ABSTRACT

Tolstoy and Zola: Trains and Missed Connections

Nina Lee Bond

“Tolstoy and Zola” juxtaposes the two writers to examine the evolution of the novel during the late nineteenth century. The juxtaposition is justified by the literary critical debates that were taking place in Russian and French journals during the 1870s and 1880s, concerning Tolstoy and Zola. In both France and Russia, heated arguments arose over the future of realism, and opposing factions held up either Tolstoy’s brand of realism or Zola’s naturalism as more promising. This dissertation uses the differences between Tolstoy and Zola to make more prominent a commonality in their respective novels Anna Karenina (1877) and La Bête humaine (1890): the railways. But rather than interpret the railways in these two novels as a symbol of modernity or as an engine for narrative, I concentrate on one particular aspect of the railway experience, known as motion parallax, which is a depth cue that enables a person to detect depth while in motion. Stationary objects close to a travelling train appear to be moving faster than objects in the distance, such as a mountain range, and moreover they appear to be moving backward. By examining motion parallax in both novels, as well as in some of Tolstoy’s other works, The Kreutzer Sonata (1889) and The Death of Ivan Il’ich (1886), this dissertation attempts to address an intriguing question: what, if any, is the relationship between the advent of trains and the evolution of the novel during the late nineteenth century?

Motion parallax triggers in a traveler the sensation of going backward even though one is travelling forward. This cognitive dissonance relates to Tolstoy’s and
Zola’s depictions of Darwinism in their works. Despite their differences, both writers subscribed to a belief in the “fallacy of progress” and thought that technology was causing man, contrary to expectations, to regress. This dissertation explores the relationships between Darwinism, trains, and nineteenth-century notions of progress and degeneration in not only *Anna Karenina* and *La Bête humaine*, but also in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, and Zola’s *Thérèse Raquin* (1867) and *Germinal* (1885).

The goal of this multi-disciplinary dissertation, which interweaves literary analysis with sociology, history of science, and visual cultural history, is to provide a new perspective on the relationship between technology and narrative.
## Table of Contents

**Acknowledgments** ii  
**Note on Translation and Transliteration** iv  
**Introduction** Railways and Narrative 1  
**Chapter 1** Missed Connections Between Tolstoï and Zoliya 13  
**Chapter 2** D(E)volution: Tolstoy “Aping” Zola 58  
**Chapter 3** Motion Parallax: Trains as Tricknology 93  
**Chapter 4** Trains, Carriages, and Walks: Defragmenting the Subconscious 137  
**Conclusion** In a Modern State of Mind 171  
**Bibliography** 187  
**Appendix** Serial Publication Dates for the *Rougon–Macquart* novels in France and Russia 200
Acknowledgments

Large portions of this dissertation were, rather fittingly, written in planes, trains, subways, and buses. Of course, the internet helped tremendously. But despite the ease and utility of today’s technologies, none of them helped as much as the generous support I received from my professors, colleagues, friends, and family.

First and foremost, my heartfelt gratitude goes out to my dissertation sponsor Professor Irina Reyfman, who graciously took on this project and believed in it. I am deeply grateful for her support, supervision, and patience throughout the whole process. I am also indebted to Professor Catharine Nepomnyashchy, whose comments aided my dissertation immensely. Starting from my days as an undergraduate, her guidance and friendship have been invaluable to me. Special thanks go to Professor Peter Connor for his insights and his questions, one of which led to the appendix at the end of my dissertation. I especially want to thank my other committee members, Professor Richard Wortman and Professor Priscilla Ferguson, for their service on my defense committee and for their comments, which helped me see new possibilities for my dissertation.

In the germinal phase of this project, I was fortunate to have Professor Cathy Popkin provide numerous critiques that had a significant hand in shaping the final document. I also appreciate the input that I received from Professor Liza Knapp and Professor Erk Grimm in the early stages.

My dissertation is, like those before mine, built on the backs of many other scholars. I owe a special note of thanks to Professor Edwina Cruise, Professor Anne Lounsbery, Professor Alexis Pogorelskin, and Professor Carol Ueland, who generously shared their research with me. I would like to express my gratitude to the following
colleagues who provided me with comments or research that enriched my own: Karin Beck, B. Tench Coxe, Ani Kokobobo, Kirsten Lodge, and Rebecca Stanton. I owe a special note of thanks to Professor Alla Smyslova for her helpful guidance and advice all these years. I would also like to acknowledge the fellowships I received from the Harriman Institute, which supported my research.

A business-school professor once told me that research has shown that, while the recipient of a favor values it more than the performer initially, over time the latter will value it more. I know of at least one exception to this: I am forever indebted to my friend, Douglas Greenfield. It was from our conversations the genesis of this dissertation emerged. Words cannot express the depth of my appreciation for his guidance from beginning to end. My dissertation benefited tremendously from his comments on earlier drafts, and was made possible by his faith in and enthusiasm for this project.

My deepest gratitude goes to my husband, John, without whom I may have never seen the light at the end of the tunnel. And, finally, I owe a long-standing thanks to my parents and my brother, whose love, support, and encouragement made sure that I would see this project through.
A Note on Translation and Transliteration

The translations of quotations taken from Russian and French works are my own, unless noted otherwise. In the footnotes and bibliography, I use the Library of Congress transliteration system for Russian, without diacritical marks. However, in the text of the dissertation and in narrative parts of footnotes, the names of well-known Russian writers are written in their most common English forms (Leo Tolstoy, not Lev Tolstoi).
In loving memory of my father.

To my mother.
Introduction

Railways and Narrative

The nineteenth century, when it takes its place with the other centuries in the chronological charts of the future, will, if it needs a symbol, almost inevitably have as that symbol a steam-engine running upon a railway.¹

H.G. Wells, “Locomotion in the Twentieth Century”

Nikolai Leskov’s short story “The Pearl Necklace” (“Zhemchuzhnoe ozherel’e,” 1885) opens with a group of men discussing the lamentable meagerness of “plot” [fabula] in contemporary Russian literature. One of the story’s narrators attributes the poverty of plot to railway expansion. Purporting to quote the Russian novelist Aleksei Pisemsky:

I recalled and recounted a distinctive comment by the late Pisemsky, who said that the perceived literary poverty above all was tied to the spread of railroads, which are very beneficial to trade, but harmful to literary fiction.

“Nowadays a person travels a lot, but quickly and harmlessly, Pisemsky said, and that is why he cannot gather any strong impressions; there’s no time and nothing for him to observe, everything glides by…But it used to be that as you went from Moscow to Kostroma ‘on long-distance carts,’ in a public tarantass, or ‘on transfer horses,’ some coachman would be a scoundrel to you, the passengers were insolent, and the innkeeper was an artful dodger…thus there was so much variety for you to get your fill by watching.”²

Disagreeing with this explanation, one of the discussants cites Charles Dickens’ short Christmas stories as an exception. After all, as one of the interlocutors points out, the popular English novelist “wrote in a country where they traveled quickly, but nevertheless saw and noticed much, and the plots of his stories do not suffer from a

meagerness of content.”³ A nameless third discussant then enters the conversation and offers to tell a story that reflects “both the century and modern man” while adhering to the constraints dictated by Dickens’ stories: it will be a somewhat fantastic tale based on a true event that took place somewhere between Christmas and Twelfth Night; and the story will contain a moral lesson and end happily.⁴ In addition to these Dickensian traits, the story-teller also incorporates elements of the Russian Christmas story, a genre which Leskov popularized. Contrary to the conjecture introduced at the story’s outset, “The Pearl Necklace” ultimately illustrates that plot-driven narratives could, and did, endure not only in England but also in Russia, despite the spread of railroads.

Almost a half of a century after Leskov’s story appeared in print, in 1928, Osip Mandelstam made the opposite claim. Whereas “The Pearl Necklace” stresses continuity in fictional narratives between the periods before and after the introduction of the railways, the narrator of Mandelstam’s surrealist novella, The Egyptian Stamp (Egipetskaia marka), insists that

[the railroad changed the whole course, the whole structure, the whole rhythm of our prose. It [the railroad] handed it [prose] over to the power of the senseless muttering of the French muzhik from Anna Karenina. Railroad prose, like the lady’s purse of that ante-mortem muzhik, is full of coupling instruments, delirious particles, iron prepositions, which has a place on the table of legal evidence, and is divorced from any concern with beauty and roundness.⁵]

This excerpt claims that the advent of the railroad altered every aspect of Russian prose, and for the worse, as it became more concerned with logic while sacrificing artistry. To counter the iron-clad logic of railroad prose, The Egyptian Stamp is constructed as “a tale

³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Osip Mandelstam, Egipetskaia marka, Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh, tom 2 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990), 87.
without a plot or a hero, made…exclusively from the feverish babble of digressions.” If nineteenth-century Russian literature emerged from Gogol’s overcoat, then Mandelstam’s story intimates that twentieth-century Russian literature emerged from the indistinct mutterings of Anna Karenina’s muzhik working on the train.

In light of the opposing opinions of Leskov and Mandelstam, we wonder what kind of impact did the railroads have on literature beyond its obvious signification of modernity and industrialization. How did prose change with the introduction of railways, which underwent significant expansion in the West in the second half of the nineteenth century? To answer these questions, I will examine the different treatments of the same image, the railways, in two of the nineteenth century’s “railway novels”—Leo Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina (1875-77) and Émile Zola’s La Bête humaine (1889-90).

Numerous scholarly articles and books on the imagery of the train in Western literature elaborate upon the interpretation of the train as the quintessential literary symbol of modernity and industrialization. Similar scholarship on trains in Russian literature also exists, focusing especially on the works by Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekhov. The scholarship on the railways in Anna Karenina, however, is limited to

---

6 Ibid., 85.


8 For an interesting reading of the railways as a metaphor for an invisible network ensnaring all the characters in Dostoevsky’s Demons (Besy, 1872), see Anne Lounsbery, “Dostoevskii's Geography: Centers, Peripheries, and Networks in Demons,” Slavic Review 66.2 (Summer 2007): 211-229. For an interpretation
relatively short articles. One of the earliest articles on the railways in *Anna Karenina* is N.S. Al'tman’s “Zheleznaia doroga v tvorchestve L.N. Tolstogo” (The Railways in the Works of L.N. Tolstoy, 1965). The article provides a gloss of almost all the train appearances in the novel and links them to each other to establish that the trains in Tolstoy’s works, especially in *Anna Karenina*, are not gratuitous; they reflect the new reality in which Tolstoy (and his characters) lived as well as his deep-seated anti-technological stance. In 1981, Gary R. Jahn published an article on the railroad in *Anna Karenina* as a symbol unifying multiple themes: death, Russian high society, and what he calls “the social,” or the construct that enables different social groups to interact. Other articles examine the railway theme in Tolstoy’s novel in relation to a particular scene. An article by Iusuke Sato and V.V. Sorokina, “The Little Man with a Tangled Beard” (1988), links the recurring “symbolic image” of the *muzhik* to the railways, “the symbol of the times, a synonym of progress and European civilization.”


---

concentrates on Anna’s return to St. Petersburg on a train and links the physical sensations experienced while inside the train (the “semi-darkness” and the oscillations between heat and cold) to the inner conflict that is introduced by her incipient feelings toward Vronsky.

Although all of these articles acknowledge the overwhelming significance of the railways in *Anna Karenina*, none of them identifies that image as key to understanding the form, content, and aesthetics of *Anna Karenina*. In this regard, there is a gap between the literary scholarship on the railways in *Anna Karenina* and in *La Bête humaine*. It is generally understood that it is impossible to appreciate Zola’s novel without taking into account the trains that populate it. Numerous studies have been devoted to the subject, and even a small sampling can represent the variety of approaches to interpreting railways in *La Bête humaine*. J. H. Matthews’ 1960 article adopts a simple approach, examining the railways as a “foil” to the main theme of men as beasts. In the article “The Cave, the Clock and the Railway: Primitive and Modern Time in *La Bête humaine*” (1990), Robert M. Viti presents a more intriguing interpretation as he reads the railway system as a symbol of modern time, which he deems a realization of Newtonian time, orderly and regulated. Viti regards disruptions of railway time as being caused by interference from “primitive time” from man’s distant primal past. Michel Serres’ book, *Feux et signaux de brume* (1975), uses the novels of Zola’s *Rougon-Macquart* cycle to demonstrate that the disciplinary boundary separating science from literature is a construct. To prove his point, Serres approaches each of Zola’s texts as a motor, thereby operating according to the laws of thermodynamics. Without an external source of energy, a closed system always conserves energy, which will eventually dissipate until

---

reaching equilibrium. Serres views the world depicted in Zola’s novels as a closed system that is disrupted through the openings created by the “fêlure,” or “crack,” from which the characters suffer.11 In addition to these works, there are numerous others, too many to annotate here.12

The Fallacy of Progress

No overt intertextual relationship exists between Anna Karenina and La Bête humaine, but a joint examination of them is not without merit. Although it is unclear which of Zola’s works Tolstoy read, his familiarity with the French author is undeniable. In Anna Karenina, the eponymous protagonist makes an explicit reference to Zola in the marked scene in which she meets Levin for the first and only time, in the novel’s penultimate part. Their rather conspicuously delayed encountered is rendered all the more significant by their conversation about contemporary art, which “touched upon the new direction in art, the new illustration of the Bible by a French artist.”13 Levin opines that “the French had reduced art to a greater degree of conventionality than anyone else, and that is why they see a special value in a return to realism. In the fact that they no longer

---


13 Leo Tolstoy, Anna Karenina, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, 90 tt., ed. V. G. Chertkov (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'tvo, 1928-1964), 19:275. All subsequent references to this novel and Tolstoy’s others works will be to this edition and given parenthetically in the text with the volume number and relevant page numbers.
lie, they see poetry” (19:275). Agreeing with him, Anna adds, “What you have said completely characterizes French art now, both painting and even literature: Zola, Daudet” (19:275). Anna shares Levin’s negative characterization of the dominant convention in contemporary French art as being predominantly concerned with overly literal representations of reality.

In life, Tolstoy was clear and explicit in his disqualification of Zola as an artist. According to Aylmer Maude, Zola’s novels did not qualify as art in Tolstoy’s eyes because they were bereft of a “transmission of feelings”:

Of Zola, who was much in the limelight at that time, Tolstoy said that his “realism,” in so far as it consisted in photographing a mass of details, is not art such as transmits feeling from man to man. A man should discriminate between what is essential and what is worthless in life, not pile up mountains of undigested facts, and this is true of the artist as well as of the man.  

Zola’s novels, in Tolstoy’s opinion, merely presented an indiscriminate mass of “undigested facts,” which ran counter to Tolstoy’s faith in the potential of the aesthetic experience of art to unite people in harmony through what he called an “infection” [zarazhenie] of feelings. Zola harbored an equally unfavorable opinion of Tolstoy, at one point even publicly declaring in an interview that Tolstoy suffered from “une fêlure.”

However much Tolstoy disliked Zola, the French author was a force to be reckoned with in Russia. A relatively forgotten, yet significant, feature of the literary landscape in late-nineteenth century Russia is the immense popularity of Zola and his novels. Nearly all of the novels in Zola’s magnum opus—the twenty-novel cycle *Rougon-Macquarts: The Natural and Social History of a Family under the Second

---

Empire (Les Rougon-Macquart: Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire, 1871-1893)—were published in Russian journals in translation while simultaneously being serialized in French journals. There is one exception, however: Zola’s La Faute de l’abbé Mouret was rejected by all the French journals for serial publication and was serialized in Russia before appearing as a book in France in 1875.16 Furthermore, while Anna Karenina was serially published in the journal Russkii Vestnik (The Russian Herald), Zola was submitting monthly literary articles on a variety of topics to the liberal Russian journal Vestnik Evropy (The Herald of Europe/The European Herald). His contributions helped him establish a Russian audience for his ideas.

The overwhelming popularity of Zola in Russia may have spurred Tolstoy to create a novel that would counter French naturalism. This possible helps explain why this new novel was a departure from his previous one, War and Peace (Voina i mir, 1869). In Tolstoy in the Seventies, a study on the origins of Anna Karenina, Boris Eikhenbaum describes the novel as being distinctly different from War and Peace because of “its incomparably greater objectivity.” This new approach of Tolstoy was intended to suggest that objectivity in literature did not necessarily have to entail a vulgarity, as was the case in French naturalism.17 To make his point, Eikhenbaum quotes a contemporary of Tolstoy, Konstantin Leon’tev (1831-1891). The nineteenth-century literary critic wrote in

16 Citing M. Kleman’s article “Emil’ Zolia v Rossii,” John McNair says that after La Faute de l’abbé Mouret and up until Le Docteur Pascal (1893) most of the Rougon-Macquart novels were first serialized in Russia before in France (McNair, 450). My side-by-side comparison of the serial publication dates of Zola’s Rougon-Macquart novels does not support that assertion (see the Appendix on p. 200).

For the precise publication dates of the Russian translations of everything Zola wrote and for Russian criticism on Zola, see G. I. Leshchinskaia, Emil’ Zolia (Moscow: Kniga, 1974), 65-67. This meticulously compiled bibliographic work is essential for anyone researching Zola’s writings in Russia.


his *On the Novels of L. N. Tolstoi: Analysis, Style, and Drift* (*O romanakh gr. L. N. Tolstogo: Analiz, stil’ i veianie*, 1890, publ. 1911) that *Anna Karenina* had “effaced only what the intolerable flies of the natural school had ‘defecated’.”\(^{18}\)

My dissertation will provide an account of the forgotten ties between Zola and Tolstoy as background material for my interpretations of *Anna Karenina* and *La Bête humaine*, which the authors wrote to some extent in reaction to each other. Their generally unflattering opinions of one another culminated in a public polemic that was an outgrowth of the literary-critical discourse of the late nineteenth century on the evolution of the realist novel. Zola’s emergence as a formidable novelist in Russia led to comparisons between him and the country’s own homegrown writers. In particular, literary critics, especially in the journals *Vestnik Evropy* (European Herald) and *La Revue des Deux Mondes* (The Review of Two Worlds), compared Zola to Tolstoy, usually favoring the latter. The first chapter of my dissertation, “The Missed Connections between Tolstoï and Zoli,” will juxtapose the political and literary contexts surrounding the reception of Zola in Russia and Tolstoy in France. (In Russian journals, Zola’s name sometimes had an alternate spelling, ending with the letter я [ia], and the last letter ё [yi] of “Tolstoy” was transliterated into French as ë.) Such a comparative study has yet to be undertaken by a modern scholar.\(^{19}\)

The differences between them will be made apparent in this dissertation through a juxtaposition of *Anna Karenina* and *La Bête humaine*, which exemplify Russian realism

---


19 There is one short article on Tolstoy and Zola. Written by Martin Bidney, it is entitled “‘Three Deaths’ and ‘How People Die’: Insight and Idealization in Tolstoy and Zola” (*Tolstoy Studies Journal* VII (1994): 5-15). The basis for the comparison, however, is the shared feature of death in two short stories, one by each of the two authors. Aside from that, Bidney makes no other connections between them.
and French naturalism, respectively. The stark differences between the two novels are apparent beginning with their short titles. On the one hand, the seemingly straightforward title of Tolstoy’s novel is the name of the female protagonist, signaling to the reader her importance. The title, however, gives no hint of the novel’s other equally, if not more, important protagonist, Levin. Meanwhile, the oxymoronic yet suggestive title, *La Bête humaine*, leaves uncertain whether it refers to one specific “human beast” or to the general human condition.

Yet, they employed the same image, trains, which are countered by images of man as a beast. Tolstoy and Zola make identical points: society has misplaced its faith in technology and science as the leading forces behind progress. In chapter two of my dissertation, entitled “(D)Evolution and Tolstoy ‘Aping’ Zola,” I will argue that these novels depict human beings as beasts to refract their anxieties about the scientific and technological developments of their day. As might be expected, Tolstoy and Zola adapted Darwin’s theory of evolution, which was publicized in 1859, to express their anxieties about progress, but also perverted it to fit their own narrative. Tolstoy and Zola viewed technological evolution as a catastrophic continuation of, if not a replacement for, human evolution, unnaturally and dangerously accelerating the process, leading not to greater chances of survival but to certain death. The second chapter of my dissertation will provide an account of the reception of Darwinism in Russia and France and then examine the role of Darwin’s ideas in *Anna Karenina* and *La Bête humaine*. An analysis of the beast imagery will yield a meaningful difference between Zola and Tolstoy.

The third chapter of my dissertation, entitled “Trains, Motion Parallax, and Aesthetics in *Anna Karenina* and *La Bête humaine*,” will juxtapose the representations of the railways in both novels. To convey the point that faster does not mean better, Tolstoy
and Zola thematize visual distortions as experienced by passengers inside a moving train. They were specifically interested in technology’s impact on the senses with motion parallax as experienced on a train. Both writers, but especially Tolstoy, deploy the metaphor of motion parallax, which is a visual phenomenon in which stationary objects outside of a moving vehicle appear to a passenger to be moving backwards. The perception of backward motion caused by forward movement embodied the dire consequences of the railways for society’s moral compass, which, in the opinions of Tolstoy and Zola, was quickly becoming decalibrated. Consequently, humans were becoming dehumanized through technology. Technological evolution has contributed to the spiritual degeneration of man. This ironic contrast between the forward motion of trains and the backward trajectory of human nature is perfectly embodied in the phenomenon of motion parallax, which became a part of daily life as train travel became more commonplace. The phenomenon of motion parallax is especially key to understanding Anna Karenina as well as two of Tolstoy’s shorter works, The Death of Ivan Ilych (Smert’ Ivana Il’icha, 1886) and The Kreutzer Sonata (Kreitserova sonata, 1889).

Finally, chapter four, “Trains, Carriages, and Walks: Defragmenting the Subconscious,” focuses on Anna Karenina. The previous chapters will have established some commonalities between Anna Karenina and La Bête humaine, namely that they both use animals and trains to counter the faith society has placed in science and technology. Whereas Zola believed that there was no way to avoid the dangerous consequences of society’s misguided beliefs in technology, Tolstoy believed the contrary. I will map out Tolstoy’s strategy of egress by juxtaposing scenes from Anna Karenina in which the characters are in transit. I will examine Anna’s final carriage rides and train
ride, Dolly’s carriage ride to the countryside, and Levin’s walk near the end of the novel. Such a juxtaposition makes apparent the correspondences Tolstoy perceived between the inner movements of the unconscious and physical journeys. While the train impedes passengers from contemplating life, other forms of motion, such as walking and riding in carriages, promote it. Tolstoy’s novel serves as an interesting challenge to Peter Brook’s contention in *Reading for the Plot*, in which he likens narrative to an engine, motivating readers to push forward to the end. Unlike the authors Brooks examines, Tolstoy is uninterested in goal-oriented readings of narratives or of life. By depicting the interior monologues of his characters, Tolstoy conveys how fragmented thoughts can become linked in a meaningful way through free associations between the present and the past. In order for that to occur, one must look backwards.

The ultimate concern of this dissertation, which is dedicated to studying the interplay between technology and the novel, is to understand how a radical transformation like the introduction of the railroad had a profound impact on the human consciousness. To accomplish this goal, I will delve into how technological innovations led to aesthetic innovations designed to reflect new realities of the day and the new realities of the perception of the surrounding world. Erich Kahler wrote in the preface to his study of the evolution of interiority in the novel,

> [A]t work throughout the whole history of Western man…is the transformation of man’s reality, of which the transformation in the forms of art is one expression. If we wish to understand what has happened to the novel, we must grasp both the transformation of our reality and the transformation within man’s consciousness…The evolution of artistic forms of expression is one of the most important evidences we have for the changes in man’s consciousness and the changes in the structure of his world.²⁰

The real marvel then in both novels is not the train, but human consciousness.

---

Chapter One

Missed Connections between Tolstoï and Zolia

Треплев: Что касается его писаний, то... как тебе сказать? Мило, талантливо... но... после Толстого или Золя не захочешь читать Тригорина.

[Treplev: As for his writing, it’s... how can I put it? Nice, talented... but after Tolstoy or Zola, you will not want to read Trigorin.]

Chaika (The Seagull, 1895), Anton Chekhov

Ce réaliste sincère était un ardent idéaliste. Son œuvre n’est comparable en grandeur qu’à celle de Tolstoï. Ce sont deux vastes cités idéales élevées par la lyre aux deux extrémités de la pensée européenne. Elles sont toutes deux généreuses et pacifiques. Mais celle de Tolstoï est la cité de la résignation. Celle de Zola est la cité du travail.¹

Anatole France, eulogy at Zola’s burial at the Pantheon in Paris, October 5, 1902.

In the 1929 book Arkhaisty i novatory (Archaists and Innovators), the Russian formalist Iurii Tynianov (1894-1943) theorized that literary genres evolve through a “struggle” [bor’ba] between the “center” and the “periphery.” Outsiders appropriate and modify literary devices and techniques employed by established writers, upgrading “archaisms” through “innovations.” This theory, though useful, is limited in application for it only considers the evolution of genres within a specific national literature. It does not consider transnational literary “struggles,” such as the consequential struggle of the nineteenth century between Russian realism and French naturalism, personified by Tolstoy and Zola, respectively.

The two writers, who were celebrated during their lives and afterwards, were all too familiar with each other, and in public, as well as in private, they expressed a mutual

disdain. Their contemporary readers and critics frequently juxtaposed them, comparing Tolstoy’s realism and Zola’s naturalism usually to exalt one over the other. At stake in these debates was the realist novel, the future of which was thought to lie with either Russian realism or French naturalism. These debates led to the curious phenomenon of Zola and Tolstoy being “naturalized” in Russia and France, respectively. Russian radical thinkers vigorously patronized Zola, believing that his brand of naturalism could provide the basis for the Russian social novel. Meanwhile, French liberal intellectuals welcomed Tolstoy’s realism, the spiritual aspects of which they hailed as an antidote to Zola’s naturalism. The result of these “naturalization” campaigns was the simultaneous occupation of France’s and Russia’s literary “centers” by Tolstoy and Zola. This ignited heated nationalistic debates within Russia and France, reflecting the predominant cultural and political divides of these nations.

