: by taking them away from their father, or by leaving them with a depraved father" (Tolstoy I.iv.12). Eventually, though, she admits to Anna, "I can't leave him. There are the children" (Tolstoy I.xix.66). Furthermore, Dolly does not forgive Stiva in order to simply comply with a religious mandate or gain some measure of self-esteem as Morson implies. When Anna urges her to "forgive in such a way as if it hadn't happened, hadn't happened at all," Dolly interrupts, "as if she were saying something she had thought more than once, 'otherwise it wouldn't be forgiveness. If you forgive, it's completely, completely'" (Tolstoy I.xix.70-71). Here, Dolly demonstrates that she has given a lot of thought to

Christian forgiveness, that she understands the act deeply, and that her forgiveness is not given lightly as simple pacification or moral chess move. While Anna characteristically imagines forgiveness as a conjuring away of things or a simple maneuver to be made, Dolly takes forgiveness very seriously. Forgiveness has deep spiritual meaning for Dolly.

Not only does Dolly exhibit religious and spiritual strength in times of crises and suffering but she also allows her religious convictions to inform her everyday life, particularly in her role as a mother. Dolly reflects upon that role as she travels to visit Anna and Vronsky at their country home, Vozdvizhenskoe. She worries about “how she [is] going to send the children into the world,” thinking first of the physical duties of motherhood (birthing, nursing, physical care) and then of the religious and moral duties: “their upbringing, vile inclinations... education, Latin – all of it so incomprehensible and difficult” (Tolstoy VI.xvi.606,607). Dolly takes the responsibilities of motherhood seriously and feels that those responsibilities include the religious and moral upbringing of her children.

This religious instruction is first evident when Dolly takes her children to the liturgy and has them take communion during their summer in the country at Yergushovo: “In the family she strictly fulfilled all the requirements of the Church – not only to set an example, but with all her heart – and the fact that the children had not received communion for more than a year troubled her greatly” (Tolstoy III.viii.262). This demonstrates that Dolly is deeply concerned for her children’s religious and spiritual education and works to foster that education. The passage goes on to describe in great detail Dolly’s meticulous attention to the dress of both her children and herself. She places importance on the latter “not for her own beauty, but so that, being the

mother of these lovely things she would not spoil the general impression” (III.viii.263). While this at first may seem a hollow, even vain pursuit, it is clear that Dolly sees the rituals of church going and meticulous dress to be outer manifestations of an inner spiritual life. Her attention to these details reflects her commitment to the spiritual edification of her children.

The spiritual and moral edification of her children brings Dolly both joys and griefs: “like gold in the sand... in her bad moments she [sees] only grief, only sand; but there [are] also good moments, when she [sees] only joys, only gold” (Tolstoy III.vii.262). When her youngest son, Grisha, is deprived of cake for whistling and disobeying the governess, Dolly witnesses a scene that “fill[s] her heart with such joy that tears [come] to her eyes and she herself [forgives] the culprit” (III.viii.264). Dolly’s eldest daughter, Tanya, feeling pity for her brother in his punishment, brings her portion of cake to share with Grisha. This evidence of generosity and goodness in her children fills Dolly with pride and happiness. This happiness is short-lived, however, when later that day Tanya and Grisha fight (III.x.272). Later still, when Dolly and her children spend the next summer at Pokrovskoe with Kitty and Levin, her daughter Masha performs some (implicitly sexual) misdeed with Grisha in the raspberry bushes (VI.xv.601). Dolly is appalled at her daughter’s “vile inclinations” and fears that this act indicates some sort of spiritual and moral degeneracy in her child. In spite of this, when Masha shows tearful remorse, Dolly tenderly forgives her. These scenes joy and grief over her children’s spiritual and moral behavior demonstrate that Dolly “lives for the soul” – not only her own soul but also the souls of her children – every day.

Some might argue that Dolly’s religious strength is not actually strength but is rather, as Joe Andrew, Professor of Russian Literature at Keele University, claims, “a

rather unthinking, almost instinctive religious sense” (personal communication, April 5, 2015). This tendency is understandable in light of Levin’s characterization of Kitty and Agafya Mikhailovna’s “feminine” understanding of religion. When both Kitty and Agafya care for his dying brother, Nikolai, they tend to his soul as well as to his physical illness, ensuring that he performs the appropriate religious rites before death. Levin reflects on their religious sense:

‘Hidden from the wise and revealed unto babes and the imprudent.’ So Levin thought about his wife [and Agafya Mikhailovna]... Both unquestionably knew what life was and what death was, and though they would have been unable to answer and would not even have understood the questions that presented themselves to Levin, neither had any doubt about the meaning of this phenomenon. (Tolstoy V.xix.496)

The impression that the women of the novel including Dolly have “a rather unthinking, almost instinctive religious sense” clearly originates from this passage. However, this assessment of female religiousness comes from Levin’s arguably limited perspective and is an unfair judgment of Kitty’s – and by extension, Dolly’s – religious strength. While Kitty’s understanding of religion may be instinctive, it is in no way unthinking. Shortly after Levin’s characterization of Kitty and Agafya’s religious sense, Agafya comments on an old man’s death, saying, "Well, thank God, he took communion, got anointed, God grant everybody such a death" (Tolstoy V.xix.497). The narrator comments on Agafya and Kitty's concern that the dying man receive last rites: "The proof that what she and Agafya Mikhailovna did was not instinctive, animal, unreasoning, was that, beside physical care, the alleviation of suffering, both Agafya

Mikhailovna and Kitty demanded something more important for the dying man, something that had nothing in common with physical conditions" (V.xix.497). Here, the narrator seems to almost refute Andrew's claims, pointing out that Agafya and Kitty's religious convictions are in fact mindful and deliberate.