The Zola Effect

Zola, above all others, was perceived, and still is, as the chief architect, advocate, and representative of the literary movement committed to a scientific approach to fiction, otherwise known as Naturalism. He was the self-elected face of Naturalism, works falling under the rubric of which were frequently regarded as “transgressing the boundaries of bourgeois literary propriety.” The *Rougon-Macquart* series was intended to exemplify French naturalism. Modeled on Honoré de Balzac’s *La Comédie humaine*, the ambitious and comprehensive cycle chronicles the lives of two extended families, from 1852 to 1870, though the series of novels as a whole does not follow a chronological order. In accordance with Zola’s own specifications for French naturalism, the cycle examined

---

“lowly” subjects—the working class, farmers, prostitutes, coal miners, and railway workers, for example—under a scientific microscope, and portrayed the characters’ behavior as resulting from flawed heredity and the environment. Zola’s deterministic explanation of human behavior, combined with the sexually charged and violent content of his novels, elicited vehement indignation from critics.

The disapproval of critics, however, did not derail sales of Zola’s novels. On the contrary, his novels profited tremendously from the firestorms they ignited. By 1886, Zola’s working-class novel *L’Assommoir* (1877) had sold 149,000 copies and was “the first bestseller in the history of the French novel.”³ Henri Mitterand claims that Zola ushered in the “era of the best-seller.”⁴ By the time of his death in 1902, it was determined that almost 2.3 million copies of the *Rougon-Macquart* novels had been sold in France alone: *Nana* (1879), possibly his most contentious novel, sold 193,000 copies;⁵ *Germinal* (1885) and *Le Rêve* sold 110,000 copies each; eight other novels sold over 100,000 copies; and sales for *La Bête humaine* exceeded 90,000.⁶ These figures, which were impressive for those days, do not even include the sales of these works in dozens of foreign languages. A prodigious writer, Zola churned out twenty *Rougon-Macquart* novels at a rapid clip of almost one per year, with production halting only once presumably because of the death of his mother in 1880.

More curious than Zola’s immense readership in France was his tremendous popularity in Russia. Baguley writes, “Zola was enthusiastically read

---

in Russia, it appears, even before he was well known in France, yet he had little impact on Russian literature.”\(^7\) Baguley’s last point is incorrect. Although Zola had more than his fair share of Russian detractors, he contributed to Russian intellectual history and literary criticism, especially to the critical discourse on the role of the novel in promoting social change. From 1875 to 1880, Russian liberal literary journals enthusiastically publicized his works and views in large part because of their perceived accordance with the ideas of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia, which included the narodniki (populists) and their radical predecessors, the nihilists, who came to prominence in the 1860s and “rejected religion, state authority, and social institutions in favor of socialism, materialist science, and positivism.”\(^8\) The Russian revolutionary intelligentsia of the seventies drew from Vissarion Belinsky (1811-1848), one of the first liberal literary critics to advocate for “committed” literature, and sought a literature that synthesized scientism and morality to promote social change.\(^9\) Like Belinsky, they looked to the West to find a model for this new social novel and thought that they had found it in Zola, whose novels fused realist fiction with science.\(^10\)

The social novel thus conceived and the promotion of Zola’s writings in Russia were not without vocal detractors. The popularity of Zola in Russia spurred counter-efforts against French naturalism from Russian realist writers, most notably from Tolstoy

---


and Dostoevsky. Although it is generally acknowledged that Russian literature has an intertextual relationship with French literature (others, Zola among them, have gone further to argue that Russian writers “plagiarized” from the French), little has been said about the Russian reaction against the influence of French naturalism, nor have there been, with a few exceptions, studies stressing Zola’s relevance and contribution to the development of nineteenth-century Russian letters.

In 1876, Sankt Peterburgskie vedomosti (Saint Petersburg Gazette) published the following characterization of French realism, written by Vasilii Vasil'evich Markov (1834-1883), who, in addition to being a literary critic for prominent liberal journals, was a poet and translator as well:

> French realism is interesting and remarkable most of all as an extreme and frequently grotesque manifestation of the realist tendency in art, as an immoderate enthusiasm for the realistic manner, as a distortion of techniques, in themselves truthful and reliable when not taken beyond proper limits, but leading to falsification when they dominate exclusively.  

Markov undoubtedly had in mind Zola, whose novels were regularly labeled as “filth” and “pornography” by critics in both Russia and France. This criticism, which stresses the irony of French realism’s deformation of reality, is fairly representative of the numerous published complaints censuring French naturalism and its most vocal advocate, Zola. Later in his career, he became more than a novelist. He became a modern-day celebrity, whose almost every move produced nothing short of hysteria. Corroborating this phenomenon, Colette Becker writes,

> The newspapers and illustrated journals followed his comings and goings: he was photographed on a bicycle, at Médan, or on a locomotive...Street vendors took possession of his person: they sold puppets in the shape of his head, postcards showing him with his heroes and heroines...His death [from asphyxiation due to a blocked chimney] was even used for publicity in Germany—and in France!—by the manufacturer of an apparatus that could be

---

adapted to chimneys to ensure their proper functioning.”\textsuperscript{12} “After Sarah Bernhardt, […] Zola held the dubious distinction of being the most caricatured figures in late nineteenth-century France.”\textsuperscript{13} His fame was not limited to his home country but spread throughout Europe and Russia. In a letter to his wife, dated 15 (27) July 1876, Dostoevsky wrote:

\begin{quote}
I subscribed to the Library for Reading—(a pitiful library), took up Zola, because I have terribly neglected European literature in recent years, and imagine: I am hardly able to read it, it’s such crap. And here we have people clamoring about Zola as if he were a celebrity, a superstar of realism.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

Zola’s “superstar” status in Russia burned bright for an impressive four decades, during which period 1500 (positive and negative) articles, reviews, and critical studies about him were published in addition to two separate collections of his complete works.\textsuperscript{15} “Between 1871 and 1881, a total of fifty-one separate translations of Zola’s fiction appeared in the various literary journals of St. Petersburg.”\textsuperscript{16} In fact, there was a time, near the beginning of his literary career, when he was better known and his writings were appreciated more in Russia than anywhere else. Zola’s influence on Russian culture was so great that one


\textsuperscript{13} Norman L. Kleeblatt, “MERDE! The Caricatural Attack against Emile Zola,” \textit{Art Journal} 52.3 (1993): 54, JSTOR, web (15 May 2010).

\textsuperscript{14} F. M. Dostoevskii, \textit{Pis'Ma v chetyrekh tomakh}, tom III, 1872-77, ed. A. S. Dolinina (Moscow-Leningrad: Academia, 1934), 225. If we believe what is written about Dostoevsky’s statement on Zola, in the memoir of Lidiia Veselitskaia [pseudonym V. Mikulich], the book he was most likely referring to in the letter is \textit{La Fortune des Rougon}, which came out in 1871 in France and in 1872 in Russia. Near the end of 1880, Veselitskaia met with Dostoevsky and asked him how many of Zola’s works he had read, to which he responded, “Out of everything written by Zola, I’ve only read two novels—\textit{Nana} and \textit{La fortune des Rougons} [sic], and decided not to read more because it was boring. And so detailed and such unnecessary details….” He also said that Balzac was undoubtedly the better writer in comparison with Zola. But when asked about whether he himself was better than Balzac, he gave no response other than to say that “each writer has his merits.” V. Mikulich [Lidiia Ivanovna Veselitskaia], \textit{Vstrechi s pisateliami} (Leningrad: Izdatel'cvo pisatelei, 1929), 155.

\textsuperscript{15} McNair, “Zolaizm’ in Russia,” 450.

anti-Zola critic, Nikolai Konstantinovich Mikhailovsky (1842-1904)—a major literary critic of *Otechestvennye zapiski* (Notes of the Fatherland) and champion of the Russian populist movement [*narodiechestvo*]—claimed that “Zola has become a half-Russian writer.” Likewise, after Zola’s death, a Russian obituarist declared him “almost our own Russian writer.”

How did this unprecedented “naturalization” of a French writer into a Russian writer take place? E. Paul Gauthier’s article “Zola's Literary Reputation in Russia prior to ‘L'Assommoir’” recounts the curious Zola phenomenon that overtook Russia before it overtook France, and that article serves as the primary basis of my account. According to Gauthier, Russian readers were first introduced to the first four books of the *Rougon-Macquart* cycle in summary form or abridged translation. The first two, *La Fortune des Rougon* and *La Curée*, were summarized with brief commentary by the literary and art critic, Vladimir Viktorovich Chuiko (1833-1899), for the July and August 1872 issues of *Vestnik Evropy*. Chuiko publicly praised Zola’s talent and the anti-bourgeois tone of his novels. Agreeing with Chuiko’s positive assessment of Zola, Petr Dmitrievich Boborykin (1836-1922), along with many other liberal and radical critics, saw the future of the Russian social novel in the early *Rougon-Macquart* novels.

Conservative literary critics disagreed with Chuiko and Boborykin. One critic labeled Zola a “charlatan,” whose disregard for free will, he thought, could appeal only to Russian Darwinists; another argued that Zola’s realism was hardly new and was already

---

17 Quoted here from McNair, “‘Zolaizm’ in Russia,” 460.
18 Gauthier, “Zola's Literary Reputation in Russia,” 38.
19 Ibid.
practised by Russian writers. Both sides, however, perceived an important political message in Zola’s first two novels, though their readings differed. While liberal and radical critics interpreted the novel’s message as anti-bourgeois, conservative critics appreciated the novels “as a satire which exposed the impotence of the Republican party and the stupid inertia of the masses.”

The third Rougon-Macquart novel, Le Ventre de Paris, was more successful than the previous two, and the fourth one, La Conquête de Plassans, was even more so. Among the Russian translations of French fiction available at that time, Zola’s latest work was “outsold” only by Jules Verne’s Journey to the Center of the Earth (1864) and Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea (1870).

Whereas Zola became an international name with L’Assommoir, the first novel of his to be published in Russia before France was an earlier work, La Faute de l’abbé Mouret. The moderately liberal St. Petersburg journal Vestnik Evropy serialized it in 1875 from January to March, a month after which it appeared in France. Other periodicals, such as Sankt Peterburgskie vednosti, Novoe vremia (New Time), Iskra (Spark), and Novosti i birzhevaia gazeta (News and Stock-Exchange Gazette), printed his novels while they were concurrently being serialized in French journals. Looking at all the positive and negative Zola-related criticism in Russia as a whole, John McNair termed the response to Zola’s works as zolaizm. McNair argues that zolaizm was a force to be reckoned with for it was “[a]ppropriated by Zolaists and anti-Zolaists alike” and “became a vital issue in Russian literary-critical discourse for the remaining decades of the century.”

---

20 Gauthier, “Zola's Literary Reputation in Russia,” 38.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., 40.
23 McNair, “‘Zolaizm' in Russia,” 450.
24 McNair, “‘Zolaizm' in Russia,” 451.
Russia’s early appreciation of Zola was rooted in the political climate of the 1860s. That decade had been profoundly shaped by Russia’s massive and humiliating defeat in the Crimean War (1853-1856) against an alliance consisting of France, Britain, the Ottoman Empire, and the Kingdom of Sardinia. The major losses experienced at the battle of 1854-55, also known as the Siege of Sevastopol, were particularly devastating to the morale of Russians, who viewed this debacle as a sign of imminent destruction. The decisive loss at Sevastopol can be largely attributed to the temporary railway line constructed by the British. The Crimean War was the first of its kind in which a train was used to conduct warfare. But the decision to construct a temporary railway was not the result of a brilliant military plan according to Christian Wolmar, author of *Engines of War*, which recounts the role of the railways in wars.\(^25\) Rather, it started with the first occurrence ever of journalists and photographers reporting first-hand accounts from the front line about the logistical setbacks British forces were facing during the Siege of Sevastopol. One of the problems was the “terrible bottleneck” on the eight-mile uphill stretch between the British base at the port of Balaklava and just outside of Sevastopol.\(^26\) The frigid winter temperatures at that time also complicated the situation, killing off oxen and ponies used to transport supplies and rendering the roads to Sevastopol “impassable.”\(^27\) It became impossible to adequately equip forces with the necessary ammunition and food, which were available at the port of Balaklava.

Informed of the “transport difficulties” by the newspapers, British railway companies came up with the idea of building, at cost, a temporary seven-mile railway


\(^{26}\) Ibid., 22.

\(^{27}\) Wolmar, *Engines of War*, 22.
line, which was completed within a mere seven weeks, on 26 March 1855.\textsuperscript{28} Named the Grand Crimean Central Railway, it utilized a combination of conventional steam locomotion, horse-drawn wagons, and gravity. In addition to getting supplies to the front line, another unprecedented usage of trains was the transportation of sick and injured soldiers to Bakalava, where they were treated by Florence Nightingale and her nurses. This new usage of trains during war time prefigured the ambulance trains used in the First World War.

Viewing defeat in the Crimean War as evidence of Russia’s backwardness and stagnation in relation to Europe, the nation carried out a critical and expansive self-examination and deemed it necessary to significantly overhaul the nation’s institutions—political, military, judicial, and educational—in order to modernize. A number of liberal reforms were instituted during the reign of Tsar Alexander II, which lasted from 1855 to 1881. The most consequential piece of reform was the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. In addition to being generally acknowledged by the educated strata of society as the morally correct step to take, the liberation of serfs was supposed to contribute to the development of a market economy. The next major step was to institute a more rapid pace of reform in higher education, especially in the fields of science and technology. Russia’s defeat at Sevastopol, attributable to the usage of several technological innovations—the first ever military railroad, electric telegraph, and submarine mines—demonstrated the need for more rapid advances on the science and technology fronts. (The instrumental Grand Crimean Railway may help account for the exponential growth of Russia’s railroad network after the Crimean War, from 1866 to 1899, from 5,000 km to 53,200 km.) During Alexander II’s reign, the Academy of Sciences, along with

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 23.
research libraries and astronomical observatories, was granted a larger budget. Nikolai Vasilievich Shelgunov (1824-1891), a radical literary critic, “characterized the early 1860’s as the years ‘when everything was blessed with overflowing energy…when everything awakened, and when the forces of good and evil engaged in a battle that was real and truly national.’”

During the 1840s, French positivism, the scientific study of society as espoused by Auguste Comte and John Stuart Mill, gained great traction among Russian liberals, who adopted the Western European ideas of rationalism and individualism. The Westernizers were divided between liberals and revolutionary democrats. The most influential figure to emerge from the revolutionary democrats was Vissarion Gregor'evich Belinskii (1811-1848), who is regarded as “the father of the Russian radical intelligentsia.” Belinskii subscribed to the western notion of individualism. As a literary critic, he believed that content outweighed form. His 1842 appraisal of Gogol’s short story “The Overcoat” (“Shinel”) as a socially committed work championing the “little man” contributed significantly to the development of the Natural School in Russia, a movement which dominated during the 1830s and 1840s and therefore had no relation to French naturalism, which came afterwards. Writers belonging to the Russian Natural School viewed literature as Belinskii did, as a means of creating physiological sketches of the social realities of serfs and peasants. By creating realistic portraits of Russian

---


downtrodden, writers were fulfilling Belinksii’s literary ideal of prose that evoked strong images and impressions.

These convictions of Belinskii would help shape the literary agenda created by the men of the sixties, who believed that literature should go beyond depicting just the lower classes and drive political reform. The most active and influential of the sixties generation were Nikolai Chernyshevskii (1828-89) and Nikolai Aleksandrovich Dobroliubov (1836-61), both of whom were radical democrats and literary critics. Chernyshevskii derived from Comte’s positivist philosophy a scientific approach to sociology, or the study of society. He believed that the liberation of scientific thought from religion and the glorification of science were the keys to greater social and economic equality. These beliefs helped to define the sixties. The other defining trait of the sixties was the utilitarian function of literature, which Dobroliubov and others such as the radical writer Dmitry Pisarev (1840-1868) actively promoted.

Chernyshhevskii, along with others, formed a minority group, members of which were enlightened, educated, and progressive, and who were collectively known as the Russian intelligentsia. This term arrived from Poland, whence it migrated from France, Germany, and Italy during the thirties and forties. As members, they identified themselves as intelligénty (the plural of intelligént; the g is pronounced hard as in good). Being “antimetaphysical,” they replaced a religious or mythical world view with a scientific one. Armed with scientific knowledge, an individual, they argued, could actively take on institutions to induce social progress. Accordingly, the value of scientific

knowledge was determined based on its contributions to the social sciences, further
discoveries in which were deemed to qualify as social progress. They believed that the
augmentation of knowledge about man as an organism through the natural sciences and
physiology was vital to achieving secular salvation. This convergence of intellectual
concerns with moral ones through science, according to Russian radicals, ought to be
reflected in literature, which they viewed as a vehicle for communicating social criticism
and propaganda to the lower classes.

Chernyshevskii’s emphasis on science contributed to the rise and dominance of
the Russian nihilists. Believers in an “ultra-individualism,” that is, personality unfettered,
and the primacy of science in the quest for social progress, these young radicals were
famously represented by Bazarov in Turgenev’s Fathers and Sons (Ottsy i deti, 1862).34
In that novel, the “superfluous men,” best represented in previous literary works by
Alexander Pushkin’s Evgenii Onegin and Mikhail Lermontov’s Pechorin, were displaced
by Bazarov, a “new man,” who tries to devote himself entirely to Western rationalism
and positivism.35 One of the historical models for Bazarov is thought to be Pisarev, who
once brashly dismissed Pushkin’s highly revered Evgenii Onegin as nothing more than
“stylistics” and who believed that people should behave according to their self-interests.
Pisarev, however, may have resented the comparison since, in his article on Bazarov, he
argued that the character went too far in his rejection of everything. Turgenev’s novel
also captured the generational clash between youth and the establishment. In the second

34 Ibid., 62.
half of the 1860s, nihilism faded from the political scene without having realized its goals.

Nonetheless, out of the Nihilists’s belief in the primacy of science in validating beliefs, or scientism, a counter-group emerged during the 1870s, the *narodniki* (populists). The dominance of the Russian populists coincides with the rise of Zola in Russia. Assuming a more moderate approach to science than the nihilists, Russian populists considered science to be a formidable instrument that needed to be “complemented” and served by the arts.\(^\text{36}\) Its chief ideologue, Mikhailovsky, believed that they needed to cultivate democratic ideals gradually and instill in the people a “social morality” that was informed by “social ideals.”\(^\text{37}\) Resistant to the idea of revolution, Mikhailovsky was “firmly convinced that the gradual democratization of political processes and institutions…should provide the most solid basis for the emergence of a modern Russian society.”\(^\text{38}\) During the early 1890s, Russian Marxism was becoming increasingly dominant. Marxists expanded their scope by promoting social revolution not only in Russia but also around the world. In summary, the second half of the nineteenth century was marked by a mixture of atheism, socialism, scientism and utilitarianism in the formulation of an ideology for the radical Russian intelligentsia, the varied members of which were driven by a pressing need for either gradual social evolution or rapid social revolution.

Not coincidentally, it is during the 1870s, when politics, science, and literature merged, that Zola entered the Russian literary scene and became one of its major figures.


\(^{37}\) Vucinich, *Social Thought in Tsarist Russia*, 62.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 63.
The very leaders who were driving radical politics in Russia were the ones debating the value of Zola’s work in the periodicals and thereby making the French author even more popular. Key to the popularization and naturalization of Zola in Russia was the liberal journal *Vestnik Evropy*, which at its height under the editorship of Mikhail Matveevich Stasiulevich (1826-1911) had over 6,000 subscribers—an impressive number for that time.\(^{39}\) Zola’s popularity in Russia certainly contributed to the decision Stasiulevich made in 1875 to hire him as a foreign correspondent for *Vestnik Evropy*, at the suggestion of Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883), who would become his staunchest advocate in Russia. Zola and Turgenev became acquainted in 1872 through Gustave Flaubert at a gathering that included other regular visitors: Edmond de Goncourt, Alphonse Daudet, and Zola. These group gatherings came to be known as the “Dîners des Cinq” (The Dinners of Five). At that time, Zola was better known as a journalist, though by the end of 1872, he had published a few fictional works. In the previous year, the newspaper *La Cloche* aborted plans to publish the rest of the novel *La Curée*, which conservatives viewed as pornography.\(^ {40}\) Then on December 22, 1872, the Parisian daily *Le Corsaire* published Zola’s article entitled “Le lendemain de la crise” (The day after the crisis).\(^ {41}\) It juxtaposes a laborer’s futile search for work with the indulgent and comfortable lifestyles of four conservative French Deputés. The article’s irreverence provoked the French Duc de Broglie to shut down the newspaper. As a result, Zola was temporarily shunned by other publications and found himself in need of money (though not completely penniless as he was still receiving his monthly retainer from Charpentier Publications, which had signed


\(^ {41}\) Duncan, “The Fortunes of Zola’s *Pariżskie pismo* in Russia,” 107.
a ten-year contract with him in July 1872 for publishing rights). In an interview with *Le Figaro*, dated 5 November 1893, Zola stated that Turgenev at this point intervened and helped make his entry into Russia possible.\(^\text{42}\)

Turgenev was Zola’s greatest advocate in Russia. Just as he had brought Flaubert’s works to the attention of the Russian reading public, he helped do the same for Zola. In the summer of 1874, Turgenev brokered a deal with Stasiulevich to have Zola contribute a submission each month to *Vestnik Evropy* as its Paris correspondent. As for Zola, he had a high regard for Turgenev’s guidance. Boborykin recalled Zola requesting an opportunity to consult with Turgenev before responding to Boborykin’s request to submit to the journal *Slovo* (Word): “I have become accustomed to trusting him [Turgenev] and do not begin any matter without his advice regarding everything having to do with Russian literature and the press.”\(^\text{43}\)

In exchange for giving *Vestnik Evropy* the exclusive rights to publishing his monthly submissions, Zola received fifteen francs per page and the freedom to select his topics, though occasionally Turgenev made recommendations.\(^\text{44}\) In general, Zola’s articles pertained to literature, art, and cultural life in France. He covered contemporary French writers, such as Balzac, Flaubert, the Goncourt brothers, Daudet, Musset, Taine,
Chateaubriand, Adolphe Thiers, George Sand, Victor Hugo, and Dumas fils. Zola also provided theater reviews and chronicled the Salons of Impressionists. From March 1875 to December 1880, Zola published in Vestnik Evropy sixty-four “Paris Letters” (Parizhskie pis’ma), each one ranging from twenty to thirty pages in length. By being published in Vestnik Evropy, Zola acquired authority in Russia as a legitimate literary critic, one that he might not have had otherwise.

The popularity of these letters was undeniable. A reviewer in Nedel’ia (Week) wrote, “If someone were to ask us who was the most popular review critic at this time, we would say without reflection, Émile Zola.” The popularity of his letters is reflected in the numerous (unsuccessful) endeavors made by other Russian editors to publish his critical writings. The most well-known attempt was made in 1876 by Mikhail Evgrafovich Saltykov-Shchedrin (1826-1889), the editor of the radical left-wing journal Otechestvennye zapiski. A bidding war ensued between Saltykov-Shchedrin and Stasiulevich with the latter winning but at the price of raising Zola’s fee by twenty francs per page.

The articles that Zola wrote during the first two years were well-received, but criticism ensued when he wrote “George Sand and Her Works” (July 1876) and “Victor Hugo and La Légende des siècles” (April 1877). In those two letters, he drew a

---

45 For a complete enumeration of these letters in French, see Jean Triomphe, “Zola collaborateur du Messager de l’Europe,” Revue de littérature comparée, 17 (1937): 757-760, JSTOR, web (13 July 2010); in Russian, see Leschchinskaia, Emil’ Zolia, 65-67.
47 Duncan, “Echoes of Zola’s Experimental Novel in Russia,” 11-12.
49 Brown, Zola: A Life, 316. See also Duncan, “The Fortunes of Zola’s Parižskie pis’ma in Russia,” 108.
distinction between “realists’ and “idealists,” and categorized both George Sand and Victor Hugo under the latter rubric to the dismay of the radical populists, who esteemed both French writers for their social novels.\textsuperscript{50} When \textit{Vestnik Evropy} reprinted Zola’s letters in a separate edition in 1877, Mikhailovsky seized this as an opportunity to rail against Zola, using as an example the depiction of a martyr in prison. Although a realist might depict the physical surroundings of the martyr with photographic accuracy, this “cold and indifferent record” could not reveal “the soul of the martyr…[or] the reflections of the high truth for which he sits behind that grating.”\textsuperscript{51} Zola’s prediction that Hugo’s legacy would probably fade away due to a lack of adherents was likely intended to mark a public break with his literary predecessors.

In the very same month in which the Hugo letter appeared in \textit{Vestnik Evropy}, an important event took place in Paris on April 16 at the restaurant Chez Trapp near Saint-Lazare railway station. The gathering of Zola and his group of young literary protégés—Guy de Maupassant, Paul Alexis, Octave Mirbeau, Henri Céard, Léon Hennique, and Joris-Karl Huysmans—formally inaugurated the naturalist movement. Also in attendance was Flaubert, though not because he supported naturalism. Maupassant submitted a telling description of their dinner menu to \textit{La République des Lettres}, which published the following: “a purée de Bovary” soup; salmon-pink trout “à la Fille Élisa”; truffled chicken “à la Saint Antoine”; artichokes “au Cœur Simple”; parfait “naturaliste”; vin de Coupeau; liqueur “de l’Assommoir.”\textsuperscript{52} Baguley interprets the dinner as a “founding

\textsuperscript{50} Gauthier, “Zola's Literary Reputation in Russia prior to ‘L'Assommoir’,” 42.

\textsuperscript{51} As quoted in Gauthier, “Zola's Literary Reputation in Russia prior to ‘L'Assommoir’,” 43. For the original, see “Letters about Truth or Falsehood,” \textit{Otechestvennye zapiski}, bk. 12 (December 1877): 310-321.

\textsuperscript{52} Brown, \textit{Zola: A Life}, 382.
event” symbolizing their collective repudiation of romanticism rather than an affirmation of a shared and unified literary agenda. Three years after the historic dinner Chez Trapp, in 1880, all the writers who were present at the dinner, minus Flaubert and Mirbeau, jointly published an anthology of short stories related to the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1), entitled Les Soirées de Médan. Zola’s controversial contributions to Vestnik Evropy, the dinner Chez Trapp, Maupassant’s humorous press release, and the subsequent anthology suggest a concerted and unprecedented marketing effort to exploit the press to advance their careers and to establish themselves as a legitimate literary collective.

What this all suggests is that Zola was adept at using the press to provoke controversy, which he deliberately incited, knowing that it would translate into profitable sales. He also understood that there was strength in numbers so he cultivated mentees and aggressively found newspaper assignments for them, to, as he put it in a letter to Céard, “occupy as much space as possible.” Zola himself wrote front-page essays for Le Figaro, one after another, much to the editor-in-chief’s chagrin, extolling the virtues of the writings of the then relatively unknown young writers Huysmans, Céard, Alexis, and Maupassant. These tactics were part of a “vigorous press campaign that Zola conducted between 1875 and 1881,” a campaign that Flaubert found distasteful. Zola’s preface to the anthology of some of the pieces that he had written for Vestnik Evropy reveals an attempt to capitalize on his involvement with the Russian journal by referring to it, after

---

54 As quoted in Brown, Zola: A Life, 464.
the fact, as “the literary campaign that I waged in Russia.” This is not to say that Zola’s motives for writing were insincere, but his modern understanding of media as a conduit for marketing played an enormous role in the migration of his works beyond the borders of France. In addition to the political climate in Russia, the French coverage of Zola and the controversy surrounding his novels were certainly contributing factors to his rise in Russia, where articles about him were also published constantly.

The Russian radicals became increasingly dissatisfied with Zola because of his most controversial contribution to the journal: the fifty-second of “The Paris Letters,” otherwise better known as Le Roman expérimental (The Experimental Novel). It was published in Russia in September 1879 and in France in December of the following year. (The first English translation of it appeared only in 1893.) Zola’s programmatic manifesto expounded his rationale for the naturalist novel, previously expressed in the prefaces to the first Rougon-Macquart novel, La Fortune des Rougon and its predecessor Thérèse Raquin.

In 1867, Thérèse Raquin created quite a stir upon release. The novel’s eponymous protagonist plots her husband’s murder to realize her desire to live with her lover, Laurent, in impunity. But the murder eventually aggravates their nerves, leading to their joint suicide. The most intriguing aspect of Zola’s novella is its treatment of its protagonists as beasts. Zola describes them as “human brutes, nothing more” in the novel’s 1868 preface, which was laced with quasi-scientific terminology. He wrote the preface to respond directly to the hostility from critics, who, with great indignation,

lambasted the novel for its “pornographic” and “stinking filthy” content—these charges would become a common refrain declaimed by anti-Zolaists. Frustrated, Zola tried to articulate as clearly as possible his scientific method of studying “temperament, not characters.”58 Uninterested in the feelings of his protagonists, the author, out of “the pure curiosity of a scientist”, applies a “modern method.”59 He treats them as “human animals,” whose behavior is pre-determined by “nerves,” “instinct,” and “blood.”60 He extrapolated their behavior based on the influence of environmental changes on their nervous temperaments. In the preface’s conclusion, Zola mentions a “group of naturalist writers,” implying that his new quasi-scientific literary views were legitimate enough to attract adherents.61

The views put forth in Thérèse Raquin were combined with the scientific methods of Claude Bernard (1813-1878), as stipulated in Introduction à l’étude de la médecine expérimentale (An Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine, 1865), to form the basis of Zola’s Le Roman expérimental. Zola draws an analogy between his own efforts to make literature evolve into a science and the famed French physiologist’s efforts to subject medicine to the same rigorous and unbiased experimental methods used in science. Just as scientists attempt to uncover the laws governing the physical world through objective experimentation, Zola argued that novelists should do the same to reveal the laws governing human behavior. Like Bernard, Zola is interested in seeking out in the physical and material world the immediate causes behind the appearance of natural phenomena. Taking from Bernard’s Introduction excerpts and terms—such as

58 Ibid., 519 and 521.
59 Ibid., 521-2.
60 Ibid., 519-523.
61 Ibid., 522.
“determinism,” “observation and experiment,” “milieu,” “hypothesis,” and “doubt”—Zola aims to establish a legitimate scientific foundation for an advanced form of literature evolved from realism. His naturalism investigates human behavior as determined by the environment and heredity. To do so, the naturalist novelist functions not only as an observer recording what he sees in photographic detail; he also functions like an “experimentalist,” who places his characters in a specific environment—such as mines as in *Germinal*, the railway as in *La Bête humaine*, or the agricultural countryside as in *La Terre* (1887)—and extrapolates his characters’ behavior and reactions based on the laws of nature and the environment.⁶² Zola’s “Paris Letter” number fifty-two transformed him from a literary critic into a literary theorist, and as such, he had an even greater impact on contemporary literary discourse.

Modern scholars, in particular Philip Duncan and John McNair, have found in the liberal and radical nineteenth-century literary journals a range of responses from Russian critics to *Le Roman expérimental*. Moderate critics at that time conceded that despite its insistence on a scientific approach, the article still possessed some merit, especially the point about milieu in understanding human behavior.⁶³ Certain Marxist radicals saw value in a literature that depicted the “filth” in social life as an important step toward a progressive social evolution.⁶⁴

Russian radicals had a different interpretation of *Le Roman expérimental*, however. They had originally believed, based on the prefaces Zola had written for *Thérèse Raquin* and *La Fortune des Rougon*, that the French novelist was devoted to

---


⁶³ Duncan, “The Fortunes of Zola’s Parižskie pis’ma in Russia,” 113.

⁶⁴ Duncan, “The Fortunes of Zola’s Parižskie pis’ma in Russia,” 114.
exposing the hypocrisy of the French regime as the cause of moral corruption and, more importantly, to instigating positive change. Accordingly, Russian radicals had interpreted naturalism as part of an effort to create a new novel promoting social progress, and they saw the potential for Zola’s naturalism to become a new “polemical weapon” for Russian radicals. 65 And their interpretations of Zola’s ideas seemed to be confirmed by his explicit statements in his polemical treatise on the greater moral purpose of his literary agenda. He argued that his experiments would make it possible to discover the mechanism governing human behavior so as to harness it for social justice:

We will enter into a century in which man all powerful will subjugate nature and use its laws to make it possible for the greatest sum of justice and liberty to reign on this earth. There is no goal nobler, higher, greater. Our role of being intelligent is this: to penetrate the why of things, to become superior to things and to reduce them to the state of obedient cogwheels. 66

Yet, despite this explicit declaration of commitment to social progress and justice, the critics Mikhailovsky and Konstantin Konstantinovich Arsen'ev (1837-1919) repudiated Le Roman expérimental, interpreting Zola’s scientific approach to the discovery of truth as an indifference to justice. 67 They regarded his treatise as “a categorical renunciation of literature as an instrument of social action.” 68 Looking back at these criticisms from the twentieth century, Duncan argues that at that time liberal and radical critics were indignant at Zola’s lack of commitment, but they had, in fact, manufactured it. In his article “The Echoes of Zola in Russia,” Duncan explains:

65 Ibid., 108.
66 Zola, Le Roman expérimental, 1188.
67 McNair points out that Mikhailovsky’s criticism of Zola would later be echoed in his criticism of Chekhov’s lack of “commitment.” “Much of the critical response to Chekhov over the next decade, notably from Mikhailovsky and other advocates of a ‘committed’ literature, was framed in terms that recalled the earlier attacks on zolaizm, while Chekhov’s own oft-quoted attempts to define and defend his own view of an ‘objective’ art (‘a writer must be as objective as a chemist’) are sometimes similarly reminiscent of Zola himself.” “Zolaizm in Russia,” 456.
68 Duncan, “The Fortunes of Zola’s Parižskie pis’ma in Russia,” 113.
This is really a distortion of Zola's meaning, as he clearly intended that his novel ultimately serve a moral purpose and social progress. But as most critics understood it, the experimental novel did not persuade; at best it analyzed. And here was the crux of the matter, for the radical intellectuals and even the liberal group were committed to publicist or tendentious belles lettres and criticism. As the liberal critic Konstantin Arsen'ev phrased it, “The unconditional triumph of the experimental novel would be a death sentence passed on the tendentious novel, which is to say, on one of the most powerful weapons of progress.”

McNair adds to Duncan’s point, saying that *Le Roman expérimental*’s insistence on analyzing heredity and the environment as deterministic forces was a “repudiation of idealism,” and it “seemed to imply a denial of the ideas that defined the intelligentsia itself, the notions of social conscience and duty to the people.” Disagreeing with this view, the literary critic and revolutionary democrat Shelgunov believed that Zola’s rejection of idealism meant that “a just society could be created only on the basis of a rational (or ‘scientific’) understanding of reality.” These different responses among Russian radicals to *Le Roman expérimental* reflected the ongoing debates on the nature of a socially conscious novel: would it reflect an ideal or would it reflect reality as it is, as filthy as it was in order to incite change; and what was the relationship of science to inciting social and political change?

After 1877, and especially after *Le Roman expérimental*, Zola’s involvement in *Vestnik Evropy* increasingly drew criticism from contributors such as the literary historian Aleksandr Nikolaevich Pypin (1833-1901) and the poet Yakov Petrovich Polonsky (1819-1898). They criticized Stasiulevich for supporting a writer who in their view replaced morality with science. The editor, nevertheless, appreciated the popularity of Zola’s letters, and, as the bidding war with Saltykov-Shchedrin demonstrated, he was

---

70 McNair, “Zolaizm’ in Russia,” 453.
71 Ibid.
willing (though begrudgingly) to pay to keep Zola. Stasiulevich’s favorable attitude toward Zola, however, began to change in 1877 as he became increasingly frustrated with the decreasing quality of Zola’s submissions; as Pogorelskin reports in her article on the history of the Vestnik Evropy, Stasiulevich said to Pypin that

‘the current article [of] Zola seemed . . . weak and colorless. Evidently he knows little of the subject matter himself and like a realist understands only when he sees a thing with his own eyes.’ Two years later Stasiulevich complained to Pypin, ‘the title of the new correspondence of Zola... horrified me. It has long been a rare event when I am not tormented by his correspondences.’

Stasiulevich also became exasperated because “Zola had little conception of the constraints imposed by Tsarist censorship” and willfully ignored the “serious editorial dilemmas” that his monthly contributions created for Stasiulevich. In 1879 Stasiulevich agreed to publish open attacks on Zola made by the Russian writer and activist Konstantin Konstantinovich Arsen’ev. Despite these articles criticizing Zola, other journals all the same accused Vestnik Evropy of endorsing naturalism by virtue of publishing his articles.

An incident that was particularly aggravating to Stasiulevich, and undoubtedly marked the beginning of the end of the collaboration between him and Zola, had to do with the publication of the ninth installment of Les Rougon-Macquart, Nana, in Russia. The French newspaper Le Voltaire began serializing it in October of 1879. Although Russia did not have copyright laws to prevent such an occurrence. Zola swore to

---


73 Ibid.


Stasiulevich that *Novoe vremia* never had his approval to publish the chapter, but this did not prevent Stasiulevich, or Turgenev, from feeling betrayed. Responding to Stasiulevich’s letter regarding this matter, Turgenev wrote, “You must absolutely teach him a lesson: he will see that one doesn’t play dirty with us and will henceforth be more careful. It’s unlikely that he will continue to collaborate much longer.”76 This incident may help account for the irregularity of Zola’s submissions from December of 1879 onwards, though in his letters to Stasiulevich he claimed illness and an overload of work.77

This incident with Stasiulevich, Arsen’ev’s negative articles, and the negative press mounting against Zola in Russia taken together help explain his decision to stop submitting to *Vestnik Evropy*. In 1880, his final article appeared in the journal’s December issue. Stasiulevich, who had been under pressure to remove Zola since 1877, did not express any regret over Zola’s departure from the journal. Stasiulevich had already been irritated with Zola’s insistence on using inflammatory language. And the editor’s tendency to soften the offensive language aggravated Zola. In one case, Stasiulevich “instruct[ed] the translator of Zola’s articles to substitute the less offensive terms *realism* and *realist* for *naturalism* and *naturalist*, which had by then acquired odious connotations.”78 The definitive cause behind the end of “The Paris Letters,” however, remains unclear according to Pogorelskin’s version of the history of *Vestnik Evropy*.79

79 Pogorelskin, rev. of I.S. Turgenev i russkaia zhurnalista 70-kh godov XIX veka, 190.
Whatever the reason for his departure, by 1880 Zola no longer needed *Vestnik Evropy* (or French newspapers such as *Le Figaro*, for which he also wrote) either as a source of income or as a public platform for his writings. Lacking neither money nor publicity, especially after becoming wealthy because of the best-selling *L’Assommoir*, Zola happily retired from journalism to concentrate his efforts on completing the *Rougon-Macquart* series. If Zola felt any bitterness about the conclusion of his professional relationship with *Vestnik Evropy*, one would never be able to tell; in his 1880 introduction to the French publication of *Le Roman expérimental*, he acknowledges his indebtedness to his Russian readership:

> Russia, in one of my terrible hours of distress and discouragement, restored in me all my faith, all my strength by giving me a podium and a public – the most well-read, the most impassioned of audiences. It is in this way that she made me, in literary criticism, what I am now. I cannot speak of this without emotion, and I will remain eternally grateful to her for it.\(^{80}\)

By 1881, twenty-four of Zola’s other “Paris Letters” were published in French in five volumes of criticism: *Le Roman expérimental*, *Le Naturalisme au théâtre*, *Nos auteurs dramatiques*, *Les Romanciers naturalistes*, and *Documents littéraires*. In these anthologies and various newspapers, forty of “The Paris Letters” in all were eventually recycled and published in France.\(^{81}\) And even after Zola stopped contributing to *Vestnik Evropy*, Russian liberal and radical journals continued to publish his novels.

The rhetoric concerning the dangers of reading Zola reached a climax with the publication of Zola’s *Nana* in Russia, from 1879 to 1880. The novel relates the story of a fifteen-year-old courtesan, whose sexual involvements invariably lead to ruin for her male partners. The novel closes with the imminent outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war.

---


\(^{81}\) Triomphe, “Zola collaborateur du *Messager de l’Europe*,” 60.
Meanwhile, Nana contracts smallpox and dies from it. The disease, a metaphor for her sordid lifestyle, symbolically eats away at her physical beauty and renders her body hideous. Nana’s body, its horrific disintegration, and its death emblematize France as it suffers from and is destroyed by the moral bankruptcy of the Second Empire, which comes to a bloody end with the Franco-Prussian war. Due to the novel’s sexual content and the young age of Nana, the novel was denounced as pornography in Russia and France. Perceiving Zola’s works as a potentially infectious moral threat, the editor of Moskovskie vedomosti (Moscow Gazette), Vladimir Andreevich Gringmut (1851-1907)—an ultra-conservative who would later become one of the major leaders of the pro-tsarist Black Hundreds movement—published in 1880 a whole monograph devoted to Zolaizm, that is Zola and his literary theories (not to be confused with McNair’s usage of the term with a lower case ‘z’), in Russia. In the work, he declared:

We must strike from their [‘liberal’ journalists’] hands all those weapons with which they think to commit their crimes against our fatherland. One of these weapons is, precisely, Zolaizm, not only Parisian, but also its Russian brand. Zolaizm in Russia represents an immensely greater danger than Zolaizm in France or in Germany and we have taken the trouble to unmask it, not from idle amusement, but to carry out our duty as a citizen.82

Gringmut’s figurative call-to-arms to his fellow countrymen to combat the insidious Russian strain of Zolaizm stemmed from his fear of it being used as a weapon in the hands of the Russian radical intelligentsia. Thus, according to Gringmut’s reasoning, exposing Zolaizm as a threat was a civic duty.

Although such extreme reactions were limited to a minority, it was nevertheless a powerful one that included the overseer of the Russian Orthodox Church, Konstantin

82 As quoted in Duncan, “The Fortunes of Zola’s Parižskie Pis'ma in Russia,” 116. Gringmut published a series of articles on Zolaizm in Russia for the journal Krugozor (Horizon) using the initial T. (Moscow, 1880, nos. 9-17). These articles were then anthologized under the pseudonym S. Temlinskii, Zolaizm v Rossi. Kriticheskii etiad (Moscow: tip. Lavrova, 1880) and then expanded the anthology for the 2nd ed.: Zolaizm. Kriticheskii etiad (Moscow: tip. Lavrova, 1881).
Petr Petrovich Pobedonostsev (1827-1907), and Chief Censor Evgenii Mikhailovich Feoktistov (1828-1898). According to Duncan’s account of the eighties, the assassination of Alexander II in 1881 and failure of the narodniki movement resulted in the tendentious novel falling out of favor, especially when Pobedonostsev became the Procurator of the Holy Synod from 1880 to 1905. In this political climate, the supposedly noncommittal naturalist novel was rehabilitated and attracted imitators.\footnote{83} While that may have been the case, Zola’s works were censored. In a letter dated 12 April 1885 to Chief Censor Feoktistov, Pobedonostsev expressed fear that Zola’s novel had great potential to foment unrest among pro-revolutionary intellectuals, peasants, and factory workers, Pobedonostsev unequivocally advised that all necessary steps be taken to ensure that Germinal never appear in Russian translation. To make his case, Pobedonostsev quotes extensively from a letter from the botanist and mathematician Sergei Aleksandrovich Rachinsky (1833-1902), who was a conservative and a major advocate for Russian Orthodox parochial schools:

"Have you seen the novel by Zola: Germinal? This book warrants attention. A translation of it into Russian must absolutely be forbidden. Do you know that our literary journals compete with each other to translate Zola’s novels, and are voraciously read by the peasant clergy and the factory workers? Germinal—maybe it’s the best that Zola has written. It is a story about strikes, completely analogous to the ones that are unfolding before our eyes in our factories. It was written with filth and blood, and is saturated with a conviction in the closeness and validity of the international social revolution. The hero is a Russian nihilist, in whom it is not difficult to recognize as Hartmann. A translation with any omissions may not be allowed. The original is harmless—French is becoming extinct in our country. Do not be surprised by this warning. After all, Nana [sic] was forbidden in the original and permitted in translation." Indeed, it would seem necessary to take all measures so that Germinal does not appear in a Russian translation.\footnote{84}

\footnote{83} Duncan, “Echoes of Zola’s Experimental Novel in Russia,” 14.

Zola was no longer simply a threat to bourgeois sensibilities, as was the case during the 1870s. By the mid-1880s, his novels were perceived by extreme conservatives as a grave threat to the political stability of the nation.

These fears turned out to be misplaced, however. The dreaded alliance between the Russian radicals and Zolaism never occurred.\(^{85}\) McNair points to the “striking paradox,” noted by Dmitry Koropchevsky (1842-1903)—journalist, translator, and editor of *Znanie* (Knowledge) from 1870 to 1877 and *Slovo* (Word) from 1878 to 1881—that although Russian journals eagerly published Zola’s writings, their critical reviews expressed “near disgust with Naturalism.”\(^{86}\) These ideological conflicts, which had been pronounced in the seventies, persisted into the eighties. They were “absorbed into the mainstream of Russian cultural life,” though without resolution.\(^{87}\)

Critics’ attitudes toward Zola were nonetheless slightly more varied than Koropchevsky suggests. Anti-Zolaists, such as the populist Mikhailovsky, although adopting a less extreme position than that of Gringmut, continued to denounce Zola’s lack of a moral or ideological point of view. Moderate critics, such as Boboyrkin and Koropchevsky, insisted that Mikhailovsky and other anti-Zolaists were willfully disregarding the moral dimension that naturalism did possess.\(^{88}\) There were also Zola enthusiasts, such as Boborykin, Dmitrii Petrovich Golitsyn-(Muravlin) (1860-1928), and Ieronim Iernimovich Iasinskii (1850-1931), whose literary pseudonym was Maksim

---

85 McNair, “‘Zolaizm’ in Russia,” 453.
87 McNair, “‘Zolaizm’ in Russia,” 456.
88 McNair, “‘Zolaizm’ in Russia,” 453.
Belinskii. These writers proclaimed the virtues of Zola’s naturalist method, according to which they wrote novels.

Still, few Russian novels were written in the French naturalist style. One worth mentioning, however, is the satirical novel The Golovliov Family (Gospoda Golovliovy, 1880) by Saltykov-Shchedrin. His novel charts the degeneration of a family and exemplifies “the extreme manifestation of the naturalistic trend in classical Russian literature.” It should be noted, however, that although Zola’s influence is undeniable on his novel, Saltykov-Shchedrin, in his own words, differentiated Russian realism’s interest in “the whole man” from its French counterpart’s interest in just “the torso,” that is, French naturalism concentrated on one specific aspect while disregarding its relationship to the whole.

**Tolstoy in France**

In addition to these various factions, supporting or condemning Zola, there was another group of anti-Zolaists, who, from the mid-1880s onwards, according to McNair, held up their “indigenous” Tolstoy as the diametrical opposite of Zola’s realism. They “contrasted the ‘physiological and pathological’ realism of the French school with the ‘true realism’ of Tolstoy’s Death of Ivan Il’ich or the ‘formulae’ and ‘daguerreotypes’ of Zola's novels with the ‘living poetry’ of War and Peace.” A similar debate took place in France, where it fueled polemics between supporters of realism and naturalism, and

---

90 McNair, “Zolaizm’ in Russia,” 453.
91 Renato Poggioli, “Realism in Russia,” Comparative Literature 3.3 (1951): 260.
92 As quoted in Poggioli, “Realism in Russia,” 260.
93 McNair, “Zolaizm’ in Russia,” 455.
sparked a new controversy on literary cosmopolitanism. The discussions lasted until almost the end of the century, and at their apex involved an unprecedented dialogue between Zola and Tolstoy. Although short-lived, this public exchange between the two novelists had been preceded by a decade-long debate on the evolution of realism. The question debated was: whose path should realism follow—Tolstoy’s or Zola’s?

While Zola enjoyed success in Russia as early as 1875, Tolstoy, along with Dostoevsky, remained relatively unknown in France until a decade later in 1886, by which time Dostoevsky had already died (in 1881) and Tolstoy had already disowned *Anna Karenina* and his preceding works. The reason for Tolstoy’s and Dostoevsky’s newfound fame precisely in June 1886 is explained by F. W. J. Hemmings in his scholarly work, *The Russian Novel in France*. Hemmings persuasively argues that the popularity of the Russian novels in France largely had to with the publication of the treatise by Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé (1848-1910), *Le Roman russe* (The Russian Novel), which, before appearing in book form in 1886, had first appeared in installments in the journal *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, starting in 1883.

*Le Roman russe* provided a brief history of the Russian novel and surveyed five major nineteenth-century Russian novelists: Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy. Vogüé’s overwhelmingly positive appraisal of Russian realism precipitated an enthusiasm for its novels, effectively creating a profitable market for them. “Although a decent translation of *War and Peace* came out in France in 1879, it was not until after the publication of *Le Roman russe* that it became a best-seller.”94 The import of this work and Vogüé’s role in the popularization in France of major contemporary Russian writers,

especially Tolstoy, did not escape the author’s attention either. In an unpublished diary, he described the evening of the first performance of Tolstoy’s *The Power of Darkness* in a Paris theater on 10 February 1888:

> Zola, Becque, the naturalists were there…Some people told me, and I feel it as well, that I am the one who created this trend, which brought here this elite public, which is applauding in Paris this unpublished work of a Russian genius, whose name was unknown five years ago.\(^95\)

Vogüé was to the Russian novel in France what Turgenev was to the French novel in Russia, though Turgenev did promote the novels of his native peers in France. In fact, because of his efforts, Tolstoy’s *Sevastopol* was published in French translation in 1876 and *War and Peace* followed two years later.

*Anna Karenina* was first published in France in 1885.\(^96\) By the end of 1886, nearly all of Tolstoy’s writings had been translated and subsequent works were instantly translated.\(^97\) Translations and re-translations of Dostoevsky’s novels appeared there as well. The rise of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky in France resulted in a decline in the popularity of Turgenev’s works. In France, eventually his fame was “eclipsed” by that of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.\(^98\) The “naturalization of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky” also instigated a mania for translating and re-translating works by minor Russian writers, which Vogüé feared would cause a devaluation of the Russian novels that he deemed more significant.\(^99\)

---


\(^{96}\) Hemmings, *The Russian Novel in France*, 49.

\(^{97}\) Ibid., 51.

\(^{98}\) Hemmings, *The Russian Novel in France*, 55.

\(^{99}\) Ibid., 52.
By popularizing the Russian novel, Vogüé played an enormous role in hastening the demise of French naturalism. According to Hemmings, whereas previous treatments of the Russian novel “had been simply informative,” *Le Roman russe* was “polemical,” sparking “a debate which lasted for at least twenty-five years” over Russian realism and French naturalism. Vogüé valued the Russian novel for its penetrating depiction of the lower classes and their circumstances; the simultaneous involvement of characters in dramatic events and abstract thought; the secular spiritualism in the novels; and their psychological analyses. In promoting the Russian novel, Vogüé articulated the weaknesses of the French realist novel, namely the lack of spiritual and psychological elements. He attributed their absence to the pessimism generated by the naturalist writers. Their cold scientific approach to depicting reality had harmfully neglected the moral function of literature. Vogüé makes it clear, however, that his intention was not to “disparage [his] own country” gratuitously. Indeed, had he actually “believed that this momentary decline was irremediable,” then he would have “kept [his] mouth shut.”