One could also point to Kitty and Levin's betrothal and wedding services as an example of Kitty's "unthinking" faith. During the betrothal, Levin is struck by the words of prayer and imagines that Kitty is having a similar experience. However, as the narrator notes, "That was not so; she had almost no understanding of the words of the service and did not even listen during the betrothal" (Tolstoy V.iv.452-453). While this seems to indicate that Kitty's religious experience is motivated by instinct rather than thought, this is arguably not the case. Kitty does not have to think about the words of the ceremony because she has already thought about it for six weeks. In fact, this ceremony is simply an outer sign of the reality that occurred when she and Levin first became engaged: "On that day...she had silently gone up to him and given herself to him – in her soul on that day and hour there was accomplished a total break with her entire former life, and there began a completely different, new life" (V.iv.453). Levin has to think about the ceremony as it occurs because he has not fully thought about and understood the sacrament previously; he is an unbeliever and doubts the legitimacy of the sacrament. Kitty has thought about and understood the betrothal; she does not doubt and can experience the full reality of the sacrament unimpeded by reasoning. Later, during the wedding service, Kitty is again unable to focus on the prayers, because she is overcome by "a feeling of triumph and bright joy" in her soul (V.vi.457). Kitty does not need to contemplate the sacrament in the abstract because its spiritual reality is taking place in her soul. Furthermore "the spark of joy that had flared up in [her] seemed to

have communicated itself to everyone in the church” (V.vi.458). In this way, the reality of Kitty’s spirituality is not only recognizable but also productive. Her rich spiritual life allows her to experience religious realities fully and to communicate that reality to those around her.

The thoughtfulness of Kitty’s religious understanding is further evidenced by her experience abroad. When Levin expresses gratitude for Kitty’s help with his dying brother Nikolai, she replies, “Fortunately, I learned a lot in Soden” (Tolstoy V.xix.498). While this statement could simply refer to the nursing skills she acquired, as the narrator just indicated, those skills apply to both the physical and spiritual well being of a patient. While in Moscow before travelling abroad, Kitty had been primarily occupied by her social life and the attentions it gained her. These superficial preoccupations result from an overabundance of “the restrained fire of life and an awareness of her attractiveness” (II.xxx. 215). While this youthful fire is not, in itself, a flaw but a natural trait of Kitty’s, it is seen as her only trait of value in a world of frivolous social pursuits and courtship. Because this superficiality ultimately causes Kitty such unhappiness, she finds herself fascinated by Mlle Varenka’s selflessness and indifference to the attention of others. Her acquaintance with Mlle Varenka, an unmarried companion who serves the sick at the spa, opens “a completely new world” to Kitty: “It was revealed to her that besides the instinctive life to which Kitty had given herself till then, there was a spiritual life. This was life revealed by religion, but a religion that had nothing in common with the one Kitty had known from childhood” (II.xxxiii.224). It is Kitty’s childhood religious life that is “instinctive” and unthinking; in Soden, however, Kitty undergoes a self-conscious, thoughtful spiritual journey for the first time. It is from Varenka that she learns to look beyond her previous, superficial lifestyle to a true spiritual life: “From

Varenka she understood that you had only to forget yourself and love others and you would be calm, happy and beautiful” (II.xxxiii.224).

Furthermore, Kitty does not accept this new spiritual world blindly. When her father arrives in Soden to visit Kitty, he mocks Pietism, the spiritual movement of which Mlle. Varenka and several others are a part. The prince identifies some of the hypocrisy and self-indulgent martyrdom of most Pietists (although not Mlle Varenka). Prompted by her father’s perspective, Kitty is eventually able to examine her spiritual life with a critical eye rather than stubbornly and blindly adhering to Pietism:

She did not renounce all that she had learned, but she understood that she had deceived herself in thinking that she could be what she wished to be... She felt all the difficulty of keeping herself, without pretence and boastfulness, on that level to which she had wished to rise...and she wished all the sooner to go to the fresh air, to Russia, to Yergushovo, where... Dolly had already moved with the children. (Tolstoy II.xxxv.236)

It is telling that after coming to a more thoughtful self-awareness in terms of her religious and spiritual life Kitty seeks to return to her sister. This suggests that Kitty associates a more thoughtful, self-aware religious and spiritual life with Dolly and wishes to share her experiences with her sister.

Like Kitty’s, Dolly’s religious and spiritual life is far from thoughtless. Just before Dolly takes her children to receive communion in the country, the narrator offers some insight into Dolly’s personal (rather than maternal) spiritual life:

In her intimate, philosophical conversations with her sister, mother, and friends, she very often surprised them with her freethinking in regard to

religion. She had her own strange religion of metempsychosis, in which she firmly believed, caring little for the dogmas of the Church. (Tolstoy III.viii.262)

This passage indicates that Dolly has a breadth of knowledge of religious and philosophical subjects and specific, self-determined religious views, such as reincarnation, that do not entirely align with the doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church. This reveals that Dolly has a rich inner spiritual life and that she gives great thought to religious matters. While she fulfills the requirements of the Church for the sake of her children's religious instruction, her spiritual views are personal convictions rather than blind obedience to organized religion or social convention. Furthermore the fact that Dolly has "intimate, philosophical conversations with her sister, mother, and friends" demonstrates that a wide group of women engage in intellectual discussions of religion, even concerning the very questions that Levin imagines his wife and Agafya could not understand.

It is also significant that Dolly holds unorthodox religious views such as metempsychosis, or reincarnation. Tolstoy would eventually be expelled from the Orthodox Church for holding similar views. By bestowing Dolly with such an autobiographical characteristic, Tolstoy demonstrates that Dolly is not merely a "feminine" type, external to himself. Rather, he shows that Dolly is capable of the same freethinking spirituality as himself or any man. This further refutes Andrew's assertion that Tolstoy characterizes women's spirituality as "unthinking," separate from and inferior to men's spirituality. Dolly's spiritual life is not "gendered" in any way; it is thoughtful and admirable by any standard.