Vogüé believed that the French novel could be revitalized by the spirituality found in Russian realist novels, especially those by Tolstoy. The French critic exalted Tolstoy’s unique ability to capture minute physical and mental details, especially the psychological fluctuations experienced by a character. The comment in *Le Roman russe* that *War and Peace* could be found “in the hands of every young Russian girl” was implicitly a criticism of Zola’s *Nana*, whose “pornographic” scenes were hardly

---

100 Ibid., 48.
102 Ibid., xlix.
103 Vogüé, *Le Roman russe*, 305.
104 Ibid., 323.
suitable for young readers. Though Vogüé credited Zola for his unflinchingly realistic
depictions of life in France, he felt that the novelist’s oppressive pessimism needed to be
tempered with the kind of relief provided by the divine mysticism found in the Russian
novels. Russian mysticism, according to Vogüé, was based on a faith in Christianity to
lead the way to “righteousness and truth.”

Vogüé reiterated his views on the Russian novel in the prominent *La Revue des
Deux Mondes*, a liberal journal focused on promoting ideas from France as well as from
other western countries and Russia. This journal sustained literary debates between
supporters of realism and naturalism for over two decades while repeatedly invoking the
names of Tolstoy and Zola. In an 1892 issue of *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, Vogüé
reviewed the penultimate volume of the *Rougon-Macquart* series, *La Débâcle*. The novel
recounts the decisive Battle of Sedan that ended the Franco-Prussian war in favor of
Prussia. Vogüé’s review of the novel is mostly favorable, but he expresses dismay at the
absence of something that he is unable to identify at first. As someone who had served in
the Franco-Prussian war, he claims to “have suffered by this reading in my saddest
memories.” Afterwards, he “instinctively picked up a volume of *War and Peace*.105
Reading Tolstoy’s novel, Vogüé finally realizes what *La Débâcle* lacks. It fails to provide
any kind of solace from the gruesome war scenes. Although both novels deal with war
and its horrors, only Tolstoy’s offers an effective palliative. Vogüé exploits this
“deficiency” in Zola’s new novel to revisit Tolstoy’s now relatively old novel in an
attempt to preserve its relevance to the debates.

---

Comparisons between Tolstoy and the French naturalists, Hemmings states, were “all designed to show how superior a writer Tolstoy is.” These comparisons did not go unnoticed by those against whom they were directed, and Vogüé was held in contempt for being responsible for them. In a journal entry dated 7 September 1888, one of the Goncourt brothers, major predecessors of the naturalist movement, expressed his resentment:

The present success of the Russian novel is due to the annoyance which devout, respectable folk felt at the success of the naturalistic French novel: they searched for something which they could use to counter that success. For there can be no doubt about it, it is the same kind of literature: the realities of life seen in their sad, human, unpoetic aspects.

And neither Tolstoy nor Dostoevsky nor any of the other Russian writers invented this kind of literature! They took it from Flaubert, from me, from Zola, and added a strong dose of Poe. Oh, if one of Dostoevsky’s novels, whose black melancholy is regarded with such indulgent admiration, were signed with the name of Goncourt, what a slating it would get all along the line! And the man who discovered this clever distraction, who so unpatriotically diverted to a foreign literature the sympathy and—yes!—the admiration which should have come to us, is M. de Vogüé. So he has deserved well the Academy, which will summon him before long to join its company. 107

One of the tactics used in what Hemmings calls the “counter-attack” against the “invasion of the Russian novels” was to summarily dismiss them as derivative of the French novel. In an interview with an American magazine in the summer of 1890, Zola expressed his annoyance with the constant and unfavorable comparisons of French Naturalism to Russian realism and with Vogüé’s promotion of the latter. Zola felt that Russian Realism was “merely an imitator of a now outdated direction in French literature.” 108 Vogüé interpreted Zola’s accusation as him using Tolstoy as a “hammer” to

---

106 Hemmings, The Russian Novel in France, 45.
bludgeon naturalism to death. Just as Gringmut had likened Zolaism to a weapon, that same imagery is invoked here to situate these conflicts in an ideological war. The fact that Zola made his claim in an American newspaper suggests that the debates had attracted international attention.

Vogüé’s role as the self-appointed guardian and protector of the Russian novel in France can be regarded as rather effective in light of its hand in the demise of French naturalism. In fact, “[t]he significance of Vogüé’s masterpiece,” according to Hemmings, “cannot be grasped unless it is seen as an attempt at utter demolishment of the naturalist aesthetic theory: it can be viewed, for instance, as a counter-blast to Zola’s *Roman expérimental.*” ¹⁰⁹ Once French intellectuals and artists became aware of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, their prominence in France was jokingly likened to an invasion undertaken in revenge for the burning of Moscow in 1812. ¹¹⁰ The Russian realist writers Tolstoy and Dostoevsky—and not Flaubert or Zola—were seen by some to be the true heirs of the French novel. ¹¹¹ Some French intellectuals at that time welcomed the invasion by the Russian novel as a much needed antidote to Zola’s naturalism. According to Hemmings, Gaston Deschamps (1861-1931), editor of the Parisian journal *Le Temps,* compared it to a breath of pure air that penetrated miraculously into the oppressive atmosphere of a gaol. “In 1886 we were shut up, without escape, without light, not too wretched, very stupefied, in the strongholds of naturalism.

¹⁰⁹ Hemmings, *The Russian Novel in France,* 30.
¹¹⁰ Ibid., 1.
¹¹¹ “They show us that the true heirs of the French novel, so gloriously begun early in the last century, were not Flaubert and especially not Zola, but the Russian and Scandinavian writers of the second half of the century.” Georg Lukács, *Studies in European Realism, A Sociological Survey of the Writings of Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, Tolstoy, Gorki and Others,* trans. Edith Bone (London: Merlin, 1978), 5. Robert Belknap makes a similar point in his essay “Novelistic Technique,” *Cambridge Companion to the Russian Novel,* ed. Malcolm V. Jones and Robin Feuer Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 233-250. Belknap argues that what is characteristic of the Russian novelist technique is, the writers’ “manipulating” the readers into experiencing for themselves what the characters in the novel are feeling and arguing” (234). This, according to Belknap, was inherited from the French eighteenth-century sentimentalist novelists, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Laurence Sterne.
Enormous blocks, L’Assommoir, Nana, had been rolled against the door by M. Émile Zola. Other workmen had stopped up the windows with dirty linen, old papers, mortar and clay.” The breath of pure air, blowing off the steppes of Russia, “gave us the strength to roll away the stone from the sepulchre.”

In a recent article on the role that La Revue des Deux Mondes played in the end of naturalism, Catherine Barry restates Hemmings’s argument that Le Roman russe “dealt a mortal blow to positivistic literature.”

Not all of Vogüé’s French contemporaries embraced Russian realism as wholly as he had. A devout Catholic, Armand de Pontmartin at first expressed appreciation for Dostoevsky and his “spirit of charity,” though he resisted “underwriting” Vogüé’s prescription of the Russian novel as a cure for the sickness induced by French naturalism. Imitation, he feared, would result only in unnecessary “exaggerations.” In 1887 or 1888, Pontmartin found nothing redeeming in Dostoevsky’s The Gambler (Igrok, 1867) and wrote a scathing review of it, hoping to provoke a counter-attack to the Russian novel.

The attacks and counter-attacks initiated by Vogüé’s book expanded into a more general debate on the value of literary cosmopolitanism, that is, an openness to the influence of foreign literatures. Certain critics encouraged tolerance and a favorable attitude toward opening the gates of French nationalism to not only Russian but also other national literatures as well. Contributors to La Revue des Deux Mondes, Ferdinand Brunetièrè (1849-1906) and Jean-Baptiste Montégut (1825-95) believed that the key to the future of the French realist novel was English naturalism. Additionally, in his

---

113 Barry, “‘La Revue des Deux Mondes’ in Transition,” 545.
115 Ibid., 62.
review of Georges Pellissier’s major and massive survey of the evolution of contemporary French literature and criticism, *Le Mouvement littéraire au XIXᵉ siècle*, Brunetière acknowledged the influence of the Russian novel in France and Vogüé’s indispensable role in the relatively recent introduction into France of the Russian novel, whose “pleasant effects” can already be seen.¹¹⁷ Brunetière, however, did “not want to separate George Eliot’s name from that of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky” in the hope that “her ideas and her work would become for us in France as familiar as theirs.”¹¹⁸

Brunetière appreciated the positive influence of the Russian novelists, but took issue with Vogüé’s narrow view of the Russian writers to the exclusion of other writers such as George Eliot, who had thus far been neglected by the French. He added that she needed “an introducer such as Tolstoy and Dostoevsky—more fortunate than she—have found in the person of M. de Vogüé.”¹¹⁹ Brunetière did have one caveat about the influence of Russian novelists: French writers need to strain out the mysticism found to a greater degree in both English and Russian novels:

A curious thing, in effect, and difficult to explain is mysticism, which appears before us practically everywhere like the end of Naturalism!...It is no less bizarre, and it is almost just as frequent that famous mystics finish by falling into materialism. But the relation is not necessary; and precisely if this tendency to mysticism, as I believe it to be, is much more common in Russia and England even than in France, it is up to us, in this case, to balance it in literature with the qualities of clarity, of elegance, or of sharpness, which we take to be our own.¹²⁰


¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Brunetière, “*Le Mouvement littéraire au XIXᵉ siècle* de M. Georges Pellissier,” 912.
Brunetière repeated this warning again in 1891 in his article entitled “Le Roman de l’avenir” (The Novel of the Future), insisting that the French novel ought to be idealistic but should not be “contaminated by a certain mysticism.”

In 1894, literary critics best represented by the well-known literary critic Jules Lemaître (1853-1914) countered the efforts of Vogüé and Brunetière to encourage the influence of foreign literatures (Russian, English, and Scandinavian) on the French novel. Lemaître charged Vogüé with overvaluing the Russian novel. And with a deep sense of literary patriotism, Lemaître wrote the article “De l’influence récente des littératures du Nord,” which was published in the 16 December 1894 issue of La Revue des Deux Mondes. He argued that it was misleading to suggest that French novels lacked what critics so greatly admired in foreign literature.

Subscribing to the argument advanced by the Goncourt brothers and Zola, Lemaître goes even further to suggest that not only Russian but also all the other “Northern” writers could attribute their success to having lifted certain qualities from French literature. He does, however, credit the Russian writers with proving that realism is not necessarily synonymous with being irreligious. Nevertheless, Lemaître sides with “literary chauvinism,” his own phrase, to defend French literature against foreign contamination.

121 Barry, “‘La Revue des Deux Mondes’ in Transition,” 547.
122 Ibid., 548.
123 Ibid., 548. For Lemaître’s article see La Revue des Deux Mondes 126 (1894): 847-72.
124 As quoted in Hemmings, The Russian Novel in France, 79.
125 Hemmings, The Russian Novel in France, 80.
After Brunetière was elected the editor of *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, a journal devoted to promoting cultural exchanges, his advocacy of literary cosmopolitanism “contributed to offsetting the fierce literary nationalism of Lemaître and his sympathizers.”

Vogüé replied to Lemaître’s article in the following issue of *La Revue des Deux Mondes*. He disagreed with Lemaître’s “patriotic” defense of “the superiority of the Gallic mind over the geniuses conjured from the North.” Vogüé believed that “taking refuge in the past” would result in “escaping the contagion of the living only to be subjected to that of the dead.” Furthermore, it is impossible to protect oneself from the influence of foreign literatures since it is an “unconscious” process. A few months later in his article “Le Cosmopolitisme et la littérature nationale,” Brunetière seconded Vogüé’s contention that the French novel could only benefit from literary cosmopolitanism and that any opposition to it would be in vain.

The arguments for and against literary cosmopolitanism, made by French and Russian critics, emerged in part from the important dialectic between Tolstoy and Zola. Although it never resolved itself into a synthesis between Russian realism and French naturalism, the dialectic was a prominent component of the late nineteenth-century literary landscape. To be sure, it had an impact on how Tolstoy and Zola regarded each other. On May 18, 1893, around the time the last novel in the *Rougon-Macquart* series appeared in Russia and France, Zola delivered a well-publicized speech at the eighth

---

126 Barry, “‘La Revue des Deux Mondes’ in Transition,” 548.
128 Ibid., 188.
129 Ibid.
annual banquet of the Association Générale des Étudiants. Addressing a group of students, Zola contrasted the current generation’s pessimistic attitude toward science with the optimistic stance of his generation, and reminded his audience that science never promised happiness, only the truth. In lieu of science, a “chimera” has arisen, satisfying the new generation’s desire for illusion and spreading the false notion that “only there [in the unknown] flourish the mystical flowers whose scent will lay our sufferings to rest.”

Although Zola did not mention any names, this line undoubtedly was intended as a jab at Vogüé, who had spoken at the same event three years prior.

In his address to the students, Zola conceded the death of naturalism, understanding that naturalism had given way to fin-de-siècle Decadence. He also expressed regret over “having been a sectarian in the past, wanting art to adhere to proven truths” and praised the “newcomers” for “recovering the unknown, the mysterious.” Yet, he insisted that there was still an “undefined margin” between the known and that which is knowable but remains unknown, that “region of doubt and of investigation” that “belong[s] as much to literature as it does to science.” This was the space, he claimed, that the present generation ought to be venturing into and “interpreting with our intelligence.” Without elaborating any further, Zola concluded his speech by trying to impress upon his listeners the importance of daily “work” [travail] Drawing from his own experience of earning a living as a writer, he claimed that work would keep a person grounded in the everyday, in the real, and not in illusions. “They tell people to look on high, to believe in a superior power, to be exalted in the ideal. No, no! This is a language

---

132 Zola, Discours aux étudiants, 97-8.
that sometimes seems to me impious." Although Zola’s notion of “work” was rather vague, the underlying intention of his speech was apparent: to counter the dangers of mysticism found in Tolstoy’s novels and promoted by Vogüé in *Le Roman russe*.

The editor of the Russian periodical *Mysl’* (Thought) Leonid Egorevich Obolensky (1845-1906) felt that it was patently obvious that the speech was directed against Tolstoy, who, upon reading a transcript of the speech, personally translated it into Russian and refuted it. Obolensky considered this exchange between “the greatest representatives of belles-lettres art” an “extremely interesting argument.” Soon after Zola’s speech appeared in print, Tolstoy published his own translation of it in one of his many contentious pamphlets entitled *Nedelanie* (Inaction), and appended his criticism of it (29:173-201). In the same month in which Tolstoy published it, May 1893, the writer Lidiia Veselitskaia (1857-1936), who wrote under the pseudonym Mikulich, visited Tolstoy at his estate at Yasnaya Polyana. She recalls in her memoir Tolstoy’s reactions to Zola’s speech:

> He generally didn’t agree with Zola and said that it was a big mistake to take so-called energetic everyday work for strength, when such busy work is in large part a sign of weakness, of humility, sometimes this is simply an infection...He cited a few examples of this kind of busy work, which sedates a person instead of awakening in him what is most important and crucial.  

In his *Nedelanie*, Tolstoy rejected Zola’s notion of “work” on the basis of its ambiguity.

Any occupation qualifies as work: for instance, bankers, who gamble on stocks; industrialists, who have factories where thousands of laborers sacrifice their lives to manufacture mirrors, tobacco, and vodka; and colonels, who train soldiers to murder

---

133 Zola, *Discours aux étudiants*, 100-1.


135 Mikulich, *Vstrechi s pisateliami*, 34.
Tolstoy rhetorically asks, “But really would you encourage their work?” (29:186). Secondly, Tolstoy took issue with Zola’s advocacy of “work” for the sake of science despite the fact that Zola made no such claim in his speech. Tolstoy took some liberty in interpreting the speech to create an opportunity to condemn science and along with it religion as a “lie” [lozh’]. In their stead, Tolstoy turns to Eastern philosophy and prescribes inaction, which, according to Taoism, is the only way to The Path of Virtue, otherwise known as the Tao. Tolstoy explains that he is not advocating that people do nothing. His point is that “all of people’s misfortunes, according to the teachings of Lao-Tzu, occur not so much because they did not do what was necessary as much as doing what should not have been done” (29:185).

Tolstoy’s contemporary, Mikhail Alekseevich Protopopov (1848-1915), a disciple of the radical literary critics of the sixties (Pisarev, Chernyshevsky and Dobroliuobov), contended in a journal article published in Russkaia mysl’ (Russian Thought) that Tolstoy’s advocacy of contemplation of philosophy, morality, and religion was no different from Zola’s argument. They both require work: “But really does thinking about these things not require mental labor?”136 That Protopopov finds a similarity, even a slight one, between these two writers thought to be unquestionably antithetical is striking. It was an unusual criticism considering that Zola and Tolstoy were typically mentioned as polar opposites.

A moment does arrive, however, when Tolstoy and Zola were regarded as similar. Ironically, by the time Tolstoy attained transcendent fame in France in 1886, his infamous “conversion” had already begun. Beginning in the early 1880s, Tolstoy disowned the very novels that made him famous in France, War and Peace and Anna

136 M. Protopopov, “Pis’ma o literature. Pis’mo sed’moe,” Russkaia mysl’ XII (1893): 215.
Karenina, preferring to write about society’s moral degeneration, which he linked to Darwin’s theory of evolution. In the next chapter, I will discuss the importance of Darwinism in France, Russia, and to Tolstoy and Zola. Despite all of their supposed differences, there were uncanny similarities between the two writers.
(D)evolution: Tolstoy “Aping” Zola

It is curious how nationality influences opinion.
Charles Darwin in a letter dated 28 May 1869/70 to the
French naturalist Jean Louis Armand de Quatrefages.¹

Кстати: вспомните о нынешних теориях Дарвина и других о происхождении человека от обезьяны. Не вдаваясь ни в какие теории, Христос прямо объявляет о том, что в человеке кроме мира животного есть и духовный. Ну и что же — пусть откуда угодно произошел человек (в Библии вовсе не объяснено, как Бог лепил его из глины, взял от земли), но зато Бог вдунул в него дыхание жизни (но скверно, что грехами человек может обратиться опять в скота).

[By the way: recall the current theories of Darwin and others about the descent of man from an ape. Without going into any theories, Christ declares straightforwardly that within man, aside from the animal world, there is a spiritual world. Well then—what does it matter where man came from (in the Bible it is not at all explained how God molded him from clay or took him from the earth), but God did breathe the breath of life into him (but the wretched part is that by sinning man can once again turn into a beast).]

Dostoevsky in a letter to V.A. Alekseev, dated 7 June 1876²

In the 1892 bestseller Degeneration (Entartung), Max Nordau (1849-1923) claimed that the recent “extraordinary prominence” that “degenerates in literature, music, and painting have in recent years come into” warrants a careful examination because “[b]ooks and works of art exercise a powerful suggestion on the masses. It is from these

productions that an age derives its ideals of morality and beauty.”\(^3\) The writers, playwrights, and composers who were considered to be especially “degenerate” were Henrik Ibsen, Friedrich Nietzsche, Richard Wagner, Zola, and Tolstoy. (Each one got his own separate chapter in the book.) The peculiarity of the list notwithstanding, Zola’s inclusion is somewhat understandable in light of the strong critical reactions his writings provoked. Tolstoy’s inclusion, on the other hand, is rather jarring since the epithet “degenerate” is nowadays rarely, if ever, applied to him.

Nordau’s judgment is based on Tolstoy’s “post-conversion” writings from the early 1880s and onwards. Becoming increasingly more explicit and vocal in his criticism of contemporary society, Tolstoy began publicizing his views in pamphlets on a variety of topics such as non-violence, slavery, the nature of art, and even Shakespeare, whom he deemed overrated. Derived from his interpretation of the Gospels, Tolstoy’s pamphlets espoused abstinence, vegetarianism, and pacifism, collectively known as Tolstoyism. Outmatching Zola’s polemical writings and prefaces in terms of quantity and didacticism, Tolstoy’s post-conversion writings drew comparisons with, of all people, the loathed French novelist.

As ridiculous Nordau’s judgments are, they raise a question about whether a more valid and more meaningful commonality existed between Tolstoy and Zola. Although points of affinity between them are not immediately apparent, a close reading of *La Bête humaine* and *Anna Karenina* reveals their authors’ shared belief in the fallacy of progress and their skepticism regarding technology as a civilizing agent for man. Both novels make the same case: technological advances had led to a greater pursuit of material and

---

carnal desires that only accentuated man’s animal nature. This cynical interpretation of human nature was aimed at countering the controversial narrative articulated by Charles Darwin (1809-1882) in his 1859 treatise *On the Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection*. Although Tolstoy and Zola resided in different countries and wrote in different languages, they were exposed to the same intellectual developments that emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century. This chapter will first provide a brief history of the introduction of Darwinism into Russia and France and the receptions it received in each country. I will then argue that the two novels provide counter narratives to Darwin’s biological explanation of the evolution of man and will focus on the treatment of human beings as animals in both novels.

That evolution occurs was not a new revelation when Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* was published. Previously, evolution was believed to be caused by alterations in the surrounding environment. Darwin’s original contribution to evolutionary theory was identifying the process that makes it possible: natural selection. Darwin theorized that animal species evolve through random variations that prove advantageous to survival and, therefore, to reproduction. The process that preserves these “profitable” characteristics so that they may be passed on to progeny is natural selection. Through natural selection, aberrations expressed in a few individuals of a species eventually evolve into an established trait of an entire species over several thousands of generations.

The first French translation of *Origin of the Species* was published in 1862, and the Russian, in 1864. The reception of the book in these two countries vastly differed. The general consensus regarding the reception of Darwinism in Russia is that it arrived...
on “prepared soil.”\(^4\) The scientific community and the Russian radicals, for the most part, embraced Darwinism, which, like the writings of Zola, could not have arrived at a more favorable moment. This positive response was largely attributable to two factors: one, the secularizing influence of the Great Reforms on post-Crimean War Russia, and two, the “incontrovertible fact” of the nation’s “strong tradition in pre-Darwinian evolutionism,” dating back to the previous century.\(^5\) A notable Russian scientist, who directly contributed to evolutionary theory before Darwin, was Karl Ernst von Baer (1792-1876). A member of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, he was also a pioneering founder of embryology and comparative embryology. In 1828 he proved that animals develop from eggs and later established several “laws.” The most important one was that the embryos of different mammals in the early stages resemble each other in form and develop similarly. In other words, general traits develop before particular ones. Ironically, although Darwin used von Baer’s research to establish his own evolutionary arguments in *Origin of the Species*, the Russian embryologist became known for his opposition to Darwinism. Doubtful of the conclusions drawn from the proof provided in *Origin of the Species*, von Baer referred to the content as “Darwin’s hypothesis.”\(^6\) In response to Darwin’s later work, *Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), von Baer wrote an article refuting all of its major points including natural

---


\(^5\) Alexander Vucinich, “Russia: Biological Sciences,” 230. For a brief summary of the major contributors to pre-Darwinian evolutionary thought in Russia, see Vucinich. *Darwin in Russian Thought*, 12-16.

\(^6\) Rogers, “Charles Darwin and Russian Scientists,” 378.
selection, which he doubted was the mechanism that led to the transformation of a species.\(^7\)

Other developments had prepared the ground for the favorable reception of the *Origin of the Species*. Sir Charles Lyell (1797-1875), lawyer, geologist, and friend to Darwin, delivered a report in September, 1859. His anticipatory comments on the forthcoming *Origin of the Species* were translated into Russian at the beginning of 1860.

In that same year, Professor S. S. Kortuga, a biology professor at St. Petersburg University, presented overviews of Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection in his first-year class, explaining that though the theory was not comprehensive, it was “the most logical, the most satisfying and…one of the most simple.”\(^8\) Darwin’s ideas also received some press in the journals *Vestnik estestvennykh nauk (Messenger of the Natural Sciences)* and *Biblioteka dlia chteniiia (Library for Reading)*.\(^9\) In 1864, *Origin of the Species* was translated into Russian by a professor of plant physiology at St. Petersburg University and professor of botany at Moscow University, Rachinsky.

Darwin’s reception by the Russian public, in contrast, is usually described as being “enthusiastic” and helped spawn other Darwinists.\(^10\) At first, the positive reception Darwinism received overshadowed scattered criticisms, which were weak and had no impact.\(^11\) The Russian scientists Nikolai Nikolaevich Strakhov (1828-1896) and Kliment Arkadievich Timiriazev (1843-1920) played large roles in popularizing *Origin of the*

---

\(^7\) For details on von Baer’s objections to Darwinism, see Vucinich, “Russia: Biological Sciences,” 251-255.

\(^8\) As quoted in Rogers, “Charles Darwin and Russian Scientists,” 378.


\(^10\) Ibid., 229.

Species through their positive articles. It helped that a coordinated anti-Darwinian crusade, which one might have expected from the Orthodox Church, never quite materialized because none of its priests had the necessary science background to respond to Darwin’s heretical arguments. The Church resorted to “publishing translations of anti-Darwinian articles from Western religious journals” and produced its own responses only near the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{12}

Whereas France hardly produced any Darwinists between 1859 and 1882, there were a number of notable Darwinists in Russia beginning in the mid-1860s.\textsuperscript{13} Certain young Russian scientists took an active enough interest in Darwin’s work to engage in research on its applicability to their own fields. Darwinism, in the hands of the self-proclaimed “ardent follower” of Darwinism Ilya lých Mechnikov (1845-1916) and Alexander Onufrievich Kovalevsky (1840-1901), helped established the foundation for comparative embryology. Kovalevsky’s brother, Vladimir (1842-1883), initiated a correspondence with Darwin and became a pioneer in evolutionary paleontology. All three became well-known Russian Darwinists, though it should be noted that they all faced difficulties in securing academic positions, not necessarily, however, because of their pro-Darwinist views.\textsuperscript{14}

The scientist Kliment Arkadeevich Timiziarev, a pioneer in photosynthesis studies and an open advocate of liberal and radical politics, not only helped Darwinism to flourish in Russia but also played an integral role in bridging Darwinism with Russian

\textsuperscript{12} Vucinich, “Russia: Biological Sciences,” 229, and Graham, Science in Russia and the Soviet Union, 59.


\textsuperscript{14} Vucinich, “Russia: Biological Sciences,” 248-9.
radical politics.\textsuperscript{15} The theory of evolution deeply resonated with the Nihilism of the 1860s, whose political ideals had synthesized the desire for political and social change with science and the secularization of knowledge.\textsuperscript{16}

In Western Europe Darwin’s theory encountered firmly established religious traditions among many of the educated elite, but in Russia its appearance coincided with the rise of a secular intelligentsia that venerated the natural sciences. The young radical thinkers of the 1860s looked to the natural sciences for the ultimate solution of all problems. They enthusiastically received Darwin’s theory of evolution as the corollary in biology of Newton’s laws in physics.\textsuperscript{17}

Darwin’s \textit{Origin of the Species} introduced a seismic paradigm shift not only within evolutionary theory but also beyond it. Darwinism, regardless of its perceived validity, provoked a transition from an interest in \textit{what} constituted man’s visible reality to a preoccupation with \textit{how} unseen mechanisms influence and shape reality. This altered perception of reality, seen as being no longer static but instead dynamic, was applied to political and social thought. Questions arose concerning the effect individuals could have on social progress. Natural selection triggered questions about an individual’s ability to artificially select ideas to implement social progress.

It is, therefore, no wonder that the same people who drove the radical political movement in Russia were also publishing articles on Darwinism. One of the most influential reviews of \textit{Origin of the Species} was not written by a scientist but rather by the radical literary critic Pisarev. He wrote his piece, which embraced Darwin’s theory, in 1864 for the periodical \textit{Russkoe slovo} (The Russian Word) while imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress in St. Petersburg for his anti-Tsarist articles. Written for the general

\textsuperscript{15} Graham, \textit{Science in Russia and the Soviet Union}, 67 and Vucinich, “Russia: Biological Sciences,” 237.

\textsuperscript{16} Vucinich, “Russia: Biological Sciences,” 228-9.

reading public, his rather lengthy review provided a detailed summary of the arguments and supporting evidence presented in *Origin of the Species* and cast Darwin as “a model for a new type of critical thinker, one who studies facts as they really are, unburdened by metaphysical or religious prejudices.” Pisarev also provided a “social interpretation” of Darwinism, using the theory to justify “rational egoism,” which dictated that people behave according to their self-interests. Pisarev, however, did not interpret Darwinism completely accurately. He did not acknowledge natural selection as the primary mechanism responsible for evolution, preferring instead as an explanation the effects of use and disuse on inheritance.

Pisarev was not the only intelligent to reject natural selection. Loren Graham claims in his account of the reception of Darwinism in Russia that the prevalent attitude among most Russian intellectuals was acceptance, despite being “uncomfortable” with the proposition that natural selection constituted the dominant mechanism of evolution. But nearly all of them “rejected” the concept of “struggle for existence,” which was the title of the third chapter of *Origin of the Species*. The social implication of the “struggle for existence” came to the fore with Varfolomei Aleksandrovich Zaitsev (1842-1882). In 1864, Zaitsev, a radical critic for *Russkoe slovo*, reviewed a book on the unity of the human races, written by the French anthropologist Armand de Quatrefages de Bréau (1810-1892). Zaitsev used Darwin’s phrase the “struggle for existence” to justify his theory that different human races evolved from different animal species and therefore were not all equal, with American Indians and Polynesians on the lowest rung. He argued

---

20 Ibid., 57 and 67.
the futility of the abolitionist movement taking place in America at that time, saying that enslavement was the best blacks could hope for when living in a society with whites.

His overtly racist views would subsequently be labeled Social Darwinism. In essence, “struggle for existence” became replaced by the notion of the “survival of the fittest,” a phrase, incidentally, mistakenly attributed to Darwin. That phrase originated from Herbert Spencer in *Principles of Biology* (1864), who introduced it after having read *Origin of the Species*. Later, Darwin used it, as another way of saying that a species has a greater chance for survival if it possesses traits that make it more “fit” for a particular environment. His notion of “fittest” was not intended to mean the strongest physically. In *Origin of the Species*, Darwin wrote, “I should premise that I use the term Struggle for Existence in a large and metaphorical sense, including dependence of one being on another, and including (which is more important) not only the life of the individual, but success in leaving progeny.”

Anticipating the objections to the phrase “struggle for existence,” Darwin explicitly states that successful reproduction could be the result of cooperation as well. Regardless of Darwin’s intentions, both phrases sparked debates on evolution and social progress, from which emerged the concept of “Social Darwinism.” The concept was used to justify policies, such as laissez-faire and colonialism, with the crude notion that “might is right.”

Nevertheless, Timiriazev, arguably Darwin’s most avid supporter, and several Russian intelligénty did take issue with the phrase “struggle for existence,” the intended meaning of which they missed. When discussing Darwinism, Timiriazev tended to

---


substitute “harmony” for “struggle.” Among the Russian radicals, the most notable critic of the phrase was Chernyshevskii, “an implacable foe of Darwinism.” He understood Darwin’s pithy formulation as a potential justification for any kind of violence performed for the sake of survival. And, if that were the case, then such a theory would result not in progress but rather in degeneration. Despite Darwin’s explanation of the phrase, educated Russians projected onto it a meaning that was unintended by its author.

The harsh criticisms Darwinism provoked in Russia arrived too late to have any significant impact. For unknown reasons, Chernyshevskii did not air his anti-Darwinian views until 1888, on the heels of Nikolai lakovlevich Danilevskii’s (1822-1925) attacks, which were published between 1885 and 1887. Siding with the Slavophiles, Danilevskii believed that Darwinism represented everything that was wrong with the West. Although “substantial,” his attacks were dismissed by the Academy of Science as being nothing more than an unoriginal compendium of anti-Darwinian arguments. After Danilevskii’s death, Strakhov, who had been one of the first popularizers of Darwin in Russia, became Danilevskii’s defender. Drawing on Danilevskii’s anti-Western arguments, Strakhov tried to undermine Darwin’s theory. He lamented the faith placed in science at the cost of sacrificing morality. In 1878, he wrote to Tolstoy affirming his awareness of the limitations of science and his wariness of becoming one of its blind followers. This sparked a heated public polemic with Timiriazev, “Darwin’s Bulldog,” in the late 1880s. These delayed criticisms, however, never amounted to an attack comparable the

---

23 Graham, *Science in Russia and the Soviet Union*, 86.
one that was waged in Western Europe. In Russia, by the late 1880s, Darwinian thought had permeated scientific and political circles.

The sort of popularization that Darwin’s ideas underwent in Russia prior to the Russian translation of *Origin of the Species* never occurred in France. “Not a single book on Darwinism was published in France before the French translation.”26 The moment when Darwinism arrived in France is often described as being not “ripe.”27 Whereas Darwin’s ideas sparked in Russia a debate that was largely in favor of Darwinism, the opposite was true in France, where the theory was outright rejected, though there were a few exceptions. In the French periodical press, the English publication of *Origin of the Species* received only five reviews, and only one was condemnatory. Just as *La Revue des Deux Mondes* published significant articles on Tolstoy for the French reading public, it published the major articles on Darwin, most notably Auguste Laugel’s fair but critical review of *Origin of the Species* in the 1 April 1860 issue.28 In addition, the journal published between December 1868 and April 1869 five articles on Darwin in a series entitled “Histoire naturelle générale: Origines des espèces animales et végétales”29 by de Quatrefages, an anthropology professor at the Sorbonne and the Museum of Natural History and author of two important books on Darwin, *Darwin et ses précurseurs français: Etude sur le transformisme* (1870 and 1892) and *Les Emules de Darwin* (1894).30 Although Quatrefages believed in Darwinism, he consistently refrained from completely agreeing with it because, in his opinion, Darwin failed to prove a single

26 Stebbins, “France,” 122.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., 123.
29 See *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, vols. 78 (1868)-80 (1869).
30 Stebbins, “France,” 131. For details on the relationship between Quatrefages and Darwin in Glick’s *The Comparative Reception of Darwinism*, see 131-33 and 150-1.
change from one species to another.\textsuperscript{31} Excepting Laugel, Quatrefages, and a handful of other scientists, no French scientist discussed, or even acknowledged, Darwin’s contributions to science after the appearance of the French version of \textit{Origin of the Species}.

Much to Darwin’s irritation, it took two years to find a French translator and publisher for \textit{Origin of the Species}. It was finally translated by Clémence Royer, who did not have any background in biology but rather in economics and social science.\textsuperscript{32} The translation was published in 1862 with an introduction of almost fifty pages and numerous footnotes contradicting Darwin’s points, written by Royer. Between 1862 and 1883, the book went through eight editions, but none of these “French translations or prefaces to the major Darwinian works was by a noted French man of science.”\textsuperscript{33} This fact is indicative of the lack of any scientific value attached to Darwinism in France. French scientists and writers for the most part ignored Darwinism and even the word “evolution,” preferring instead the French word \textit{transformisme}, which was rarely, if ever, associated with Darwin’s name. In short, his reception was marked by “systematic hostility” and “a conspiracy of silence.”\textsuperscript{34}

The extremely negative reaction against Darwinism in France is surprising in light of the fact that evolutionary thought could trace it origins to that country thanks to the contributions of two French naturalists: Comte de Buffon (1707-1808) and Jean-Baptist


\textsuperscript{32} Stebbins, “France,” 125-6.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 129.

\textsuperscript{34} The full quotation is as follows: “Jean Rostand, in his history of evolutionary ideas, said that, ‘in France the Darwinian work ran into a systematic hostility.’ T. H. Huxley was perhaps more accurate when he said that Darwin’s ideas were met in the Academy of Sciences by a ‘conspiracy of silence’.” (Stebbins, “France,” 122.)
Lamarck (1744-1829). Although Leclerc is regarded as the first person to discuss evolution in a scientific context, he actually asserted that species were immutable. In 1800, Lamarck delivered the inaugural address at the Musée national d'histoire naturelle. Drawing on Leclerc, he presented his views on evolutionary transformation. His original contribution to the field was that a species could metamorphose into a new and distinct species. He argued that this is possible through alterations in the environment, which resulted in alterations in habits, and, in turn, caused changes in forms. He explains the process of transformation as driven by need [besoin]. Lamarck’s ideas were poorly received but ignited a debate over evolution thirty years before such a debate occurred in England. In the year following Lamarck’s death, famed paleontologist Georges Cuvier condemned Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire’s defense of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck’s transformation argument. This polemic of 1830 established the official stance on evolutionary thought within the scientific community and hampered its further development in France. Although Cuvier, an anti-Darwinist before Darwinism, defeated Geoffroy, some pro-transformists did emerge between 1830 and 1859, though they contributed nothing new to evolutionary theory.

_Tolstoy and Zola on Darwinism_

Tolstoy’s and Zola’s positions on Darwinism diverged to differing degrees from the prevailing views in their respective nations. Tolstoy shared to a certain extent the view of Darwinism that had been advanced by the Russian radicals; he accepted Darwinism as valid for the most part. By the late 1860s, Tolstoy was familiar with and actually approved of Darwin. Hugh McLean makes this point the chapter of _In Quest of Tolstoy_, in which he details the relationship between Tolstoy and Darwinism. While

---

working on a draft of *War and Peace*, Tolstoy mentions Darwin favorably, describing him as one of the “leading thinkers ‘working toward new truth’.”

Later in life, according to McLean, “Tolstoy basically accepted a great deal of what Darwin said: the origin of species by natural selection, the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest, and even the simian kinship of man. All this applied, however, only to man as an animal.”

Tolstoy’s particular issue with Darwinism was its uselessness in answering existential questions. That view is expressed in *Anna Karenina* by Levin, who had been encountering in journals the articles they were discussing, and had been reading them, interested by them as the development of the bases of natural science, familiar to him when he was a naturalist while at the university, but he had never for himself brought together these scientific conclusions about the descent of man from an animal, about reflexes, about biology and sociology, with those questions about the meaning of life and death which lately had been coming more and more often to his mind. (18:27).

Levin’s issue with Darwinism, like Tolstoy’s, was not its validity as a scientific theory but rather the scope of its applicability to questions beyond science. As was the case for Levin, Tolstoy considered the natural sciences and existential questions to be separate issues that should not be linked together.

Tolstoy was dismayed with Russian society’s turn to Darwinism for answers to questions related to the meaning of life and to how to live. The extent to which Tolstoy was bothered by this is apparent in the last letter to his children. In late 1910, after having forsaken his comfortable life, Tolstoy traversed Russia by train and eventually fell sick at the Astapovo railway station. On November 1, Tolstoy dictated, from his deathbed his

---

37 Ibid., 179.
final letter to his children, Sergei and Tanya, to be delivered after his death. Addressing his son specifically, he says:

Those views you have adopted on Darwinism, evolution, and the struggle for existence will not explain to you the meaning of your life and will not give you guidance in your actions. And a life without an explanation of its significance and meaning, and without the immutable guide that flows from it, is a pitiful existence. Think about it. Because I love you, I say this to you most likely on the eve of my death. (81:223).

That Tolstoy’s final words to his children were devoted to disabusing his son of Darwinism’s applicability to existential questions indicates how disturbed he was by the idea of understanding life strictly in scientific terms.\(^{38}\)

Tolstoy’s criticisms of Darwinism make sense in the context of Russia’s reaction to the theory. In contrast, the general silence on the part of the French scientific community concerning Darwinism makes Zola’s attraction to it as an artist rather curious. As it turns out, although Darwinism was largely ignored in France by scientists, intellectuals discussed it at great length and applied the theory to fields beyond science. In particular, Darwinism was invoked with respect to questions about the evolution of the French national literature and the influence of foreign novels on it. In 1889, Brunetière wrote a review of Georges Pellissier’s ambitious work *Le Mouvement littéraire au XIX\(^{e}\) siècle*. Brunetière describes it as being not so much an historical account of literary movements in French literature as an evolutionary reconstruction of how classicism gave way to realism, which, in turn, gave way to naturalism. Brunetière describes this interest in “évolution” as “à la mode” but does not mention Darwin’s name anywhere in the

---

\(^{38}\) It is interesting to note that in 1910 Sergei was not a child but a 47-year-old man. He had by then long abandoned his interests as a student in Darwinism, but had deliberately avoided arguments with his father “about matters of principle.” Sadly, Tolstoy died, ignorant of the change in his own son’s thinking. See S. L. Tolstoy, *Mat’ i ded L. N. Tolstogo* (Moscow: Federatsiia, 1928), 259.
article. 39 Despite the lack of further elaboration, his reference to Darwin’s theory is clear. According to the twentieth-century scholar Ross Shideler, “stories about Darwin and his theories became part of French intellectual life just as they did throughout Europe, and this Darwinian influence affected Zola.” 40 Shideler, however, also writes that “Darwin’s work barely figures in Zola’s.” 41 That is not accurate.

Although Zola rarely explicitly mentions Darwin or his works, they clearly had an impact on his ideas and figure significantly in his novels. In Le Roman expérimental, Darwin’s name, surprisingly, comes up only once, though the word “evolution” appears several times throughout. In fact, the phrase “l’évolution naturaliste” appears in the second sentence of the first chapter, before any mention of Claude Bernard, whose experimental method shapes Zola’s own method. Zola’s experimental method tasks the novelist with applying Bernard’s theory to an investigation into human nature. The novelist functions first as an investigator searching for the facts related to manifestations of a natural phenomenon, usually an inherited trait as expressed in people. Once the facts about a phenomenon become known, the writer becomes an observer, who must capture the facts with near photographic precision.

These observed facts then serve as the foundation for a reasoned hypothesis, the verification of which constitutes the experiment. It is at this point that the novelist-observer must become an experimentalist, who tests the laws of natures by modifying the circumstances in which a particular phenomenon occurs. Defending his theory against critics who dismiss his method as nothing more than an impossible exercise in

40 Ross Shideler, Questioning the Father: From Darwin to Zola, Ibsen, Strindberg, and Hardy (Stanford: Stanford University, 1999), 178.
41 Ibid., 29.
photographic imitation, Zola argues that the artistic component of writing an experimental novel is in the act of inventing a specific milieu to demonstrate how a particular phenomenon operates. To accomplish that task, the experimentalist places a group of individuals in a specific environment to show the mechanism of a phenomenon. Moreover, by varying the circumstances, the novelist can demonstrate how complicated it is.

Zola, nonetheless, repeatedly stresses that the novelist must not violate the laws of nature. His emphasis on the laws of nature italicizes the impossibility of the environment, or in today’s parlance nurture, to overcome nature. The traits individuals inherit, the good and especially the bad ones, will find a way to manifest themselves regardless of the surroundings. The question in Zola’s mind is not whether or not a trait can be suppressed or altered due to the environment but rather how it will express itself. And without fail, Zola demonstrates that the expression of certain inherited defective traits is always destructive in some way. In this regard, Zola’s formulation runs counter to Darwin’s theory of evolution. In the *Rougon-Macquart* novels, although certain traits inhibit survival, such as the self-destructive one that turns members of the dysfunctional clan into raging alcoholics and murderers, they will continue to be passed on from one generation to the next.

That part of the story draws on the relationship between the environment and heredity while clearly contradicting Darwin’s theory of evolution. Zola acknowledges in his work that Darwin deserves further elaboration but explains away its absence in the work: “One ought to address the theories of Darwin, but this is only a general study of the experimental method as applied to the novel, and I would get lost if I were to go into the
details. I will simply say a word about milieu.\(^\text{42}\) Of all the ideas argued by Darwin, to select only “milieu” seems odd because he could have instead mentioned Lamarck, who had linked the environment to behavioral changes.

Zola’s decision to mention Darwin may be attributable to the fact that the name evoked a host of associations that served as the basis for the *Rougon-Macquart* series. In the closing line of the preface to the first *Rougon-Macquart* novel (1872), the last word at the end of the sentence is rather striking: “the first episode, *The Fortune of the Rougon*, should be called by its scientific title: *The Origins.*\(^\text{43}\) Without any forewarning, Zola invokes Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* without mentioning either the name or the full title, and, even more curious, without any further elaboration. This reticence is unexpected from an artist who made it a point to quote from current scientific works to lend his novels greater credibility. For him not to quote from the scientific work of the nineteenth century is conspicuous. Perhaps, Zola’s efforts to obscure the influence of Darwinism on his works were a testament to the policy of silence that prevailed in France. To make open references to Darwinism might have instigated a messy controversy that even Zola would have preferred to avoid. Moreover, it might have detracted too much attention from his novels, rather than benefitting them.

Whatever the reason may be, Zola’s novels were clearly heavily influenced by Darwinism. Zola’s familiarity with Darwin’s published works is reflected in the underlying themes in his novels as well as in reference to man’s existential struggles with his animality. Although Darwin does not discuss the animal origin of man in *Origin of the Species*, saving that topic for *Descent of Man*, the implication of his theory—that

---

\(^{42}\) Zola, *Le Roman expérimental*, 1184.

men, too, were descended from animals—did not escape his readers. *Origin of the Species* was a significant scientific source for these “human beasts” populating the world of the *Rougon-Macquart* novels as well as his earlier work *Thérèse Raquin* (1867).

For the *Rougon-Macquart* novels, Zola added to the basic premise of *Thérèse Raquin*, that men were beasts, by incorporating the influence of environmental factors on human behavior. Influenced by the idea of inherited criminal behavior developed by the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909), Zola attributes the savage behavior of individuals not only to alcohol and jealousy but also to a defective, inherited trait that compels rational beings to behave like animals. *Germinal*, the thirteenth novel of the *Rougon-Macquart* series, explores the impact of a specific milieu on people, in this case a coal mine. It recounts the political education of Étienner Lantier, who is the younger brother of Jacques Lantier, the protagonist in *La Bête humaine*. *Germinal* tells the story of how Étienne became a worker in a coal mine and eventually leads a miners’ strike. Étienne is susceptible to the same “hereditary sickness,” which is described in *La Bête humaine* as being caused by his parents’ alcoholism.44 Manifestations of this sickness could be triggered by alcohol or jealousy, resulting in “a homicidal rage.”45 *Germinal* makes it clearer than even *La Bête humaine* that no one is immune to effects of this inherited animality, including young children such as Jeanlin, the “degeneration of a freak with an obscure intelligence and of a cunning savage slowly overtaken by the ancient animality” (*Germinal*, 222). In addition to alcohol, what also incites the

---

44 Émile Zola, *La Bête humaine, Œuvres Complètes*, vol. II, ed. Henri Mitterand (Paris: Cercle du livre précieux, 1966-70), 153. All further citations of this text will be presented in-text parenthetically as *La Bête humaine* followed by a page number.

expression of this deep-seated homicidal rage is the dehumanizing environment the
miners are subject to every day at the hands of the men running the coal mining
company. Workers receive the barest minimum pay for a hazardous job that can lead to
untimely death in the event of a mine shaft collapse or to life-threatening health
problems. The coal miners’ circumstances prove ultimately to be so utterly dire and
hopeless that resorting to a violent revolt, under Étienne’s leadership, becomes necessary
for their survival. *Germinal* is a bit of an oddity within the *Rougon-Macquart* for it shows
one man, Étienne, harnessing his animal nature in a productive manner in order to
improve conditions for coal miners.

In both *Germinal* and *La Bête humaine*, class conflict is explained through social
Darwinism. While the first half of the novel illustrates Darwin’s theory of the struggle of
the fittest in a labor context, with the haves completely dominating the have-nots, the
second half, briefly, makes it seem possible to reverse the struggle in favor of the have-
nots. Although the uprising ultimately proves to be unsuccessful, the novel closes on an
optimistic note (non-existent in *La Bête humaine*). Étienne, the reader learns near the end
of the novel, has begun to educate himself by reading. His education consists of reading
Darwin, though not a full edition of his current writings, but rather “some fragments,
summarized and vulgarized in a volume for five sous; and, from this reading poorly
understood, he made for himself a revolutionary idea of struggle for survival, the have-
nots eat the haves” (*Germinal*, 349). By specifying that Étienne has read an abridged
version of Darwin, Zola seems to be suggesting that the ideas his protagonist derives
from it are “vulgarized” and do not fully conform to the original intentions of the British
naturalist. Nevertheless, Étienne takes comfort in imagining himself giving a speech one
day based on his own version of Darwinism in which he redefines the strong not as the
bourgeoisie, who had been “worn out from self-gratification,” but instead as the working class, who were “hardy, young still” (Germinal, 403). Étienne’s redefines the currently socially weak workers as the “strong.” The implication is that ultimately they will overcome their bleak conditions as it is biologically determined for the strong to overpower the weak, who, at the end of the novel, are defined as the elite.

Like Zola, Pisarev, and Chernyshevskii, Tolstoy does not respond to Darwinism but rather to social Darwinism as characterized by the phrase “struggle for existence,” the idea of which he abhorred. In Anna Karenina, when Levin ponders the origin of his epiphany on the meaning of life—“to love another,” he concludes, that “Reason revealed the struggle for existence and the law which necessitates that everyone who gets in the way of the fulfillment of my desires should be strangled” (19:379). Levin believes that reason led to Darwinism, which, though not false, induces people to engage in antagonistic relationships rather than ones based on love.

Reason has the opposite function in La Bête humaine as the sole faculty that can prevent people from savage behavior. In one of the key scenes in the novel, the protagonist Jacques Jacques considers his lover’s proposal to kill her husband. Using indirect discourse, the narrator describes the mental struggle occurring inside Jacques’ mind over whether he had “the right to murder” (La Bête humaine, 221):

> Within him the civilized human being was revolting, with the force acquired from education, from the slow and indestructible building of transmitted ideas. One should not kill. He had been suckled on that idea by the milk of generations: his brain, thus refined and furnished with scruples, rejected murder with horror as soon as he began to rationalize it. Yes, to kill out of a need, in a flash of instinct! But to kill with intent, from calculation and self-interest, no, never, that he could never do! (La Bête humaine, 221).
Reason civilizes man, helping him to resist the base instinct of killing someone out of self-interest. Jacques’ reasoning prevents him from killing Séverine’s husband when the opportunity presents itself.

The possibility for reason to overcome baser instincts is made apparent by a physiological description of it in the novel. Early in La Bête humaine, when Jacques becomes sexually aroused by the sight of his childhood friend Flore, he is simultaneously overcome with the desire to kill her. But, “a great coldness was bringing him to his senses” (La Bête humaine, 60). The physiological representation of reason, which helps him suppress his animal instincts, enforces the notion that reason is a natural part of humans.

Zola’s depiction of reason as a faculty inherent to man was in part “a contradictory response to Crime and Punishment,” although in that novel a distinction is made between reason (razum) and rationality (rassudok), which implies a more calculated thought process than the term “reason.” The protagonist Raskolnikov rationalizes the act of murdering a female pawnbroker. This cautionary tale was concerned with the limits of the applicability of rationality to living a meaningful life. A translation of the novel appeared on French bookshelves in 1884. According to one of the foremost Zola scholars, Henri Mitterand, in the drafts of La Bête humaine, Zola made at least two allusions to Dostoevsky’s novel. Zola found Raskolnikov’s rationalization of “the right to murder” and the remorse he experiences after committing murder not credible. Zola depicts reason as the mechanism that can prevent individuals from

---

47 In 1888, Zola’s good friend Paul Ginisty adapted the Russian novel for the stage.
committing murder. Those who do commit murder, in Zola’s opinion, do so out of a need to satisfy a defect passed on from generation to generation from time immemorial. Martin Kanes writes in his detailed source study of *La Bête humaine*:

Objecting to Raskolnikov’s preoccupation with the admiration for Napoleon…Zola saw in Dostoievsky…arguments in favor of self-aggrandizement by means of reason….Science and reason are means of progress, and such retrograde manifestations as murder must be due to atavistic forces going back to man’s primitive state. The hero of the new novel must therefore reject the ‘right to murder’.  