Arguably, Dolly's freethinking spirituality inspires and informs Kitty's own religious life. In addition to engaging in philosophical discussions together, Dolly and Kitty are "in constant and frequent correspondence" (Tolstoy V.xvi.486). Furthermore when Kitty falls ill following the collapse of her hopes for Vronsky's love, Dolly visits her. Although Kitty unfairly lashes out at Dolly to begin with, in the end she confides in her sister. As a result, Kitty's first real steps toward healing are to receive forgiveness for her hurtful words from Dolly, to share in similar pain with Dolly (that of rejection and humiliation in love), and then to help Dolly nurse her sick children before going abroad (II.iii.125-126). And, as noted previously, her first instinct upon returning from her religious experience abroad is to reunite with her sister (II.xxxv.236). Thus, Kitty begins and ends her journey of spiritual growth by spending time with Dolly, suggesting that her relationship with her sister is important to her spiritual life. Dolly serves as a spiritual confidante, example, and guide for Kitty.

Undoubtedly, Dolly and Kitty have a close, spiritual relationship, and as such they have similarly thoughtful religious values. However, like Masha in *Family Happiness*, Kitty lives out those values in the context of family *happiness*. Dolly lives out those values in the context of family *unhappiness*, distinguishing her as more of a hero than either Masha or Kitty. While all three women ultimately choose "prosaic" love and "living for the soul," Dolly does so in the face of indefinite unhappiness and hardship. When deprived of family happiness, Dolly finds some semblance of personal happiness and independence (and works for the happiness for her children) by pursuing the "prosaic" heroism of "living for the soul." It is Dolly's ability to live out those religious values – to live for the soul – in spite of her family unhappiness that makes her a true hero of the novel.

Morson's *Anna Karenina In Our Time* is not only limited by his neglect of the religious content of the novel that supports Dolly's heroism. In addition, his analysis of Dolly is open to feminist criticism. Because Morson's arguments in *Anna Karenina In Our Time* apply the theory of prosaics to all aspects of the novel, not just Dolly's heroism, critical responses and reviews largely focus on other aspects of the novel and ignore or undermine the content related to Dolly. Reviews by Donna Orwin, Steven Cassedy, Diane Oenning Thompson, Roger Cockrell, and others commend the theory as a whole but largely continue to ignore or deny the significance of Dolly's heroism. However, if engaged with seriously, Morson's arguments for Dolly's heroism can be difficult to reconcile with feminist theory. Morson proves Dolly to be a Tolstoyan "prosaic" hero. He begins his arguments for her heroism, saying, "If by the hero of the work we mean not the character who occupies the dramatic foreground but the one who most closely embodies the author's values, than the hero of *Anna Karenina* is Dolly" (Morson 38). Is Dolly only a hero, then, in that she fulfills Tolstoy's ideas of heroism? If that were the case, many feminist scholars might argue that Tolstoy's own perception of this "prosaic" female heroism and morality is in fact misogynistic and limiting to women – that Dolly is a hero primarily because she submits to the patriarchy and fulfills the "prosaic" role of wife and mother.

Unlike Morson, the majority of critics have either viewed Dolly as a somewhat pitiable character who, unlike Anna, submits to the oppressive patriarchal system or neglected her as an insignificant minor character. This is true of such prominent feminist sources as Judith Armstrong's *The Unsaid Anna Karenina*, Ruth Crego Benson's *Women in Tolstoy: The Ideal and The Erotic*, Barbara Heldt's *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature*, and Amy Mandelker's *Framing "Anna Karenina"*:

Tolstoy, the Women Question and the Victorian Novel. Armstrong mentions Dolly in her book almost exclusively in plot exposition and refers to her as “the wan, care-worn, and pathetic Dolly” who is merely “part of a subplot” (Armstrong 52-53). Benson refers to Dolly very little in her study, but argues generally that Tolstoy was hostile and misogynistic in his depictions of women. In *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature*, Heldt references Dolly once in her chapter on Tolstoy, “Tolstoy’s Path to Feminism.” She places Dolly in contrast to Anna and argues, “Dolly often reflects the accumulated cares and worries of years of child-rearing... No one reading the novel could envy her” (Heldt 43). In *Framing “Anna Karenina”: Tolstoy, the Woman Question and the Victorian Novel*, Mandelker does actually address Dolly in somewhat more depth and confirms that “the critical view that Tolstoy is a misogynist is still well entrenched” (Mandelker 56). However, Mandelker ultimately argues against Morson’s reading of Dolly, suggesting instead that “in depicting Dolly, Tolstoy drew yet one more portrait of the victimization of woman: in this case a spiritual rather than a physical death, a life based on lies, self-deception, dissimulation, and ultimately on cowardice” (Mandelker 55). These examples of prominent criticism demonstrate that Dolly continues to be largely neglected or maligned by feminist critics. While a very few critics have presented Dolly in a positive light, none have gone as far as Morson in declaring her the moral hero of *Anna Karenina*. For example, in her article, “Dolly Oblonskaia as a Structural Device in *Anna Karenina*,” Marina Ledkovsky acknowledges that Dolly “in many ways represents his ideal of womanhood,” but she focuses primarily on her structural use as a link between the two more prominent story lines of the novel, namely the story of her sister Kitty and the story of her sister-in-law Anna (Ledkovsky 543).

I would argue that these characterizations of Dolly in feminist criticism are reductive and ignore Dolly's personal strength compared with Anna's weak character. To define the strength of these women only by their actions within society would simply perpetuate rather than challenge socially defined femininity and gender stratification. Dolly is not a Tolstoyan hero because she submits to society's patriarchal hierarchy; Anna is not a villain because she defies it. Dolly is a strong feminist figure, if an unconventional one. Her heroism goes beyond her social, marital, and maternal status. While Anna seems to defy societal oppression and the patriarchy, she acts selfishly and grows increasingly dependent on men. In contrast, by "living for the soul," Dolly achieves a sense of independence and purpose that Anna does not.