That new hero is Jacques. Education and “all the human notions,” which had been transmitted to him, prevented him from killing another. Reason, however, proves to be no match for the overpowering homicidal instinct, which ultimately compels Jacques to kill the woman he loves. He ends up brutally stabbing her to death, and does so, not because of reason, but because he “had been carried away by the heritage of violence, by this need of murdering,…the necessity of living and the joy of being strong” (*La Bête humaine*, 271). In addition to attributing violence to heredity rather than reason, Zola’s novel also denies Jacques the kind of spiritual resurrection that Raskolnikov experiences.

Whereas Zola would contend that man has been suckled on the milk of reason, Tolstoy would argue, as he does in *Anna Karenina*, that man has been suckled on “spiritual truths.” Levin “lived (not realizing it) by these spiritual truths, which he had imbibed with his mother’s milk” (19:379). The complete disregard for spiritual truths in Zola’s works is related to Tolstoy’s disagreement with French naturalism as well as Darwinism, both of which displace the spiritual without recommending an effective replacement. During a sojourn in Italy, Vronsky and Anna become curious about the Russian émigré artist Mikhailov living there. Vronsky asks his former comrade in the

---

Corps de Pages, Golenishchev, about the artist. According to Golenishchev, Mikhailov is a materialist who believes that “there is nothing, évolution, selection, the struggle for existence—and that’s it” (19:36). Golenishchev’s use of the French for “évolution” underscores the Western, non-Slavic, origins of the scientific concept. Golenishchev continues his overtly negative characterization and groups Mikhailov with writers and artists concerned with disavowing Jesus’s divine status by depicting him as a historical figure. To illustrate how widespread the lamentable trend has become within western art, Golenishchev deliberately singles out three prominent individuals of different nationalities: Alexander Ivanov (1806-1858), David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874), and Ernest Renan (1823-1892). Ivanov was a Russian painter whose masterpiece Appearance of Christ to the People (1837-57) placed Jesus in the background and John the Baptist, in the foreground of the canvas. The German writer Strauss published in 1835 a two-volume work entitled The Life of Jesus (Das Leben Jesu), which treated the supernatural events in the Gospels as myths. The French writer Renan published in 1863 a work also entitled The Life of Jesus (Vie de Jésus), which treated the Gospels as a fictional story. The historical approach to Jesus is also evident in Mikhailov’s painting, Christ before Pilate, which depicts Jesus “as a Jew with all the realism of the new school” (19:34).

Standard literary interpretations of Mikhailov focus on his metapoetic significance. Scholars have regarded Mikhailov as an example of Tolstoy’s idea of an ideal artist. In his book on Tolstoy’s aesthetics, Hidden in Plain View, Gary Saul Morson’s focuses on a discarded sketch that Mikhailov happens to rediscover and on which he notices pieces of candle wax. The drips from the candle form something like a Rorschach inkblot test, inviting the artist to perceive an image not really there.
Consequent to this imagined “vision,” he revises the pose of an angry man in the painting. Morson concludes that

as chance creates new possibilities, it is not just a detail that is changed, but a whole configuration. One completely random event redefines the relations of all the elements of the painting….Mikhailov is a good painter…[he] is aware that configurations change rapidly and unexpectedly, and is alert to the opportunities presented in a world of uncertainty.\textsuperscript{50}

Amy Mandelker argues that “Mikhailov paints directly from the heart.”\textsuperscript{51} Gustafson interprets Mikhailov’s Jesus painting as an emblem of Tolstoy’s novel, embodying “two modes of being,” represented by Anna’s ‘personality’ and Levin’s ‘divine self.”\textsuperscript{52}

Finally, in an article on “perspectival vision in Tolstoy,” Thomas Seifried argues that “Mikhailov undergoes a transformation from artist to spectator: he removes covers from what is essential in his paintings, but out of a desire to see, to render displayed before the eyes the true image resident within.”\textsuperscript{53} The consensus among Russian literature scholars is that Mikhailov is a good artist.

But is that really so? Each of the interpretations ignores the issue of Golenishchev’s negativity toward Mikhailov’s historicization of Jesus. Although we should be wary of conflating a character’s views with those of the author, Tolstoy did share Golenishchev’s belief that the works of Renan, Ivanov, and Strauss were “false” (19:34). On the one hand, Tolstoy’s conception of Jesus was devoid of fantastical elements, such as the divine origin and birth, for, as McLean argues, he “was a rationalist…[and] did not believe, and at least since childhood had never believed, that


\textsuperscript{51} Amy Mandelker, \textit{Framing Anna Karenina: Tolstoy, the Woman Question, and the Victorian Novel} (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1993), 108.

\textsuperscript{52} Gustafson, \textit{Resident and Stranger}, 142-3.

Jesus was the Son of God in any sense.”

On the other hand, Tolstoy differed from the “Renans and Strausses of the world” in that he had no interest in the quest for the historical Jesus because it was nothing more than a distraction from contemplating the basis of Christ’s greatness and deification, his moral teachings, which he personified.

Based on the reactions of Anna and Vronsky to the paintings of “Jesus before Pilate” and Anna’s portrait, we must assume that Mikhailov’s artistry rests on his ability to depict subject matters realistically. But Mikhailov’s realism proves to be problematic. Mikhailov’s painting, according to Golenishchev and as we have already noted, presents Christ “as a Jew with all the realism of the new school” (19:34). The painting is of “a man-God, and not a God-man” (19:42). In other words, it equates man with God, which is the opposite of Tolstoy’s belief in man’s potential to become like the God-man Jesus, who was the humanized, more accessible form of God. Tolstoy was not opposed to humanizing Jesus so long as the “portrayal did not degrade an ideal moral figure to the level of base humanity.” And that is the fundamental issue with Mikhailov’s painting, which is realistic to the point of being crude. Moreover, it is problematic, according to Golenishchev, because it provokes an immaterial debate over whether the painting is a depiction of a God or a man, or, in other words, “whether this is God or not God” (19:43). Mikhailov disagrees, responding, “for educated people…this argument can no longer exist” (19:43). Yet Golenishchev maintains that this question is an unsuitable theme for art especially when “other” themes “can be found” (19:43).

---

54 McLean, In Quest of Tolstoy, 119-20.
Russian artists are not the only ones that Tolstoy considers to be displacing God with science. He also implicates the French naturalists. The ultra-realistic style of Mikhailov is associated later in the novel with Zola in fact. Right before Levin’s sole encounter with Anna, he sees Mikhailov’s portrait of Anna. It seems so realistic to him that it appears to be “protruding from the frame” (19:273). Yet, when Levin sees Anna in person he becomes aware that there is “something…attractive, which wasn’t there in the portrait” (19:274). Despite the portrait’s realism, something is still lacking. During this scene, Levin and Anna agree on the regrettably crude realism of French naturalism. Gustafson articulates in *Resident and Stranger* how Tolstoy’s realism differed from that of his contemporaries:

> Realism, as understood in the nineteenth century, reflects a human reality that is shaped by the world in which people reside. Social, economic, and historical forces mold the individual, and God, at best, simply transcends the world. In this realism, furthermore, human psychology is understood as the complex interactions of a conscious being with this formative world and there is no God within. Tolstoy did not accept this deterministic and materialistic conception of human reality. He always defined himself in opposition to the non-spiritual and often outraged anti-religious world-views of those who dominated the intellectual life of his generation…For him reality is the world not separate from God.  

For Tolstoy, realism cannot be divorced from the spiritual world because otherwise such art serves no greater moral purpose.

Accordingly, Tolstoy counter-balances Anna’s wretched suicide with Levin’s spiritual awakening. While her affair with Vronsky culminates in her fateful carriage ride to the fateful railway station, Levin’s philosophical meanderings lead him to a conclusion vastly different from that of Anna. But during both of their final journeys, they think about Darwinism, which attracts Anna and repels Levin. During Anna’s carriage ride, she recalls something Yashvin, a friend of Vronsky, said to her about “the struggle for

---

existence and hatred—the one thing that links people” (19:342). She then notices people in a carriage headed to the suburbs for fun, and mentally addresses the occupants, “You will not escape yourselves” (19:342). She reads their physical journey as a pointless metaphysical escape from themselves. Her vision is clouded by her defeatist attitude based on her understanding of Darwinism applied to social human relations. Accordingly, these casual travelers, along with everyone else, are engaged in a constant struggle with each other and are thereby united not by a mutual camaraderie but rather by a divisive hatred. A few hours after this encounter, Anna’s Darwinist state of mind and the railways converge when she throws her body in front of an oncoming train. Her fate is an illustration of the dead end awaiting those who turn to Darwinism to answer existential questions.

In contrast, Levin takes a critical stance toward Darwinism, concluding that it fails to reveal life’s meaning and the way one ought to live:

Yet in all of us, together with the aspens and with the clouds and with the nebulous blots development is taking place. Development out of what? Into what? Infinite development and struggle? [...] As if there could be some kind of direction and struggle in infinity! And I was surprised that despite the greatest effort of thinking along this line, the meaning of life, the meaning of my impulses and urges, nevertheless remain undiscovered. Yet the meaning of my impulses in me is so clear that I constantly live according to them, and I was surprised and glad when a muzhik articulated it to me: to live for God, for the soul. (19:378).

Levin does acknowledge that man does undergo a kind of evolution, but, instead of being biological, it relates to the process of striving to live for the soul. Levin reaches this conclusion not with the help of well-regarded “experts” of science or politics, but thanks to a muzhik. Time and again in Tolstoy’s works, despite the fact that one character in Anna Karenina describes them “as standing in the transitional stage of the development from ape to man” (18:345), muzhiks are the true progressives. Possessing greater spiritual
knowledge than the more sophisticated intellectual or scientist, the *muzhik* was Tolstoy’s “basic yardstick”\(^{58}\) to measure a good life.

The way Tolstoy establishes his point, by juxtaposing Anna’s and Levin’s stories and then closing with the happier one, is never employed again in his “post-conversion” works. Instead, those stories, in which images of human beings as animals are more prominent, are oddly reminiscent of Zola’s. One of the fundamental points of *La Bête humaine* is that in spite of technological advancements, men would remain beasts underneath. For Jacques’ Aunt Phasie, who juxtaposes the modern railways and primitive instincts, the railways are “a fine invention, it goes without saying. One goes fast, one is more knowledgeable…But savage beasts remain savage beasts, and whatever better machines they still go on inventing, there will nevertheless be wild beasts underneath” (*La Bête humaine*, 53). The remainder of the novel serves as proof of Aunt Phasie’s contention. In *La Bête humaine*, nearly all the characters, major and minor, male and female, are susceptible to the inherited instinct to kill, and succumb to it. The first instance in the novel occurs in the first chapter when Roubaud becomes insanely jealous upon learning about Séverine’s sexual relationship with her benefactor. Roubaud loses control of himself,

flailing in the void, tossed hither and thither by every shift in the wind of violence that lashed him, falling back into the unique need to appease the beast howling within his depths. It was a physical need, pressing, like a hunger for vengeance, which contorted his body and which would no longer grant him any rest so long as he did not satisfy it. (*La Bête humaine*, 40).

It is this unseen beast lurking in man’s consciousness that transforms an otherwise sane and loving husband into a merciless murderer. Even Pecqueux, a relatively minor character, possesses the potential, when drunk, to behave like “a real brute, capable of a

---

\(^{58}\) McLean, *In Quest of Tolstoy*, 164.
bad blow” (*La Bête humaine*, 75). Women in the novel are capable of equally violent behavior. Séverine aggressively and proactively prods Jacques to murder her husband Roubaud and nearly succeeds in getting him to go through with it. Flore, who is in love with Jacques, becomes so wildly jealous of his affair with Séverine that she attempts to kill them by derailing the train on which they are traveling, but fails. This equal-opportunity homicidal urge affects people of both genders and different ages. What becomes clear is that Zola believed that man is bound by time and space. *La Bête humaine* shows that man’s actions are shaped and inscribed within the particular space and time in which he lives, insisting on the impossibility of man overcoming heredity and genetic and material conditions.

Tolstoy, too, in both his early and later works attributes certain types of human behavior as animalistic or bestial. In his pre-conversion novel *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy uses Anna’s affair with Vronsky to depict the fulfillment of sexual desire as “the gratification of an animal passion” (18:384). The two lovers are not aware of truths greater than their carnal desires. Levin, on the other hand, understands that without spiritual truths man would be condemned to an unimaginably beastly existence: “[M]aking the greatest efforts of imagination, he still was not able to imagine the beastly being he would be if he did not know what he lived for” (19:379).

The characterization of certain human activities as animalistic in Tolstoy’s pre-conversion works is, however, relatively tame compared to what it is in his later texts. In 1908, Tolstoy wrote in “The Law of Love and Law of Violence” (“Zakon liubvi i zakon nasiliia”) the following cynical observation on society’s progress:

> And the people of the Christian world live like animals, guided in their life only by personal interests and by a struggle with each other; only differentiated from animals by the fact that animals since time immemorial have stayed behind with
the same stomach, claws and fangs; while people make the transition with ever greater and greater speed from unpaved roads to the railroad, from horses to steam, from oral sermons and letters to book-printing, to telegraphs, telephones, from sail boats to ocean steamers, from cold steel arms to gunpowder, cannons, Mauser rifles, bombs and aeroplanes. And life—with telegraphs, telephones, electricity, bombs and aeroplanes, and with a hatred pitting everyone against everyone—is guided not by some spiritual principle unifying people but, on the contrary, by animal instincts alienating everyone and exploiting intellectual faculties for their own satisfaction; life is becoming all the more and more insane, all the more and more calamitous. (37:155).

Tolstoy felt strongly that the exploitation of man’s intellectual capabilities for the technological advancements of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries—not only in transportation but also in telecommunications, warfare, and electricity—had led to the neglect of spiritual development, turning men into depraved animals solely interested in the satisfaction of their physical and material needs. He viewed evolution in non-biological terms and fervently believed that he was witnessing the regression of society as it became more technologically advanced. Darwinism, he felt, defined evolution in terms that did not help society evolve as a whole.

In Tolstoy’s later works, he departs from creating positive characters like Levin and creates darker ones like Anisya and Nikita in the five-act play The Power of Darkness (Vlast’ t’my, 1886). Out of animosity, Anisya kills her selfish husband, Peter, a wealthy peasant. She then marries Peters’s servant, Nikita, who had encouraged her to kill her husband. Nikita eventually becomes corrupted by the money he inherits through marriage. Resentful of his involvement in killing Anisya’s husband, he takes sexual advantage of his sixteen-year-old step-daughter Akulina and kills her newborn baby fathered by him. The late Tolstoy deserts the optimistic depictions of a full life made possible through the discovery of spiritual truths. He instead resorts to depicting frightening portraits of a world in which spirituality has been marginalized.
Because of the play’s gruesome plot, the staging of *The Power of Darkness* was completely forbidden by the influential triumvirate, which consisted of Chief Russian Censor Feoktistov, chief overseer of the Russian Orthodox Church Pobedonostsev, and Tsar Alexander III (1845-1894). To illustrate the abhorrent nature of the play, Pobedonostsev, in a letter to Tsar Alexander III, dated 18 February 1887, claims that Tolstoy had outdone even Zola, who “himself hardly could have reached such a degree of vulgar realism, to which Tolstoy here is turning.”

The accusation that Tolstoy had outdone Zola was repeated when *The Kreutzer Sonata* was printed. In that story, sexual desire is repeatedly characterized as animalistic. Pozdnyshev declares that sexual desire is “of all the passions the strongest, and most evil, and most tenacious” (27:30). Throughout this short novella, Pozdnyshev refers to physical love as an “animal passion” (27:50), “animal excesses” (27:34), and “animal sensuality” (27:71). He decries the fact that “[m]en and women are created just like animals” (27:34). He claims that “I made myself into a beast, an evil and deceitful beast” (27:69). We learn that after he gave up custody of his children, they were put in the care of their aunt and uncle, “growing up to be just like the savages all around them” (27:40). Pozdnyshev describes his growing “exasperation” with his wife as “nothing other than the protest of human nature against the animal, which was suppressing it” (27:34). Tolstoy depicts an existential struggle between man and his animal nature, which forms the core of Zola’s novels.

This surprising parallel between Tolstoy and Zola did not escape the attention of contemporaries. In an impressive study on the reception of *The Kreutzer Sonata* in Russia...

---

and elsewhere, Peter Møller incorporates considerable archival materials, including excerpts from two letters drawing a parallel between Tolstoy and Zola based on the controversial novella. One letter was published in 1939 by the literary scholar V. A. Zhdanov. It was one of five anonymous letters addressed to Tolstoy, concerning *The Kreutzer Sonata*. The author of it wrote, “[I]f you had any idea of how you are ridiculed, abroad, for instance, where you are regarded not only as a crank, but as a purveyor of pornography, like Zola, whose writings no decent woman will touch.” The second letter Møller mentions is dated 4 November 1889. E. M. Feoktistov, who spearheaded the initiative to ban *The Kreutzer Sonata*, wrote to Konstantin Nikolaevich Bestuzhev-Ryumin regarding *The Kreutzer Sonata*, “The point is that in certain scenes Tolstoj has outdone Zola with regard to realism; even his supporters are somewhat taken aback.” Again, Tolstoy was accused of exceeding Zola, although these themes were present in his earlier work *Anna Karenina*, albeit more subtly.

Zola rejected and resented the comparisons with Tolstoy, who he felt had lost his mind. (Zola was especially critical of Vogüé’s role in encouraging comparisons between himself and Tolstoy.) In an interview given in the summer of 1890, Zola is dismissive of the Russian realist writers. He makes the familiar argument that their novels are derivatives of early French ones, adopting novelistic techniques now outdated. Zola called *The Kreutzer Sonata* “a nightmare, the fruit of a sick imagination.” Furthermore,

---


61 Ibid., 45.

62 As quoted in Møller, *Postlude to the Kreutzer Sonata*, 44.

63 As quoted in Møller, *Postlude to the Kreutzer Sonata*, 109.
Zola believed Tolstoy to have “a small crack [une petite fêlure] in the head.”\textsuperscript{64} It was as though Tolstoy had a “crack” like a Rougon-Macquart character and had exceeded Zola by presenting all sexual relations as reprehensible.

But in what way was the animal imagery in Tolstoy’s works, which had been employed in a way similar to that of Zola, actually worse? One of the preeminent Russian formalists, Viktor Shklovsky (1893-1940), astutely identified a particular feature of Tolstoy’s narratives and named it “defamiliarization” or “estrangement,” making the familiar unfamiliar in order to re-sensitize the senses to the experience. Shklovsky’s concept of defamiliarization is inadequate, however, when applied to Tolstoy’s later works. It does not adequately account for the more extreme form of defamiliarization evident in works such as The Kreutzer Sonata. In that work, Tolstoy does not merely try to defamiliarize for the reader a mundane and quaint experience, such as watching an opera. He disturbs the reader. The purpose of “disturbance” is to cause a radical rupture with conventions and reverse our worldview. This is not merely a new way of experiencing an opera. What is at stake is our commonly held social mores regarding success and marriage. What we believe to be valid, is not, according to Pozdnyshev.

It turns out then that Pozdnyshev, whom we start out regarding as a strange solitary outsider, is not the only one who has engaged in immoral behavior. We the readers are implicated too. Tolstoy’s version of human savagery, compared with that of Zola, was more terrifying because it was not limited to those with an inherited defective trait. Instead, Tolstoy suggested that it was inherent to bourgeois mores. To convey this message to his readers, Tolstoy deployed images of the railways and attendant visual

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
distortions. The following chapter will examine the connections between the railways, motion parallax, and devolution in both Tolstoy and Zola.

Although both Zola and Tolstoy were committed to artistic representations of reality, the difference in their brands of realism is that while Zola tries to depict the world as it is from the perspective of a cold observer, Tolstoy portrays our perception of it and then undermines it. The literary critic Pierre Macherey, author of *A Theory of Literary Production*, once wrote that “a book never arrives unaccompanied: it is a figure against a background of other formations, depending on them rather than contrasting with them.”

The constant juxtapositions made between them attests not only to their differences but also their entanglement. On certain themes, especially Darwinism and the fallacy of progress, Tolstoy and Zola wrote in reaction to one another. From this inter-reaction a more meaningful difference between them emerges. Tolstoy revealed the norm to be dysfunctional whereas Zola’s depicted the dysfunctional as the norm.

---

Chapter Three

Motion Parallax: Trains as Tricknology

Cela représentait la République, ou le Progrès, ou la Civilisation, sous la figure de Jésus-Christ conduisant une locomotive, laquelle traversait une forêt vierge. Gustave Flaubert, *L’Éducation sentimentale* (1869)\(^1\)

*With the tremendous acceleration of life, mind and eye have become accustomed to seeing and judging partially or inaccurately and everyone is like the traveler who gets to know a land and its people from a railway carriage.* Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* (1878)\(^2\)

In 1813, an Austrian engineer named Franz-Josef von Gerstner proposed, in lieu of a waterway route, a short railway line for a horse-drawn train between Linz, which is located on the Danube river in northern Austria, and Budweis (now České Budějovice in the Czech Republic), which is located on the Moldau river in southern Bohemia. The line was intended to facilitate the transportation of salt from the mines in the Salzkammergut mountains to the Austrian state-controlled salt market. The engineer’s proposal was eventually realized by his son, Franz-Anton von Gerstner, who in 1821 visited Great Britain to study their unique iron tracks that connected towns to one another. After returning from Britain, von Gerstner formed the company *Este österreichische Eisenbahn-Gesellschaft* and drew up plans to build the Budweis-Linz railway line using British rail technology with horse-drawn carriages. Von Gerstner recruited an assistant to join the company, named Francesco Zolla (with two l’s), a civil engineer originally from

---


Venice living in Austria and the future father of Zola the writer. In September 1824, von Gerstner received the concession for the railroad. A year later, another event took place in Britain that caused von Gerstner to revise his plans. On September 27, 1825, Britain opened the Stockton & Darlington railway line, the first of its kind to use a steam locomotive. Von Gerstner and Zolla saw this new technology during their winter visit to England between 1826 and 1827 and marveled at its enormous potential. Upon returning to Austria, von Gerstner tried repeatedly to persuade the board directors to abandon the original plan of using horse traction in order to adopt steam power instead. But evaluating the new technology as an even riskier proposition, the board of directors resisted and ended up dismissing von Gerstner. Despite his departure, the Linz-Budweis line eventually was completed, by September 1828. Even though it opened after the Stockton & Darlington Railway made its debut, some have nevertheless claimed the Austrian line to be the first European railway line because the plans for it had been conceived in 1813.

Before von Gerstner’s dismissal from the company, Zolla had already left to form the Zola Railroad Company (now with one l) in order to build a line between Linz and Gmunden for a steam locomotive, and he obtained an imperial charter to construct it by June 1829. Although Zolla had prepared everything for the construction of the railway line—the survey of the terrain, plotting of the line, purchasing the land, ordering the rails—he had accounted for nearly every possible contingency except for one: the Austrian government unforeseeably abrogated its monopoly on the sale of salt, rendering

---

3 For a more detailed account of Zola’s father’s involvement with the railways, see Brown, Zola: A Life, 6-7.

the line unusable for its original purpose of transporting the commodity. After this led to insurmountable complications, Zola resigned. Instead of returning to his home in Venice, Zola’s father immigrated to France, where he served a year in the French Foreign Legion. In 1832, Eisenbahn-Gesellschaft, von Gerstner’s former employer, took over where Zola had left off and built the Gmunden line, using his detailed plans.

A few years after leaving Eisenbahn-Gesellschaft, von Gerstner became instrumental in bringing the railroads to Russia initially by writing a letter urging the government to adopt railroad technology. This eventually led to the construction of the 400-mile railway line between Moscow and St. Petersburg. Once the project received the approval of Tsar Nicholas I, construction began on 13 January 1842. On 1 November 1851, the line opened with the first passenger train leaving St Petersburg at 11:15 a.m. and arriving in Moscow 21 hours and 45 minutes later, at 9:00 p.m. the next day. This railway line was the one immortalized in *Anna Karenina*.

In 1875 the *Russian Herald* began serializing *Anna Karenina*, which later was published as a book in 1878. The first French translation appeared in 1885, the same year in which Zola’s thirteenth *Rougon-Macquart* novel, *Germinal*, came out. That novel, like *La Bête humaine*, concentrates on one specific locale symbolic of industrialization, the coal mines. In 1886 Tolstoy published *The Death of Ivan Il’ich* and then, three years later, the controversial work *The Kreutzer Sonata*, in which a man tells a fellow train passenger the story of how he ended up murdering his own wife. Later in the same year in which Tolstoy’s short novella appeared, the first parts of Zola’s novel *La Bête humaine* began to be published in France and Russia. Both works shared uncanny similarities with each other, involving adultery, murder, and trains. *La Bête humaine* was serialized from 14 November 1889 to 2 March 1890 in the weekly journal *La Vie populaire*, and nearly
simultaneously published in Russia, as *Chelovek-zver'* in the *Novosti i birzhevaia gazeta* (News and Exchange Newspaper). The time frames covered in *Anna Karenina* and *La Bête humaine* are closer to each other than their publication dates. *Anna Karenina* narrates events beginning in February 1872 through August 1876, and *La Bête humaine*, February 1869 through June/July 1870.

This chapter will first differentiate between the depictions of trains in *La Bête humaine* and *Anna Karenina*. The differences in their descriptions of the railways will make the commonality—the motif of motion parallax—between the two works all the more curious. This unexamined motif associated with trains in both *Anna Karenina* and *La Bête humaine* will be the primary focus this chapter. I will elaborate upon the relationship of motion parallax to the narrative structures of both novels. Motion parallax is an especially key metaphor in Tolstoy’s works. To make this argument, in addition to *Anna Karenina*, I will briefly discuss its significance in two of his shorter works, *The Kreutzer Sonata* and *Death of Ivan Il'ich*.

Zola admired the railways; Tolstoy condemned them. Zola viewed the new railway stations being built out of steel and glass as a new kind of mixture of architecture and technology, of art and science. Tolstoy, on the other hand, likened the railways to a brothel. In a letter dated 9 April 1857, Tolstoy wrote to Turgenev that “the railroad is to travel what the brothel is to love. It is just as convenient, but just as inhumanly

---

6 Tomasik, “*La Bête humaine*, or the World Perceived through a Machine,” 310.
mechanical and murderously monotonous.”

Ironically, Tolstoy died at the railroad station in Astapovo, ten days after having left his family and estate to find solitude.

*La Bête humaine* and *Anna Karenina* are frequently referred to as *railway novels* due to the prominent role that trains play in them. In *Anna Karenina*, aside from passing comments on the railroad, the setting for a number of the novel’s key scenes is a train or a railway station. Before the start of the novel, Levin has already arrived on a morning train in Moscow from the countryside, where he had been residing for the past two months (18:27). The novels begins on Friday, 11 February 1872. On this day, Stepan Arkadyevich Oblonksy, or Stiva, learns through a telegram (another transformative invention of the nineteenth century) that his sister, Anna Karenina, will arrive by train from St. Petersburg the following day around eleven in the morning (18:7). While waiting for her at the train station, Stiva encounters Vronsky, who is expecting his mother to arrive on the same train and, as the reader soon learns, in the same compartment with Anna. This is how Vronsky meets Anna for the first time inside a train compartment. As the two newly acquainted individuals head for the station exit with their entourage, they learn that a railroad watchman has been fatally hit by a train. What exactly happened to

---


8 For details on Tolstoy’s death, see William Nickell, *The Death of Tolstoy: Russia on the Eve, Astapovo Station, 1910* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010). There is also a film about Tolstoy’s death, entitled *The Last Station* (2009), directed by Michael Hoffman and starring Christopher Plummer as Tolstoy and Helen Mirren as Tolstoy’s wife.

9 A history of the railways in Russia and French literature, although interesting, lies beyond the scope of this dissertation and has already been well documented elsewhere. For the railways in French literature, see Jacques Noiray, *Le romancier et la machine: l’image de la machine dans le roman français, 1850-1900* (Paris: J. Corti, 1981), 43-84. For a short analysis of the horse/train imagery in Russian literature, see Bethea, *The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction*, 44-61.

10 The exact date on which the novel opens is never made explicit. Vladimir Nabokov cleverly infers the date based on details taken from the novel and links them to actual historical events. See his *Lectures on Russian Literature*, ed. Fredson Bowers (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich/Bruccoli Clark, 1981), 190.
him is unclear. He may have intentionally committed suicide, or was so bundled up because of the cold that he did not hear the train switching tracks. Either way, Anna and the reader as well immediately read the death as an unmistakably “bad omen.”

By the time Anna arrives in Moscow, Levin, who throughout the novel always seems to be moving in a direction, physically and metaphorically, opposite to hers, has already departed from the city. He heads south back to his home in Pokrovskoe by train. During his train trip, he converses with the neighboring passengers about the railways (18:98). On the Monday following Levin’s departure, Anna leaves Moscow earlier than planned to return to St. Petersburg. Almost exactly at the midway point between Moscow and St. Petersburg, on the platform of the major train station in Bologoe, Anna encounters Vronsky, who confesses his feelings for her (18:109). They arrive on a Tuesday at the St. Petersburg train station, where Anna’s husband, Alexei Alexeevich, awaits her (18:112). We learn that Levin also first became acquainted with Alexei Alexeevich during a train ride to Tver (18:403).

In the second half of the novel, especially part seven, the symbolism of the train becomes overtly linked to death. Levin’s brother, Nikolai, dies from consumption in a squalid hotel near a train station in part five. The next death in the novel happens at a train station, Anna’s suicide (19:348). Lastly, through Vronsky’s final fate, Tolstoy makes clear the political implications of train technology. Although Vronsky’s death is never spelled out for the reader, it is heavily implied in his last appearance on a station platform, where his train has made a stop. Vronsky, along with other volunteers, is on his way to the front of the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878), in which the railways played a pivotal role (19:360). My litany of train references in the novel establishes the railways as the site or background for some of the novel’s most pivotal and tragic events.
In addition to serving as setting, the railways are mentioned in passing here and there, linking characters—minor and major—to each other. The first “train” in *Anna Karenina* appears a few pages into the novel and is not real. A few pages into the novel, we see Stiva noticing his children, Grisha and Tanya, playing with a “chest that represented a train” (18:10). As the two play together, Tanya reminds her younger brother, in English, that one should not place passengers on the roof. At this moment, Oblonsky thinks to himself, “Everything is confused...there the children are running around on their own” (18:10). The roles in his house have been reversed; the children are behaving like adults. Meanwhile, the adults, the married couple Dolly and Stiva, are acting like children, ignoring each other and neglecting their children. In part seven, Stiva has a similar realization when he travels to St. Petersburg to visit Anna’s son, Sergei, who describes to his uncle his pastime between classes at school. “We’ve got a railway going” (19:305). It involves three students on a bench, with two of them sitting down and the third standing up. Everyone links arms or is bound together with reins, and then they run down the hallways together as though they are the wheels of a train. Sergei adds that playing the conductor is difficult because “for that one needs to have courage and agility, especially as soon as they stop or someone falls,” to which Oblonsky responds, “Yes, that is no joke” (19:306). As the child explains the game, Stiva becomes melancholic, noticing that Sergei’s eyes, which resemble his mother’s, are no longer those of a child. 

The allure of trains has resulted in children trying to imitate adults with their own

---

11 This short scene could be interpreted as a comment on the apparent stupidity of Britain’s early practice of seating passengers on top of trains, the danger of which was obvious, as Tolstoy suggests here, even to children. Sitting on top of trains still persists to this day, especially in Third-World countries, and has even become an extreme sport known as “train surfing.”
“railway game.” The imitation of adults’ behavior has accelerated the loss of the children’s innocence.

M. S. Al’tman points out in his reading of the railways in Anna Karenina that they ensnare not only Anna but also Stiva, who is in dire financial straits and uses his connections to gain a position with the railways. In part seven of the novel, we see him for the last time, in St. Petersburg. He is there to find out for Anna about her son’s well-being and whether her husband will grant her the divorce that she has requested. He is also there on a personal matter, to apply for a vacant post on a well-paying commission of the United Agency for Mutual Credit Balance of the Southern Railways and Banking Institutions, a nonsensical and ridiculously lengthy name. Stiva wants this position because it would provide a much needed sinecure, one of those “cushy bribery posts,” with salaries ranging anywhere between a 1,000 and 50,000 (19:297).

Eager to acquire the post, Stiva asks a friend and his brother-in-law, Karenin, to put in a good word for him with members of the commission, they both question his motive for wanting to work there. The job has an unjustifiably large salary, says Karenin. Stiva’s friend Bartnianskii raises his objection to the post with a rhetorical, and anti-Semitic, question, “[W]hy would you want to get into these railways affairs with the Jews?” (19:307). At first, their questions do not disabuse Stiva of his belief in the commission’s work as a “new, active, and honest affair.” However, Stiva eventually begins to have misgivings about working for this new commission and is unsure about the origin of his disquietude:

Whether he was uneasy because he—a descendent of Riurik—Prince Oblonsky waited two hours in the Jew’s anteroom, or because for the first time in his life

---

12 Al’tman, “Zheleznaia doroga v tvochestve L. N. Tolstogo,” 256.
he was not following the example of his ancestors, serving the government, and was setting off on a new course, either way he was very uneasy. (19:302).

The indignation of “a descendent of Riurik” waiting in the anteroom of a Jew (another ostensible example of how everything is “confused” in the novel) notwithstanding, the source of his uneasiness is not merely anti-Semitism. Stiva is becoming aware that something is amiss with his pursuit of a position associated with profit and capitalism. A reversal is beginning to take place in his mind.

It is never clear what happens to Stiva after his trip to St. Petersburg or how his story line ends since the text is silent on the matter. Presumably, he ends up not working for the railways. This inference is based on the fact that in the final part of the novel, the last of what the reader learns about Stiva is from his letter to Dolly, in which he implores her to sell her share of an estate to cover the cost of their debts. Oddly, his story and Dolly’s never arrive at a satisfying conclusion, suggesting that these two characters perhaps, although struggled with each other on occasion, find a way to muddle along unlike Anna and Vronsky.

While the characters in *Anna Karenina*, for the most part, take an occasional train ride, Zola’s novel is populated with people who are immersed in the world of railways as a result of their employment by train stations. Though Zola admired the beauty of trains and railway stations, in *La Bête humaine* he constructs a complex of negative associations around the railways. He accomplishes this through a process of accretion that begins with the novel’s opening scene in an apartment overlooking a train station. When the novel opens in a Paris apartment near Gare Saint-Lazare, a Le Havre assistant railway station master named Roubaud awaits the return of his beloved wife, Séverine, before their scheduled train departure from Paris. Soon after her return, the novel quickly takes an
unexpected turn. While the married couple casually converse, Roubaud learns a terrible truth about his wife’s past: Séverine was forced into a sexual relationship with her benefactor Grandmorin, a highly respected retired judge in Paris and director of the railway company. She became his ward after the death of her father, a gardener for Grandmorin. To prevent anyone from suspecting this case of sexual abuse, Séverine’s guardian marries her off to one of his railway employees, Roubaud, but continues to take advantage of her. When Roubaud learns the truth, he becomes enraged and instinctively lashes out at his wife, physically abusing her. Only afterwards does he direct his fury toward Grandmorin, the perpetrator. Roubaud hatches a plan to murder him and violently coerces his wife to being his accomplice. He forces her to write a note requesting that Grandmorin be on the same Paris-Le Havre train that the couple already intended on taking. Once aboard the train, Roubaud and Séverine enter the private train compartment of the unsuspecting Grandmorin and keep him company until the perfect moment to kill him arrives. As the train nears Le Havre, they brutally murder him and throw his body, with its throat slit, out the window of the moving train.

Jacques Lantier—a locomotive driver whose brother, Étienne, was the main protagonist in *Germinal*—chances to witness the murder and the murderers as the train passes by him in Le Havre. Despite being able to connect the faces of Roubaud and Séverine to the murder, Jacques, inexplicably at first, does not turn them in to the police. Their identities as the perpetrators are never found out by the investigator Denizet, whose incompetence in solving the murder is intended as a parody of Dostoevsky’s very able police detective Porfiry Petrovich in *Crime and Punishment*.

13 Kanes, Zola’s *La Bête humaine*, 27.
rapidly deteriorates as Roubaud turns to gambling and drinking. Meanwhile, Séverine initiates an affair with Jacques, who suffers from an inherited “crack” [*une fêlure*]—a hereditary madness that fills him with a nearly uncontrollable impulse to commit murder. (Each member of the Rougon-Macquart family suffers from this “crack.”) Jacques’ affair with Séverine temporarily relieves him of the temptation to kill.

The second chapter resumes where the first chapter left off but in a different setting, in the countryside, near an abandoned and desolate house referred to as Croix-de-Maufras, which is in walking distance of the Barentin train station. The house stands in a garden traversed by only one set of railway tracks, which serve as its sole link to the outside world. All the characters are connected to this stretch of railway near Croix-de-Maufras, and each one of them will suffer. So close to the railways, the house is, unsurprisingly, cursed and foreboding. There, Grandmorin repeatedly raped Séverine as well as having attempted to rape Louisette Misard, a barely fourteen-year-old servant. After being attacked by Grandmorin one day, Louisette dies of brain fever. Her death, however, is blamed on the only innocent man in the novel, Cabuche, who, ironically, has nothing to do with the railways. A loner quarryman, he lives on the edge of the Bécourt forest and was a friend to Louisette. Later in the novel, Croix-de-Maufras will be the site of Séverine’s murder at the hands of Jacques, who becomes overtaken with the desire to experience the sensation of killing a person.

Close to the isolated house stands the dilapidated home of the level-crossing keeper, Misard. His wife, Phasie, correctly suspects him of poisoning her a little bit each day. After she dies prematurely from the poisoning overdose, he vigorously searches for her 1,000 francs, which he believes she has hidden somewhere. Phasie’s daughter, Flore secretly loves Jacques and is filled with jealousy upon realizing his involvement with
Séverine. In an attempt to kill her rival, Flore derails the train that Jacques and Séverine are taking for one of their weekly jaunts in Paris. In the final chapter of the novel, Jacques and his close friend, Pecqueux, are working on a train transporting soldiers to the front of the Franco-Russian war. Knowing that his wife is cheating on him with Jacques, an inebriated Pecqueux initiates a brawl that results in both of them falling off the train and dying. The novel closes with the image of a driverless train speeding away, with drunken soldiers blissfully ignorant of what has just occurred. Zola suggests that trains lead only to dead ends, quite literally.

The dangers of the railways represented in La Bête humaine and Anna Karenina reflected the times. Anna Karenina’s suicide was based on an actual incident. In a letter dated 18 January 1872, Tolstoy’s wife, Sofia, recounted to her sister a suicide committed by the mistress of Tolstoy’s neighbor, Anna Stepanova Pirogova, who threw herself in front of train.14 Trains were involved with other dangers that threatened even more lives. Any number of mishaps and accidents while traveling by train were possible: boiler explosions (a problem with earlier locomotives); derailments; head-on or rear-end collisions; side collisions; collisions with vehicles, people, or animals; bridge collapses; runaway trains; mechanical breakdowns; and even sabotage. (In light of these calamities, it is unsurprising that accident insurance became institutionalized during the railway era.)15 Russian travelers during the nineteenth century believed that the likelihood of


experiencing a life-threatening situation on trains was so high that an “apocryphal anecdote circulated in St. Petersburg” around the time the Petersburg-Moscow line opened. According to the story, two government ministers who hated each other so much that they decided to settle their differences—not in the traditional and standard way, by dueling—by drawing lots to see which of them would ride three times on the railway and survive.\(^{16}\)

The most serious and traumatic consequence of train travel was the railway accident, which resulted in not only physical injuries but also psychological injuries. The first recorded railway accident with fatalities took place on 31 July 1815 in England. Three people died instantly, and another fifty were injured. The dubious distinction of having the world’s first train disaster goes to Meudon, France on the Ouest line. It took place on 8 May 1842, killing 57 people.\(^{17}\) It occurred because of a broken driver axle, leading to a derailment that caused passenger carriages to catch on fire. Many died because they were locked into the compartments from the outside. Statistics from 1874 concerning the Russian railway lines listed “184 employee, 9 passenger, and 104 ‘other’ deaths.” Moreover, “14 people died of natural causes and 5 others committed suicide on the tracks. In all, a total of 261 passenger train derailments and 80 collisions occurred.”\(^{18}\)

One railway accident became extremely famous because it involved Charles Dickens, who was riding in a first-class compartment with his manuscript of *Our Mutual Friend*. Known as the Staplehurst Railway accident, it took place on 9 June 1865 while Dickens was traveling from Folkestone to London. A 42-foot section of the railway near

---


\(^{18}\) Harter, *World Railways of the Nineteenth Century*, 420.
Staplehurst, Kent had been taken out to repair a viaduct over the River Beult, and the construction foreman relied on the wrong timetable and did not expect any train for another two hours. By the time the driver of the train saw the construction, it was too late to brake the train. The engine and the first carriage, with an unharmed Dickens in it, made it safely across, but all the other subsequent carriages fell into the river bed below, killing 10 people and injuring 49.\textsuperscript{19}

In a letter written to a close friend a few days afterwards, Dickens recounted the incident and then abruptly cut himself off, stating that he felt “the shake” as a result of his recollections. In letters sent off about two weeks later, he described his nerves as still being “shaken” and wrote that he finally got his voice. In February of 1867, he confessed to his sister-in-law, “I am not quite right, but believe it to be an effect of the railway shaking. There is no doubt of the fact that, after the Staplehurst experience, it tells more and more, instead of (as one might have expected) less and less.” It becomes apparent in his even later correspondences that his nerves were never the same again following the horrific catastrophe. Three years after the accident, he was still describing the traumatic effect that the railway accident was still having on him. He expressed frustration with being unable to “obliterate” the memory of the accident from his “nervous system,” experiencing “sudden vague rushes of terror, even when riding in a hansom cab, which are perfectly unreasonable but quite insurmountable,” and being overcome with “odd momentary seizures” in railway carriages.\textsuperscript{20} Coincidentally, or not, Dickens died from a stroke at the age of fifty-eight, on the fifth anniversary of the Staplehurst accident.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 419.

Doctors back then suspected that Dickens was suffering from a neurosis called “railway spine.” The first medical study detailing the condition’s symptoms was John Eric Erichsen’s *On Railway and Other Injuries of the Nervous System*, published a year prior to the Staplehurst disaster, in 1864. Experts originally believed that “railway spine” was a physical ailment afflicting travelers who had been in train accidents. The condition caused pain as the result of “either simulation or a supposed microscopic deterioration of the spinal cord.” By the end of the 1880s, “railway spine” was no longer viewed as a physical trauma but instead as a psychological one affecting train-accident survivors. The scholar Schivelbusch points out that railway spine can reasonably be understood as a predecessor to shell shock, a condition that emerged from World War I. Schivelbusch correctly sees a connection between “the railroad shock of the nineteenth century” and Freud’s theory of stimulation and overstimulation developed in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). Doctors today now understand shell shock and railway spine as post-traumatic stress syndrome.

Psychological effects aside, there were, of course, physical threats as well that train passengers faced. One of the factors threatening passenger safety was the separate railway compartment for first-class passengers, a feature inherited from stagecoaches. They became a locus of criminal acts and violence uncommon on older modes of transportation. Since no witness could see or hear the crime, the isolation of these compartments made them ideal crime scenes for pickpocketing, rapes, and murders. In *Wonders and Curiosities of the Railway*, William Sloane Kennedy comments, “In

---

looking over the index of the London *Times*, the writer of these pages was astonished to find that during a period of twenty years, there was not a single year in which many outrages, attempted murders, and attacks by madmen were not reported to have occurred in the closed compartments of English cars.”²⁴ In *The Railway Journey*, Schivelbusch relates the news of a Chief Justice shot to death by a sole fellow traveler riding in his compartment on December 6, 1860 in a train on its way to Paris.²⁵ Four years after the murder of the Chief Justice, on July 9, 1864, in another first-class compartment a murder took place in England on a North London train. Thomas Briggs was robbed and murdered by a man named Franz Muller, and no one witnessed his body being thrown from the train.²⁶ These two compartment murders separated by a mere four years were “traumatic experiences” for Europe.²⁷

These killings and the ensuing media coverage they received fed into anxieties about trains, where travelers could encounter potentially dangerous strangers. The paranoia about fellow passengers was satirized in Leskov’s 1882 short story “Journey with a Nihilist” (“Puteshestvie s nigilistom”), which mocked the Russian stereotype of nihilists as terrorist bombers. It narrates the “adventure” [prikliuchenie] of five travelers—an unidentified narrator, a soldier, a cleric, a merchant, and a deacon—sharing the same compartment on “one of the small railway branches” that is still incomplete.²⁸ Their “adventure” begins when a sixth travelling companion suddenly appears in their

²⁸ N. S. Leskov, “Puteshestvie s nigilistom,” *Sobranie sochinii v odinnadtsati tomakh*, tom 7 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1958), 125.
compartment, and they instantly assume that he is “a real, pure-blooded nihilist.”

Goaded by the deacon in the group, the other passengers become entirely convinced that the sixth passenger has a bomb in the laundry basket located on the seat across from him. Their suspicions are further aroused when he denies their requests to move the basket.

Upon arriving at their destination, the suspecting travelers notice the nihilist heading to the door but without the suspicious basket. The station master happens to appear and begins questioning him. Dissatisfied with the suspect’s denials of being the basket’s owner, the interrogator takes the nihilist into custody along with the others in the compartment. After further questioning, they see a Jew enter and claim the basket, which, when opened, discloses nothing more than a lady’s dress. Apparently, there had been a seventh passenger in their compartment! He had placed his basket on the chair and then had hidden under the bench to avoid paying for a ticket. As for the supposed nihilist, he turns out to be, ironically, a public prosecutor of the appellate court, a representative of authority, not a challenger of it as they had assumed. It immediately occurs to the soldier to openly blame the deacon for this (non-)event. Again, the proclamation of one individual sets the group up for another witch hunt but this time to catch the deacon, who has, however, mysteriously already disappeared. Never is there any kind of acknowledgement of everyone else’s complicity in this (humorous) case of mistaken identity. Although the deacon had helped flame the fires of their ironclad preconceived beliefs, it was ultimately their choice to, albeit unknowingly, “railroad” an innocent man.

Anne Lounsbery interprets the train compartment in which these variegated people are thrown together as a microcosm of the modern world, “where people must

---

29 Leskov, “Puteshestvie s nihilistom,” 126.
30 Leskov, “Puteshestvie s nihilistom,” 132.
interact constantly with others who are unknown to them…people have to judge each other in the absence of traditional sources of information like family ties or shared personal history.”  

This lack of information about fellow travelers contributed to the sense that suspicious figures used the railways to instigate political instability through terrorism.

Tolstoy was among those Russian who feared that the railways would bring instability. He was especially concerned with their impact on the Russian agricultural economy. His anti-technological bias is made apparent in Levin’s case against the spread of railways in Russia. Levin argues that the railways threaten the profitability of agriculture in Russia. Poverty has been exacerbated by an “alien civilization abnormally grafted onto Russia, particularly by means of communication, the railways” (19:52). He goes on to argue that “the railways, which were brought about not by economic but by political necessity, were premature and, instead of contributing to agriculture, which was what was expected of them, had outstripped agriculture and caused the development of industry and credit” (19:52-3). Levin’s criticism of the railways as a foreign invasion is unconsciously shared by Anna, who on several occasions dreams of a muzhik speaking French while working on the rails.  

The striking image of the quintessential Russian, often the model of virtue in Tolstoy’s works, speaking in a foreign language used by the Russian elite, evokes a dichotomy between the natural (Russia) and the unnatural (the West).

---


32 Meyer, “Anna Karenina: Tolstoy’s Polemic with Madame Bovary,” 250. Meyer also suggests an analogy between Anna’s imagined French-speaking muzhik and the old vagrant whom Emma encounters on several occasions, including right before her death.
Tolstoy, however, miscast his critical net. Between Tolstoy’s anti-railway views and the then commonplace perception of the coming of the railroad as a savior is a middle road that coincides more accurately with the real impact of the railways. The railroads went beyond simply expediting the industrial revolution, triggering a massive chain reaction of changes in nearly every facet of society: business, industry, technology, urban and rural spaces, architecture, culture, and man’s basic understanding of time and space. They radically altered the economies of areas connected by the railways. Although Tolstoy and Dostoevsky in their novels argue against the spread of the railways, Russia needed them. In The Russian City between Tradition and Modernity, the historian Daniel Brower called the railroad “an instrument of salvation,” freeing commerce from its reliance on waterways, which were useless in frigid temperatures. The impact of the railroads was tangible in economic activities and the dynamics of urban growth: it enabled the speedy and direct transfer of goods from urban centers to peripheral towns; it also helped to keep food costs low by making food supplies regularly available in greater quantities than ever before; and, of course, the increased personal mobility facilitated the migration of labor from rural to urban areas. The Petersburg-Moscow line was instrumental in importing perishable foodstuffs, such as fruits, vegetables, and meat, without spoilage from the Moscow region to Petersburg, a city built on a marsh which made agriculture impossible there. As a result of cheaper food and produce, the cost of living decreased in Petersburg.


34 Brower, The Russian City between Tradition and Modernity, 49-50.

35 Haywood, Russia Enters the Railway Age, 519.
By the mid-1870s, almost twelve thousand miles of rails had been laid down. With easy access to national and international grain trade markets, the availability of foodstuffs in urban areas increased, thereby hastening commercial growth and intensifying the movement of migrants into and through certain cities.\(^{36}\) The migrant labor force, seasonally moving back and forth between rural and urban areas, grew because of the availability and affordability of third-class train travel. Distances that used to take weeks to cover by foot could be covered in hours by train. By the end of the nineteenth century, most of these workers traveled by train. In short, “the importance of these rail lines to the towns along their path cannot be exaggerated. A certain number of urban areas experienced a transportation and marketing revolution.”\(^{37}\)

The ease and affordability of train travel triggered the reshaping of leisure. After the Petersburg-Moscow line was built, dachas were also built in the vicinity of Moscow and even smaller towns such as Klin and Tver.\(^{38}\) In France, leisurely weekend trips to the suburbs quickly turned into permanent emigration toward the suburbs.\(^{39}\) The railways encouraged not only centripetal movement toward cities, related to labor, but also the centrifugal movement of passengers seeking leisure toward the peripheries of cities, thereby helping to develop suburbs. In this way, Schivelbusch argues, “space was both diminished and expanded.”\(^{40}\) As distances seemingly shrunk, remote regions became accessible through the railway network.

---

\(^{36}\) Brower, *The Russian City between Tradition and Modernity*, 47.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 43.

\(^{38}\) Haywood, *Russia Enters the Railway Age*, 524.


\(^{40}\) Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, 35.
This new connectedness is one of the many aspects defining the industrial age that is questioned in *La Bête humaine*. It is apparent from the opening pages of Zola’s novel that modernity has everything to do with trains. The story begins with a description of the Paris railway station, which noticeably precedes any description of a character, as Roubaud looks out from a fifth-floor apartment window with a panoramic view of the railway station. Roubaud’s view is dominated by the various components of the expansive Parisian railway station: a building inhabited by railway workers, glass roofs blackened by smoke from locomotives, sheds, three pairs of railway lines, black smoke blotting out the sky, and the posts for three pointsmen, who are responsible for the important task of diverting the trains onto another set of rails. Descriptions of nature are minimal, limited to passing mentions of a gray mid-February sky, sunlight, and “bare” gardens located near the pointsmen’s posts. The lack of any kind of description of people is all the more conspicuous given the highly detailed description of the railways at an exact moment in time:

He followed with his eyes the shunting-engine, a small six-coupled tank engine with low wheels, which was beginning to detach from the train, and an alert busybody, leading and pushing back the carriages to the sidings. Another engine, a powerful one, a four-coupled express locomotive with devouring wheels, stood alone, releasing through its chimney a thick black smoke rising straight up very slowly into the calm air. But all of his attention was taken up by the 3:25 train headed for Caen, already filled with its passengers, awaiting its engine. He did not catch a glimpse of that one, which was stopped beyond the Pont de l’Europe; he only heard it ask for the track, with slow and urgent whistle-blow, like a person overtaken with impatience. An order was shouted, it responded with a brief whistle indicating that it had understood. Then, before setting off in motion, there was a silence, the steam-cocks opened, the steam hissed at the ground level in a deafening spurt. (*La Bête humaine*, 23-4).