The first part of the novel draws a personal contrast between Anna and Dolly. As Anna departs from the Oblonsky home, feeling some guilt for her flirtation with Vronsky and her betrayal of Kitty, Dolly tells her, "Everything in your soul is clear and good," but Anna contradicts her replying "Each of us has his skeletons in his soul... But really, really, I'm not to blame, or only a little" (Tolstoy I.xxviii.98). At this reluctance to admit guilt and take full responsibility, Dolly laughs and compares Anna to her brother. Indignantly Anna denies this: "'Oh, no, no! I'm not like Stiva,' she said frowning... But the moment she uttered these words, she felt that they were wrong; she not only doubted herself, but felt excitement at the thought of Vronsky" (I.xxvii.98). In this admission, it is clear that everything in Dolly's soul is clear and good, while Anna – like her brother – holds skeletons in her soul that cause her to act selfishly and then avoid responsibility for those selfish actions. Anna's contrast with Dolly is just as much a comparison with Stiva, and she acts just as selfishly and irresponsibly, if with less good humor.

Anna's selfishness is evident in her love affair with Vronsky. Throughout the novel, Anna acts consistently in her own interest disregarding the needs of her husband and her lover. The act of infidelity is one of selfishness itself, and from the beginning Anna is fully aware of her guilt and shame. After finally submitting to Vronsky's seduction, Anna admits her guilt: "My God! Forgive me!" she said, sobbing, pressing his hands to her breast" (Tolstoy II.xi.149). However even when she reveals her infidelity to Karenin, Anna attempts to avoid the consequences of her wrongdoing and neglects to take any action at all. She does not return to her husband and son, she does not run away with Vronsky, and she does not try to secure a divorce. Instead, Anna shies away from the responsibility of making a decision. As a result, "the situation was painful for all three of them, and none of them would have been able to live even one day in that situation had they not expected that it would change" (IV.i.353). This state of indecision, where nothing is defined and everything is confused, is unbearable for all involved, and yet Anna refuses to change things.

Anna also makes selfish decisions in regards to her children. While Dolly abandons her pride in order to remain with her family and care for her children, Anna sacrifices her children to her pride and vanity. When Dolly visits Anna and Vronsky in the country she observes that Anna is very uninvolved with the care of her daughter. When she visits the nursery with Anna, it is clear that the mother's visit is rare: "Most surprising of all was that, when asked how many teeth the girl had, Anna was mistaken and knew nothing about the two latest teeth" (Tolstoy VI.xix.619). This is shocking to Dolly, who is so involved with all aspects of her children's upbringing. Just as Anna takes no responsibility for her affair, she also refuses responsibility for the child born from it. In addition, Dolly discovers that Anna uses birth control to prevent any further

pregnancies. She takes these measures without informing Vronsky, who wishes to have a son and heir one day. Rather than taking her lover's wishes into account, Anna acts on her own desire to preserve her lovely appearance, which she believes is necessary to preserve his love (VI.xxiii.638). It might seem like Anna is making empowered decisions for herself, but these are in fact actions of insecurity, not power.

Although Anna claims to have a great love for Seryozha, she acts selfishly where he is concerned as well. Anna tells Dolly that she cannot ask for a divorce for fear of losing her son: "They won't give him to me. He'll grow up despising me, with the father I abandoned... I love only these two beings [Seryozha and Vronsky], and the one excludes the other. I can't unite them, yet I need only that" (Tolstoy VI.xxiv.640). Anna, however, did have the power to unite them. Before Anna and Vronsky left for Italy, Anna remained miserable with Karenin, and Stiva intervened, begging Karenin to agree to a divorce. Karenin consented, and even agreed to give up Seryozha. But Anna refused his offer, choosing instead to go abroad with Vronsky and with nothing resolved. She tells Vronsky, "Stiva says *he* consents to everything, but I can't accept *his* magnanimity" (435). Thus, Anna refuses the opportunity to divorce Karenin and unite her two loves. She sacrifices Seryozha out of pride and devotes herself solely to Vronsky. When Anna believes she is going to die, she feels momentarily capable of reconciling Karenin and Vronsky and of accepting Karenin's forgiveness. However, when the romantic event of her death does not occur, Anna is unable to deal with the "prosaics" of their situation; she selfishly does not want to be beholden to Karenin. While Anna consistently says she wants custody of Seryozha, the fact is she does not want to be a mother.

In contrast, Dolly devotes herself to the upbringing of her children. When Dolly leaves Pokrovskoe, the Levins' home, to visit Anna and Vronsky at his country estate,

Vozdvizhenskoe, she reflects on all the hardships she endures in order to raise the children:

Pregnancy nausea, dullness of mind, indifference to everything, and, above all, ugliness... then the children's illnesses, this eternal fear; then their upbringing, vile inclinations' (she remembered little Masha's crime in the raspberries), education, Latin – all of it so incomprehensible and difficult. (Tolstoy VI.xvi.607)

While Anna abandons her son and leaves her daughter to the care of others, Dolly devotes her all her efforts to sending her children into the world, without help from the undependable Stiva. While reflecting on these hardships, Dolly cannot help but see her children as burdens. She wonders if Anna's choice – to selfishly neglect the needs of others for her own need for romantic love – is, in fact, the better choice. She soon discovers, however, that this is not the case.

Through Dolly's reflections it seems that Anna selfish decisions ultimately free her from the bonds of societal oppression and allow her to be an independent individual, but Dolly soon sees that this is an illusion. For all of Anna's airs of perfect happiness in the country, Dolly observes that she ignores her children and devotes herself solely to Vronsky – and the result is unhappiness. When Anna admits that she uses birth control in order to preserve her figure to keep Vronsky's love, Dolly reflects:

I didn't make myself attractive to Stiva... He left me for other women, and the first one he betrayed me for did not keep him by being beautiful and gay. He dropped her and took another. And is this how Anna is going to attract and keep Count Vronsky? If he's looking for that, he'll find clothes and manners that are still more gay and attractive. And however

white, however beautiful her bare arms, however attractive her full bosom, her flushed face against that dark hair, he'll find still better ones, as my disgusting, pathetic and dear husband seeks and finds them.

(Tolstoy VI.xxiii.638)

Through this reflection it is clear that, in spite of appearances, Dolly is truly independent from men while Anna remains a prisoner to the fleeting superficiality of physical attraction. After making this observation, Dolly no longer thinks of her children as burden, but, realizing her own freedom and strength, "that world of hers now seemed so precious and dear to her that she did not want to spend an extra day outside it for anything" (VI.xxiv.641).

Anna merely exchanges social dependence on Karenin for emotional dependence on Vronsky. By giving both men the same first name, Alexei, Tolstoy reveals that Anna's situation has not changed. If anything, her relationship with Vronsky is more parasitic, and she is more dependent than before. Anna has neglected any responsibilities toward her children and any other aspect of her life. Living selfishly has not given her freedom but rather reliance on Vronsky's love, seemingly based (at least in Anna's mind) on superficial, physical attraction alone. In fact, while Vronsky feels the need to distract himself from the intensity of their relationship, Anna is described as (parasitically) drinking in his romantic assurances to remain calm (Tolstoy V.xxxiii.549). Anna often reminds him, "I have nothing but you" (II.xi.150). When Vronsky leaves her for a few days to take part in the provincial elections, she is so tormented by his absence and her fear of his waning love that she feels compelled to write him a letter exaggerating their daughter's illness in order to manipulate him into returning home (VI.xxxii.666). This extreme romanticism based on physical attraction

seems just as oppressive as the societal gender stratification of the time. Anna only defies dependence on one Alexei within the patriarchy to depend on another Alexei outside of the accepted social system. In this way, Anna is not a champion of the feminist movement, but rather demonstrates that feminine fortitude cannot be judged merely by the social context of an individual's actions but must be considered in light of the personal strength of the individual. By living for herself, Anna demonstrates weakness of character and places her happiness completely in Vronsky's hands, and this ultimately leads to her unhappy end.

In contrast, by forgiving Stiva for his infidelity and accepting that she cannot maintain his affections with her physical beauty, Dolly is no longer dependent on Stiva's love. She devotes herself to the care of others (her children) and relies on no man to validate her life. While she fulfills the traditionally feminine roles of mother and wife, Dolly demonstrates strength of character that surpasses that of the men around her. Because of Stiva's undependability, Dolly takes on roles traditionally left to the husband and assumes masculine responsibilities. For example, Dolly looks after the education of her son, Grisha, a task normally left to the husband. Although Levin takes over that tutoring when the family stays at Pokrovskoe, he is forced to respect Dolly's new role, and "he promised his sister-in-law that he would conduct the lessons as she wished" (Tolstoy VI.vi.567). In addition, because of Stiva's carelessness with money, Dolly takes on some financial responsibilities for the family. When Stiva wastes the money from two-thirds of Dolly's inheritance, "Darya Alexandrovna, claiming a direct right to her own fortune for the first time, had refused to put her signature to the receipt of the money for the last third of the wood" (VII.xvii.719). This text is also an example of how Tolstoy uses Dolly's full name, Darya Alexandrovna, to emphasize her dignity and

autonomy. Dolly asserts her autonomy and strength of character by assuming these responsibilities in order to lead her family more responsibly than Stiva – a man – has done.

In addition to demonstrating her capability in family matters, Dolly exhibits superior spiritual strength. When Karenin attends Stiva's dinner party in Moscow, Dolly speaks to him about his situation with Anna. In attempt to prevent him from divorcing and ruining Anna, Dolly empathetically tells Karenin that she endured the same situation, "I was married and my husband deceived me. Angry, jealous, I wanted to abandon everything... I forgave and you must forgive" (Tolstoy IV.xii.394). Here, in her earnestness, Dolly confirms that, in spite of the pain and humiliation of her situation, she truly forgives Stiva and in doing so finds spiritual relief and strength. Karenin, however, "smiled contemptuously. He had long known that [one must forgive], but it could not be applied in his case" (IV.xii.395). In his masculine superiority, he dismisses Dolly's situation as if his was somehow more difficult and insulting, and he refuses to forgive Anna. Here, through her selfless forgiveness, Dolly demonstrates greater spiritual strength than Karenin. She is not his spiritual equal; she is his spiritual superior. She truly "lives for the soul," without pride or qualification.

Perhaps when viewed through the perspective of a feminist criticism of the patriarchal society, Dolly seems a disappointment. In this perspective, and in Stiva's eyes, Dolly is "a worn-out, aged, no longer beautiful woman, not remarkable for anything, simple, merely a kind mother of a family" (Tolstoy I.ii.3). Furthermore, she is the mother of a family who chooses to remain confined in her roles as mother and wife, in spite of her husband's infidelity. However, the assumption here is that to be "merely a kind mother of a family" is to be unremarkable (I.ii.3). This assumption not only admits

the misogynistic viewpoint that traditional feminine roles are inferior to traditional masculine roles – a socially constructed notion – but also defines Dolly only by her status as a wife and mother. In fact, by choosing to remain with her family, Dolly reveals personal and religious virtue. She finds the strength to forgive Stiva for his infidelity and to raise her children. Both Dolly and Anna experience unhappiness and pain in their respective marriages and family lives. Anna responds selfishly, lives for herself, and exchanges one unhappiness for another. Dolly endures her suffering and rises above it, choosing every day to live for her children, for God and the soul. In this, she finds the best happiness she can and demonstrates the personal strength of a Tolstoyan hero.

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Armstrong, Judith. *The Unsaid "Anna Karenina."* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988. Print.

Armstrong's close textual analysis deals with the formal, psychoanalytic and ideological devices and discourses of the novel, examining Tolstoy's relationship as a male author to the female character he engendered. The work largely neglects Dolly.

Bartlett, Rosamund. *Tolstoy: A Russian Life.* Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011. Print.

In her recent, significant work Bartlett examines the story of Tolstoy's life from his aristocratic childhood, to his years of aimless squandering, his literary genius, and his complicated marriage.

Benson, Ruth Crego. *Women in Tolstoy: The Ideal and the Erotic.* Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1973. Print.

Benson seeks to define Tolstoy's ambivalent attitudes towards women, sex, and love. The work largely neglects Dolly.

Berlin, Isaiah. *The Hedgehog and the Fox.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953. Print.

Isaiah Berlin (1909-1997) was a social and political theorist, philosopher, historian, and essayist. He was a Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory at the University of Oxford. Berlin's book outlines the widely accepted but problematic thesis that Tolstoy the moralist (a hedgehog) was marginal to Tolstoy the artist (a fox), creating the foundation for an enduring dichotomous view of the novelist.

Cassedy, Steven. Reviewed Work: "*Anna Karenina*" In *Our Time: Seeing More Wisely* by Gary Saul Morson. *Slavic Review*. 68.1 (Spring 2009): 188-189. Web. 7 July 2015.

Steven Cassedy of the University of California reviews Gary Saul Morson's book. In the review, he commends Morson's theory as a whole but neglects to address the book's significance to Dolly Oblonsky.

Cockrell, Roger. Reviewed Work: "*Anna Karenina*": In *Our Time: Seeing More Wisely* by Gary Saul Morson. *The Slavonic and East European Review*. 87.3 (July 2009): 534-535. Web. 7 July 2009.

Roger Cockrell of the University of Exeter reviews Morson's book. In his review, Cockrell largely commends Morson's "challenging" theory and admits

that the book gives rise to debate. He does not refer to Dolly except in summary of Morson's thoughts.

Emerson, Caryl. *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Print.

Caryl Emerson is A. Watson Armour III University Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and professor of comparative literature at Princeton University. In this introduction Emerson creates a narrative of Russian literature across several centuries, focusing on the major authors of modern times, including Tolstoy.

Emerson, Caryl. "Tolstoy versus Dostoevsky and Bakhtin's Ethics of the Classroom." *Approaches to Teaching Tolstoy's Anna Karenina*. Ed. Knapp, Liza, and Amy Mandelker. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2003. 104-116. Print.

Caryl Emerson is A. Watson Armour III University Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and professor of comparative literature at Princeton University. Emerson's article examines the continual binary comparison of the two titanic contemporaries, specifically analyzing the pedagogy of Mikhail Bakhtin, one of the most important literary critics of the 20th century. Emerson evaluates Bakhtin's dichotomous argument for a dialogic Dostoevsky in many ways superior to a monologic Tolstoy. She presents the counter-argument that such an analysis is in some ways restrictive and that Tolstoy's truth stems from his life-like and "life-confused" characters, rather than his authoritative voice.

In addition, the article devotes attention to the moral, philosophical, and spiritual concerns of Tolstoy (as contrasted with Dostoevsky). This analysis of Tolstoyan works will provide a foundation for examining the religious and spiritual facets of *Anna Karenina*, particularly as they pertain to Dolly's characterization.

Emerson, Caryl and Gary Saul Morson. *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of Prosaics*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1990. Print.

Caryl Emerson is A. Watson Armour III University Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and professor of comparative literature at Princeton University. Gary Saul Morson is Frances Hooper Professor of the Arts and Humanities, Charles Deering McCormick Professor of Teaching Excellence, and professor of Slavic languages at Northwestern University. Emerson and Morson analyze the pedagogy of 20th century Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, specifically addressing the concept of the "prosaic" in his work. "Prosaics" is a form of thinking that presumes the importance of the everyday, the ordinary, the "prosaic," which has ethical as well as aesthetic importance. Prosaics demands that everyday details are more important to examine than cataclysmic events. Bakhtin connects the ethical with every ordinary moment of life. This concept of prosaics forms the basis for Morson's thesis on Dolly's heroism.

Gibian, George, ed. "Criticism." *Anna Karenina*. 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 1995. Print.

George Gibian was Goldswin Smith Professor of Russian and Comparative Literature at Cornell University. His honors included Fulbright, Guggenheim, American Philosophical Society, and Rockefeller Foundation fellowships. A useful selection of Tolstoy criticism but pays no attention to the religious dimensions of *Anna Karenina*.

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

Richard Gustafson is Professor Emeritus in the Slavic Department at Barnard College and Columbia University. Gustafson criticizes Berlin's thesis of the fox and the hedgehog, the conception of two Tolstoys – artist and moralist. In response, he argues for the predominance of Tolstoy's religious viewpoint in all Tolstoy's writings. Gustafson's work will provide an understanding of the importance of Tolstoy's religious thought and the place for ethical-religious criticism of his works.

Heldt, Barbara. "Tolstoy's Path to Feminism." *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987. Print.

Heldt provides a thorough feminist study of Russian literature. The work largely neglects Dolly.

Katz, Michael R., ed. *The Kreutzer Sonata Variations: Lev Tolstoy's Novella and Counterstories by Sofiya Tolstaya and Lev Lvovich Tolstoy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. Print.

Michael Katz is C.V. Starr Professor Emeritus of Russian and Eastern European Studies at Middlebury College. His recent and unprecedented volume contains a new translation of Tolstoy's controversial novella about sexuality, accompanied by counterstories written by the author's wife and son in attempts to undo the message of Tolstoy's tale.

The conflicting stories – supplemented with family letters, diaries, notes, and memoirs – reveal powerful disputes concerning morality, sexuality and gender roles in Tolstoy's time. This new discovery sheds light on the family dynamics surrounding Tolstoy's works and ideas, particularly in relationship to Sofiya Tolstaya.

Ledkovsky, Marina. "Dolly Oblonskaia as a Structural Device in *Anna Karenina*." *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*. 12.4 (1978): 543-548. Web. 7 July 2015.

In her article, Ledkovsky acknowledges Dolly as a Tolstoyan ideal but primarily focuses on her structural use as a link between the two more prominent story lines of the novel.

Mandelker, Amy. *Framing Anna Karenina: Tolstoy, The Woman Question, and the Victorian Novel*. Columbus, Ohio State UP, 1993. Print.

Amy Mandelker is associate professor of comparative literature at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. She is the editor of *Bakhtin in Contexts: Across the Disciplines*. This book challenges current perceptions of Tolstoy as misogynist and literary realist, providing a feminist and structuralist defense of *Anna Karenina*. Mandelker analyzes the existing and varied feminist criticism on the novel and offers a revisionary argument. She argues that Tolstoy aesthetically subverts the Victorian realist novel through the direct discussions of art, the subtexts of folklore and myth, and the thematic system of imagery in the novel, and that this subversion reveals Tolstoy's feminist criticism of social institutions.

Mandelker's evaluation of the existing scholarship on Tolstoy's representations of women offers both an overview of existing academic perceptions and a new perspective on those perceptions. She argues against Morson's defense of Dolly, arguing that Tolstoy's depiction of Dolly is that of a victim, not a hero. This will help provide a context of feminist criticism for the analysis of Dolly's heroism. While her own argument does not directly address the ethical-religious dimension, she addresses the importance and challenges of such criticism in Tolstoy's novel.

Mirsky, D. S. *A History of Russian Literature from Its Beginnings to 1900*. Ed. Francis J. Whitfield. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999. 127-346. Print.

This landmark study remains a standard English-language guide to classical Russian literature and its historical context. Chapters 5-9 (pp.127-346) are the most relevant to Tolstoy and his historical context, influences, and contemporaries.

Morson, Gary Saul. "*Anna Karenina*" *In Our Time: Seeing More Wisely*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007. Print.

Gary Saul Morson is Frances Hooper Professor of the Arts and Humanities, Charles Deering McCormick Professor of Teaching Excellence, and professor of Slavic languages at Northwestern University. In his book, Morson overturns traditional interpretations of the novel and claims that readers misunderstand Tolstoy's characters and intentions. He challenges conceptions of romantic love and offers a critical interpretation of *Anna Karenina* condemning Anna's narcissistic and romantic nature in favor of Dolly's prosaic love and lowly wisdom.

Morson's defense of Dolly's prosaic love provides support for her heroism. However, his arguments do not directly address the spiritual and religious realm in relation to Dolly, providing a significant point for research and analysis.

Morson, Gary Saul. "The Daily Miracle: Teaching the Ideas of *Anna Karenina*." *Approaches to Teaching Tolstoy's Anna Karenina*. Ed. Liza Knapp and Amy Mandelker. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2003. 60-66. Print.

In this article, Morson discusses ways to teach and discuss the novel by focusing on the idea of "prosaics."

Morson, Gary Saul. "Prosaics and Anna Karenina." *Tolstoy Studies Journal*. Volume I (1988): 1-12. Web. 9 December 2014.

In this article, Morson first advanced his thesis on "prosaics," arguing that Dolly is the hero of *Anna Karenina*.

Morson, Gary Saul. "The Moral Urgency of *Anna Karenina*: Tolstoy's Lessons for All Time and Today." *Commentary*. 139.4 (2015): 34-42. Web. 7 July 2015.

In this article, Morson applies his theory of prosaics vs. romantic fatalism, arguing that Dolly is the hero of *Anna Karenina*.

Orwin, Donna, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Tolstoy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Print

Donna Orwin is associate professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Toronto. She is the editor of the *Tolstoy Studies Journal* and as well as *The Cambridge Companion to Tolstoy*. A useful selection of Tolstoy criticism but pays no attention to the religious dimensions of *Anna Karenina*.

Orwin, Donna. Reviewed Work: "*Anna Karenina*" *In Our Time: Seeing More Wisely* by Gary Saul Morson. *The Slavic and East European Journal*. 52.4 (Winter 2008): 596-597. Web. 7 July 2015.

Donna Orwin, associate professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Toronto, reviews Gary Saul Morson's book. In her review, Orwin commends Morson's theory as a whole but contends that Tolstoy is more sympathetic to passion and romanticism than Morson allows. She only mentions Dolly to summarize Morson's arguments and offers no evaluation of her heroism.

Orwin, Donna. "Tolstoy's Antiphilosophical Philosophy in *Anna Karenina*."

Approaches to Teaching Tolstoy's Anna Karenina. Ed. Knapp, Liza, and Amy Mandelker. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2003. 95-103. Print.

Donna Orwin is associate professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Toronto. She is the editor of the *Tolstoy Studies Journal* and editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Tolstoy*. In this article, Orwin examines the complexities of Tolstoy's attitude toward philosophy. She traces the origins of his "antiphilosophical philosophy" to influences of Rousseau and Plato, describing Tolstoy as a sort of metaphysical idealist or transcendentalist. Orwin then outlines the Platonic philosophical debate of *Anna Karenina*: the idealistic dualism of physical and spiritual love and the manifestations of that dualism in reality.

Orwin's analysis of Tolstoy's philosophical attitude contributes to a greater understanding of the philosophical, moral, and spiritual aspects of *Anna Karenina*. Her outline of the Platonic philosophical debate contextualizes central issues of love and morality concerning Dolly (among most other characters).

Steiner, George. *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky: An Essay in the Old Criticism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959. Print.

George Steiner is a literary critic, essayist, philosopher, novelist, and educator. He was Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Geneva (1974-1994), Professor of Comparative Literature and Fellow at the University of Oxford (1994-1995), and Professor of Poetry at Harvard University (2001-2002). Steiner's criticism compares the two Russian masters in both form and philosophy. He examines the philosophical and ethical-religious views of both and the ways in which those differing views are present in their writings.

Thompson, Diane Oenning. Reviewed Work: "*Anna Karenina*" In *Our Time: Seeing More Wisely* by Gary Saul Morson. *The Modern Language Review*. 106.2 (April 2011): 614-615. Web. 7 July 2015.

Diane Oenning Thompson of the University of Cambridge reviews Morson's book. In her review, Thompson commends Morson's work as a whole but offers a few reservations concerning some of his points. Thompson neglects to address Dolly except in summary of the book.

Tolstoy, Leo. *Anna Karenina*. 1877. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Penguin Classics-Penguin Books, 2004. Print.

This recent edition translated by the award-winning Pevear and Volokhonsky is beautiful, up-to-date, and true to Tolstoy's voice.

Tolstoy, Leo. *Family Happiness*. 1859. Trans. J.D. Duff. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009. Print.

In this novella, Tolstoy addresses themes of marriage, love, and sexuality that are relevant to those same themes in *Anna Karenina* as well as to the idea of “prosaics”.

Tolstoy, Leo. *The Kreutzer Sonata*. 1889. Trans. Katz, Michael. *The Kreutzer Sonata Variations: Lev Tolstoy's Novella and Counterstories by Sofiya Tolstaya and Lev Lvovich Tolstoy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. Print.

In this novella, Tolstoy addresses themes of marriage, love, and sexuality that are relevant to those same themes in *Anna Karenina* as well as to the idea of “prosaics”.

Tolstoy, Leo. “Why Do Men Stupefy Themselves?” 1890. In *Leo Tolstoy: Selected Essays*. Trans. Aylmer Maude. New York: Random House, 1964. Print

This essay is Tolstoy's polemic against what he saw as the escapes of alcohol and narcotics. Originally published in 1890 as a preface to a book by Dr. P. S. Alexeyef. Tolstoy expounds much of the philosophical thought from which both Bakhtin and Morson derived their ideas on “prosaics.”

Tolstoy, Sofia [Sofiya Tolstaya]. *The Diaries of Sofia Tolstoy*. Trans. Cathy Porter. New York: Harper Perennial, 2010. Print.

Cathy Porter is a translator, teacher, and researcher on Russian history. She is the author of *Fathers and Daughters: Russian Women in Revolution* and translator of *Alexandra Kollontai's Love of Worker Bees*. After marrying Leo Tolstoy in 1862, Sofia Tolstoy kept a detailed diary until his death in 1910. She idealized her husband but was tormented by him. She lived against the background of one of the most turbulent periods in her country's history, as feudal Russia was transformed by three revolutions and three major international wars. These diaries reveal a tremendous woman's private experiences and endurance in the face of suffering.

These diaries provide insight into Sofia Tolstoy's own experience of her husband's work, as well as her own thought on feminist and moral and religious issues; they offer an opportunity to examine her perspective and influence on Tolstoy's novel and the characterization of Dolly.

Tolstoy, Sofia [Sofiya Tolstaya]. “Song Without Words.” n.d. Trans. Katz, Michael. *The Kreutzer Sonata Variations: Lev Tolstoy's Novella and Counterstories by Sofiya Tolstaya and Lev Lvovich Tolstoy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. Print.

Tolstaya's short story addresses themes of marriage, love, and sexuality that are relevant to those same themes in *Anna Karenina* as well as to the idea of “prosaics”.

Tolstoy, Sofia [Sofiya Tolstaya]. "Whose Fault?" 1891-1894. Trans. Katz, Michael. *The Kreutzer Sonata Variations: Lev Tolstoy's Novella and Counterstories by Sofiya Tolstaya and Lev Lvovich Tolstoy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. Print.

Tolstaya's short story was written in response to her husband's work, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, and addresses the same themes of marriage, love, and sexuality that are relevant to those same themes in *Anna Karenina* as well as to the idea of "prosaics".

Walicki, Andrzej. *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism*. Trans. Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979.

This is the best survey by a scholar of the generation following Zenkovsky. The section on Tolstoy is pp. 248-326. References to Tolstoy occur throughout the work.

Wilson, A.N. *Tolstoy: A Biography*. New York: WW Norton & Co, 1988. Print.

Andrew Norman Wilson is an English writer and newspaper columnist, known for his critical biographies, novels, works of popular history and religious views. He is an occasional columnist for the Daily Mail and former columnist for the London Evening Standard, and has been an occasional contributor to the Times Literary Supplement, New Statesman, The Spectator and The Observer. His work on Tolstoy was honored with the Whitbread Award for the best biography of 1988. In this biography, Wilson narrates the events of Tolstoy's life from his aristocratic childhood, to his years of aimless squandering, his literary genius, and his complicated marriage.

Wilson traces the roots of Tolstoy's artistic work to his relationship with religion, women, and Russia and recreates the context that shaped the novelist's life and art. His book provides an extensive understanding of Tolstoy's life and the circumstances and thought that shaped novels such as *Anna Karenina*.

Zenkovsky, V. V. *A History of Russian Philosophy*. Trans. George L. Kline. 2 vols. New York: Columbia University Press, 1953. Print.

This is a classic survey of the history of Russian philosophy. Zenkovsky's discussion of Tolstoy is in 1: 386-399.