The description is photograph-like, a feature no doubt partially attributable to Zola’s love of photography, which he discovered in 1888. Yet, despite all the nuance captured here,

---

there are no details about people or nature. Both have seemingly been supplanted by man-made buildings, iron railways, and massive, wheeled machines. Man has been displaced as an object of interest, and iron machines and railings have replaced him. A human presence is hardly detectable aside from Roubaud, whose appearance and thoughts are not described at all. His sole function here is to serve as a lens through which to perceive a landscape that has been “railroaded.” (“To railroad,” an obsolete definition of which, the Oxford English Dictionary tells us, is “to construct railroads in.”)

If there is any detectable living presence in these opening paragraphs, it is the engines themselves, to which human qualities such as impatience have been attributed. This opening makes clear the novel’s naturalist commitment to engage with a specific milieu. The novel is also dedicated to depicting other physical aspects of the railway system, as pointed out by Zola scholar Henri Mitterand, from small to large: “the railway line, the stations, the inside space of the carriage, that of the locomotive, the level-crossing keeper’s dwelling, the signalman’s hut, the tunnel, the side of the track, etc.”

In contrast, in all of Anna Karenina, there is only one, very brief train description, which, aside from characterizing the train as heavy, remarkably does not describe it at all:

The approach of the train became all the more apparent with the movement of preparations at the station, the running of attendants, the appearance of gendarmes and servants and the approach of those who were coming to meet the train. Through the frosty steam workers in short fur coats and soft felt boots could be seen crossing the rails of the curved tracks. The whistle of the locomotive on the distant rails could be heard and the movement of something heavy. (18:65).

Tolstoy eschews a conventional description of the train’s physical attributes—the smoke emanating from the locomotive, the rotating wheels, the enormity of the machine, and so on, sketching instead an image of the “something” without referring to a single one of its

---

specific qualities. He denotes the train’s movement through the physical actions of the railway workers, gendarmes, servants, and the people awaiting its arrival. The tangible features of trains, which fascinated so many other nineteenth-century artists, are not mentioned anywhere in this passage where it would have been fitting.

As already noted, the sole descriptive quality Tolstoy does offer is “heavy,” a trait that is strangely also attributed to Anna. Although Anna’s quick and light steps, so evocative of a small, dainty woman, are mentioned several times in the novel, she is actually quite full-figured. The contrast between her quick steps and her full figure are striking to the narrator, who comments that Anna has “a quick gait, which so oddly carried her rather full body with ease” (18:68). The word “oddly” succinctly denotes the strange impression created by her ability to move quickly despite her “rather full body.” This incongruity suggests a kinship between Anna and a train, and by association, with speed (a relationship that is elaborated upon in the next chapter.)

Whereas trains are primarily associated with Anna and her affair with Vronsky, in La Bête humaine they connect all the characters, who either work for a railway company in some capacity or are related to someone who does. Moreover, they dominate every aspect of the novel, interspersed throughout which are episodic catastrophes involving trains (enumerated earlier in this chapter). Uninterested in “the fabrication of a work,” Zola concerned himself with “rendering alive and palpable…the perpetual transit of a major line.”

Indeed, the plot of the novel is not terribly complicated: one couple tries to avoid being discovered as murderers while a man struggles to prevent having a psychotic

---

episode. Far more interesting than the plot is the way Zola uses the railways as a model for narrative structure. In his notebooks on the novel, he stated his intention to graft a railway journey onto the structure of *La Bête humaine*. In an often-quoted letter to a friend, he wrote: “I would like my work itself to be like a trip on a sizable train…, slowing down and stopping at each station, that is to say at each chapter.” 44 Indeed, the Paris-Le Havre railway line links the different story lines generated by the characters, and serves as a metaphor for the novel’s structure. The railways appear in every chapter of *La Bête humaine*. They shuttle characters between the cities of Paris, Rouen, Barentin, and Le Havre, conveniently conveying the reader between places and characters. The railways inform the novel’s structure, functioning as the centerpiece of each major episode. The first chapter (the departure) concludes with a train, in which a murder is about to take place, departing; in the middle of the novel (chapter six), the plot speeds up just as a train would hit its highest speed at the midway point of a journey; the obstacles that the characters (chapters 7 and 10) face are mirrored in train-related complications: the stalling of a train due to bad weather, the planned derailment of a train by a horse-drawn dray placed across the tracks by Flore, and Flore’s suicide by an oncoming express train in a tunnel; once Jacques murders Séverine, the pace slows down near the end of the novel in the same way a train slows down as it approaches its destination (chapter 11); finally, the novel closes in June/July 1870, with the end of a railway journey and with the start of a new one, but this time with a runaway train headed to the Franco-Prussian war (chapter 12). The attendant violence and crises associated with the railways are headed uncontrollably beyond the bounded geographical and temporal parameters set by the novel, threatening not the lives of several individuals, but instead nations. The entire

---

44 As quoted in Kanes, *Zola’s La Bête humaine*, 11.
narrative, with each major episode functioning like a train stop, is isomorphic to a railway journey. The result is a wholly original melding of form and content, which creates a new possibility for novelistic topography. Instead of one event leading to the next, the plot follows a line, or lines, connecting all the events and characters into a railway network.

Through the unusual railway structure of *La Bête humaine*, Zola predetermines the connections within the novel for the reader. Tolstoy has a wholly different narrative strategy, which requires the reader to make the necessary connections. The structure of *Anna Karenina* is not linear; it eschews a straightforward beginning-middle-end narrative structure. Tolstoy’s novel tells the story of not only the eponymous heroine but also simultaneously that of Levin, jolting back and forth between the two. In fact, Vladimir Nabokov, in his lecture on the novel, notes that “any old kind of transition is used from chapter to chapter.”

Tolstoy is conscious of this narrative disorder, akin to the confusion that has descended upon the Oblonsky house as mentioned in the second line of *Anna Karenina*, “Everything was confused in the home of the Oblonsky’s.” (18:3). The phrase “everything was mixed-up” appears in the novel four more times: 1) when Stiva sees his children pretending to simulate a railroad journey using a cardboard box, he thinks to himself, “Everything has become mixed-up…over there the children are unsupervised.” (18:10); 2) The narrator uses the phrase to convey Anna’s state of confusion during her train ride back to St. Petersburg from Moscow (18:108); 3) Anna’s son also experiences a state of confusion when he has a dream involving his mother, a windmill, and a penknife (18:98); and 4) while Levin is observing a group of people casting their votes, “everything was so confused that the provincial marshal had to call for order” (18:228).

---

The repeated use of the phrase in various contexts intimates a concern with disorder, to which there is no apparent solution.

It turns out, however, that there is a “response” to the phrase. In the second chapter of part I, Matvei comforts his master with one word, which appears italicized consistently throughout the novel: “obrazuetsia” [“it will work itself out”; literally, “it will shape itself”] (18:7). The root of this verb, obraz, means “image” or “ikon.” This word reappears throughout the novel. After Matvei says it, Stiva, in turn, repeatedly says it to himself, wanting to believe while simultaneously doubting it (18:13). The phrase reappears in part III when the Oblonskys have moved temporarily to their country home, where Dolly is in despair because the house is in disarray. Here the reader learns that the phrase is actually not Matvei’s, as previously thought, but rather that of another servant, Matryona Filimonovna, “an unnoticed but most important and most useful person,” who reassures Dolly with it (18:275). In part IV, Stiva again believes that things will shape up with regard to a new superior at work (18:395). Stiva says the phrase when Levin nervously waits for his dress shirt right before his wedding ceremony. Stiva, just as Matvei had once tried to console him, tries to comfort his friend, over what is essentially a trivial incident, by telling him, “obrazuetsia” (19:15). Stiva repeats “obrazuetsia” twice, confident of its validity, at the close of the chapter after Levin has received the shirt (19:16). In response to the seemingly insignificant crises (a missing shirt) to more serious ones (the discovery of an affair), the possibility always exists for situations to resolve themselves without any participation from the actors involved.

The process from disorder to “self-ordering” is applicable to the narrative structure of Anna Karenina. Tolstoy discourages the reader from solely relying on the sequence of events to determine their relationships to each other and encourages them to
link disparate events through association. Rachinsky was frustrated by the lack of a structuring “architecture” unifying Anna’s and Levin’s plot lines. In response to Rachinsky’s criticism, Tolstoy wrote in an oft-quoted letter dated 27 January 1878:

I pride myself, on the contrary, on the architectonics—the arches are joined in such a way that it is impossible to notice where the keystone is. And I strived above all else to do this. The link in the structure is created not by the story and not by the relationships (acquaintanceship) of the characters, but by the internal link. (27:377).

The sense of unity in Tolstoy’s novel comes not from the subject, from a tidy chronological presentation of episodes, as in La Bête humaine, but rather from the linkages within the novel. Tolstoy’s narrative strategy serves as the basis for one effective reading strategy. Liza Knapp suggests in Approaches to Teaching Anna Karenina one way of navigating through “the Tolstoyan labyrinth” is “a textual scavenger hunt.” This strategy encourages the reader to track “images, themes, events, literary devices,” or any number of quotidian objects, such as animals, teeth, any work of art, iron, Anna’s red bag, or women’s clothing. The reader then should “consider each example in its context and…look for possible patterns that emerge, for linkages among different examples as well as for apparent lack of connection and for randomness.” The connections within Anna Karenina are nearly infinite and not always obvious, requiring the reader to engage with the text to make these connections. This narrative strategy rewards the process of becoming aware of the connections over the final conclusion derived from the linkages.

Gustafson writes in Resident and Stranger, “In Tolstoy reading is an act of glancing

---

46 For more on Rachinsky’s relationship with Tolstoy see Hugh McLean, In Quest of Tolstoy, 161-2.


backward while moving forward, a continual reassessment.” Inherent to *Anna Karenina* is an invitation to the reader to revisit and reassess parts of the text related to these various objects to figure out how they are woven into the text and fit into the larger narrative.

This reading strategy, moreover, reflects Tolstoy’s multi-directional approach to narrative. The backward-and-forward movement given form in the architectonics of the novel is relevant to what I will argue is a key figure in the novel—motion parallax, which is a depth cue resulting from motion. An observer, who is, for instance, riding in a train carriage, is able to distinguish stationary objects, such as trees, that are closer to the window from those that are further away, such as a mountain range, by how quickly they seem to be moving; the faster a stationary object appears to be moving, the closer it is to the observer. Furthermore, objects closest to the observer will appear to be moving backwards whereas distant objects will appear to move in the same direction as the observer. Because of motion parallax, the brain is able to discern the relative distance of

---


50 In her article on the train in *Anna Karenina*, Alyson Tapp writes, “Narrative is a form of motion. We speak of a text conveying meaning, of transporting the reader to another world, and we find that the textual practices of metaphor and translation have ideas of movement at their core.” Alyson Tapp, “Moving Stories: (E)Motion And Narrative In Anna Karenina,” *Russian Literature* 61.3 (2007): 341, ScienceDirect, web (18 July 2009).

51 Chekhov’s short story *Gooseberries* (1898) opens with the narrator describing the landscape as viewed by two protagonists, who see hills, from one of which one could see “a train, which in the distance resembled a crawling caterpillar.” (A.P. Chekhov, “Kryzhovnik,” *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v tridsatii tomakh*, tom 10 (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), 55.) The narrator does not describe the actual movement of this hypothetical train but rather its apparent movement. Because it is distant from him, it looks as if it is traveling much more slowly and looks much smaller than it actually is. This depiction of the train’s movement as slow is a departure from descriptions of it as fast and massive. In addition to rendering this distortion in perspective, the metaphor likens a man-made machine to a creature of nature. The railways have been “naturalized.”

There might be a parallel in the story between Ivan Ivanych’s brother and the gooseberries, which are small and insignificant but so idealized in his mind that he must have them at all costs. The value of the gooseberries, the story demonstrates, is relative to one’s (distorted) perspective. There is still much work to be done in examining the railways in Chekhov’s works, building on what Stephen Baehr started.
stationary objects when the body is in motion, though researchers to this day still know little about how this mechanism operates in the brain’s visual system.\textsuperscript{52}

“Motion parallax” is a relatively recent term, tied to the notion of “induced motion,” “the apparent visual movement of a stationary object, usually in the opposite direction to the real movement of other objects.”\textsuperscript{53} The concept of “induced motion,” in contrast, was known as early as around 300 B.C., when Euclid (ca. 323-283 B.C.) noted in his \textit{Optics} that when three objects, two in motion and one stationary, are viewed simultaneously, the latter will appear to move backwards.\textsuperscript{54} Two centuries later, Titus Lucretius (ca. 98-55 B.C.) observed induced motion in the natural environment, specifically in relation to celestial bodies. Stars appear to be stationary unless clouds pass them, in which case they appear to move in a direction opposite to their true one. Claudius Ptolemy (ca. 100-170 A.D.) observed a comparable situation with a stationary boat in moving water. An observer inside the boat, if looking only at the water, will think that the boat is moving and not the water, but if he looks at both the water and land in the distance, then the motion of the water can be observed.\textsuperscript{55}

In the late seventeenth century, French writers on optics and vision described the phenomenon of motion parallax without identifying it as such.\textsuperscript{56} Jacques Rouhault (1620-1675) described how the movement of just one eye could help determine depth. Philippe de La Hire (1640-1718) was the first person to use the term “parallax.” He recognized its

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \cite{Ibid} Ibid., 377.
\item \cite{Wade2005} Wade, and Heller, “Visual Motion Illusions, Eye Movements, and the Search for Objectivity,” 378.
\item \cite{Ono2005} Hiroshi Ono and Nicholas J. Wade, “Depth and Motion in Historical Descriptions of Motion Parallax,” \textit{Perception}, 34 (2005): 1264.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
relationship to the determination of relative distance. The term, derived from the Greek word *parallaxis* meaning “alteration,” originally had been used in astronomy to describe the apparent motion of the stars produced by an alternation in an observer’s position. In 1833, the English astronomer John Herschel, a key advocate for the use of the Greenwich Mean Time in Great Britain, made the connection between motion and parallax. To illustrate his point, he described in his “Treatise on Astronomy” (1833) what one would see outside a rapidly moving carriage or train window:

> Let any one travelling rapidly along a high road fix his eye steadily on any object, but at the same time not entirely withdraw his attention from the general landscape, he will see, or think he sees, the whole landscape thrown into *rotation*, and moving round that object as a centre; all objects between it and himself appearing to move *backwards*, or the contrary way to his own motion; and all beyond it, forwards, or in the direction in which he moves.\(^{57}\)

The view from the window of a moving vehicle remains the most common illustration to this day of motion parallax. What this brief look at the history of motion parallax makes evident is the evolution of observed instances of parallax, from natural, celestial bodies to man’s everyday experience of it through advancing forms of man-made transportation technologies—boats, carriages, and, of course, trains. Faster forms of transportation have revealed more to us about how we perceive motion. (The irony is that understanding motion parallax has helped scientists to replicate the feeling of movement without a subject ever moving, as in video games.)

Motion parallax causes in a subject a moment of cognitive dissonance in that what appears to be happening is contrary to what the subject knows to be true. Awareness of this disjunction was especially pronounced with the advent and popularization of the train, which was the fastest form of transportation in the nineteenth century. At this time, with new technologies and visual culture, the intriguing disparity between what one saw

\(^{57}\) As quoted in ibid., 1265.
and reality became of increasing interest. Experts started to regard optical illusions as “optical truths.” According to Jonathan Crary’s *Techniques of the Observer* (1990), a fascinating study on man’s evolving understanding of vision during the nineteenth century,

> in the early nineteenth century, particularly with Goethe, such experiences attain the status of optical ‘truth.’ They are no longer deceptions that obscure a ‘true’ perception; rather they begin to constitute an irreducible component of human vision...there was no such thing as optical illusion: whatever the healthy corporeal eye experienced was in fact optical truth.  

One contributing factor to these new questions and understandings of vision was “the often accidental observation of new forms of movement, in particular mechanized wheels moving at high speeds,” or, in other words, the train. On December 9, 1824, Peter Mark Roget (1779-1869), an English mathematician better known today for compiling the first thesaurus, delivered a speech in which he recounted his observation of an optical illusion produced by a rolling railway carriage wheel seen through the slats of a fence. “Under these circumstances the spokes of the wheel, instead of appearing straight, as they would naturally do if no bars intervened, seem to have a considerable degree of curvature.” Crary concludes that the railroad and the development of mechanized cogwheels played a role in furthering our understanding of vision, perception, and cognition. “[N]ew experiences of speed and machine movement disclosed an increasing divergence between appearances and their external causes.”

---

59 Ibid., 97-8.
60 Ibid., 111.
Before elaborating on the significance of motion parallax in *Anna Karenina*, I will first briefly discuss the appearance of motion parallax in two of Tolstoy’s major later shorter works, *The Death of Ivan Il’ich* and *The Kreutzer Sonata*. In *The Death of Ivan Il’ich*, the protagonist Ivan is depicted in the early part of his life as frequently moving around with his family as he quickly ascends the ranks within the judicial system. He is essentially a social climber, investing time and money in acquiring material objects and socializing strictly with well-connected individuals to advance his career. One day he mysteriously becomes ill, and as his condition worsens, Ivan becomes increasingly immobile. His illness triggers a spiritual crisis. Ironically, it is only when he cannot move, when he is near the end of this life, that he recognizes that he has “lived not as I [he] ought to have” (26:113). It is a conclusion that he could not have made earlier because before he could only think of “all the legality, correctitude, and propriety of his life” (26:109). Two hours before dying, Ivan experiences a sensation that resembles motion parallax. “What happened with him was what used to happen to him in a railway carriage, when you think that you are going forwards but actually are going backwards, and suddenly realize the real direction” (26:113).

Motion parallax is a modern visual metaphor for *peripeteia*. Just as motion parallax induces a moment of doubt regarding direction, a life event can cause a person to doubt the direction of his entire life. That doubt, in Tolstoy’s ideal world, leads to the recognition (*anagnorisis*) that the forward direction in which a person presumes his life to be headed is false. Instead, the person has been regressing. This is a moment of *peripeteia*. Aristotle applied the terms *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* to Greek tragedies and used them to articulate the relationship between the hero to other characters. His prime example is the moment when Oedipus is no longer ignorant of his true identity, a
realization that entails becoming cognizant of his role in the murder of his father and his incestuous marriage to his mother. Only by looking backwards and recognizing the true direction of his life is he able to go forward. Ivan Il'ich’s experience of excruciating physical pain represents the tremendous effort required to acknowledge one’s mistakes.

Tolstoy believed that material progress, as indicated by the accumulation of wealth and status, is an optical illusion, endowing man with a false sense of direction and purpose. This explains his issue with the railways, which did not have to do with technology per se but rather with the unquestioned assumption that the material and quantifiable progress resulting from trains would actually lead to better, more meaningful lives. Tolstoy’s point in The Death of Ivan Il'ich, and elsewhere as we will see, is that when man is at rest, not on “automatic pilot” headed to his next destination, he has time to reflect on where he has been, and thereby becomes able to reassess the true direction of his life. The conclusion at which Ivan arrives right before he dies is that the only judgment that matters is that of the truth-seeker and not that of his peers. “[H]e waved his hand, knowing that the one who needed to, would understand” (26:113; italics are mine).

Ivan Il’ich’s recognition of this spiritual truth turns what could have been an Aristotelian tragedy into a story about enlightenment and redemption. Ivan Il’ich finds that “instead of death, there was light” (26:114). Life begins at the moment of death.

Similarly, death, or, more specifically, a gruesome murder, leads to insight in The Kreutzer Sonata, in which forward movement is demonstrated to lead a person backwards and vice versa. The story opens, like Dostoevsky’s Idiot and Leskov’s “Journey with a Nihilist,” conspicuously on a train that is a modern-day version of the

---

Ship of Fools, with a chance gathering of a motley crew of men and women—a male lawyer, a liberated female nihilist, an old merchant, a young tradesman—debating the validity of divorce. The lawyer and his female companion argue that divorce is perfectly acceptable in this day and age, while the old man, a throwback to the sixteenth-century men of the domostroi era, endorses patriarchal tyranny. To this argument, a third voice is introduced by an unidentified narrator. The lone traveler Pozdnyshev challenges their views with his unorthodox stance on male-female relationships as being based on nothing more than sex. The reader is unsure about whose side the truth will be found, with Pozdnyshev or with the others. Pozdnyshev speaks nearly non-stop detailing his ideas on marriage, sex, and divorce while sustaining the narrator’s (and the reader’s) curiosity by promising to relate the story of how he ended up murdering his wife.

It is tempting to read the story as a statement on narrative being like a railway journey. But that would be a misreading. This narrative is a simulacrum of the train experience from a passenger’s perspective. The brief chapters contribute to the disjointed feel of the narrative, reminding the reader of train stops, but the narrative is nothing like a railway line. The story is told in a disjointed manner; most of the chapters do not pick up precisely where the previous chapter left off, but instead a few moments afterwards. The way the story is told mimics the narrator’s experience at the beginning of the story, when he “could hear their conversation in snippets” (27:7). The text explains that he has difficult hearing because the train rattles whenever the train moves along. He manages to hear Pozdnyshev better once he sidles up to him, and it is now the reader who is unable to catch everything. Once Pozdnyshev takes over the narrative and is the one speaking most

---

of the time, each chapter closes with him saying one thing, but the following chapter opens with him speaking about something else. For instance, the third chapter ends with him mentioning the “episode” that changed his life forever but the subsequent chapter starts with him talking about the “torments” he has lived through. It as though the reader is also a passenger on the train.

The significance of having Pozdnyshev relate the murder story on a train is that Tolstoy effectively creates a narrative that is homologous to motion parallax. The reader, like the narrator, is aware of the backward movement of Pozdnyshev’s narrative. As Pozdnyshev travels forward in space, he is going backwards in time, recollecting how he murdered his wife over her alleged affair with a musician. The railroad setting of the storytelling reinforces Pozdnyshev’s message, supported with figures and percentages, of mechanical and certain (spiritual) death because of sexual desire. After he kills his wife, he insists that he has become enlightened: “ever since that ‘episode’ occurred my eyes were opened, and I have been seeing everything in a completely different light. Everything reversed, everything reversed!” (27:16; italics are mine). This explains the Homeric epithet associated with him from the beginning of the story, “with unusually illuminated eyes.” The opposite of what we know is actually the truth, and once we realize this, we become enlightened.

Pozdnyshev’s newfound realization constitutes the story’s controversial and rather extreme position: marriage, which he, like the reader, once viewed as holy, is nothing more than an institutionalized and acceptable form of prostitution. But to dwell solely on that one point is to miss Tolstoy’s real point: to question our “common sense.” The backward motion of his narrative conveys him, and the reader, to a reversed worldview that is contrary to the one maintained and propagated by society. Tolstoy uses motion
parallax in *The Kreutzer Sonata* in order to sober up an “intoxicated” society. The implication of the story is that society as a whole, not simply the occasional individual, is backwards. That perhaps helps explain the aggressively negative reaction the story provoked. With regard to story-telling, Tolstoy conveys that a “good” narrative is nothing like a railway journey. It should be, in fact, the exact antithesis. Unlike trains, narrative leads you backwards, which is the only true way forward, metaphysically speaking.

Contrary to the belief that forward motion inevitably leads to progress, Tolstoy wants us to believe that going backward is the true path forward, toward an enlightenment that will lead to real insight and reveal to us *how to live*. Life’s passengers reach enlightenment when they first begin to doubt the direction in which they are moving (motion parallax) and then through a painful process arrive at insight. But the path to *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* through doubt is not easy as demonstrated by Ivan Il'ich’s fatal illness and the brutal murder of Pozdnyashev’s wife. There is a very high price to be paid for being a late-arriver, the literal meaning of the name Pozdnyashev, but Tolstoy also reminds us that late is surely better than never.

In *Anna Karenina*, motion parallax is first mentioned, as it is in *The Death of Ivan Il'ich*, as a metaphor for an odd sensation experienced by Anna during her train ride from Moscow to St. Petersburg. Anna has a peculiar physiological response while thinking about her encounter with Vronsky in Moscow:

> her nerves, like wires, keep stretching more and more tightly on some kind of winding pegs. She felt her eyes widening more and more, her fingers and toes nervously moving, inside something oppressing her breathing, and all the images and sounds in this wavering semi-darkness struck her with unusual vividness. Minutes of doubt as to whether the carriage was moving forwards or backwards, or standing still, unrelentingly struck her. (18:91).
The doubt Anna experiences is akin to motion parallax, which serves as a metaphor for the confusion her senses are experiencing. Later in the novel, her confusion over going forward or backward will become a metaphor for her entire life.

Near the end of her life, Anna does experience motion parallax. While inside a train just beginning to depart, she looks out the window “at the people who, as if rolling backwards, were seeing the train off and standing on the platform” (19:346). The narrator describes not what is actually happening but rather the visual illusion caused by motion parallax. Contrary to reality, Anna perceives the platform with the people on it as moving backwards while her train seems to be stationary. If we read this line in the context of Tolstoy’s later works, *The Death of Ivan Il’ich* and *The Kreutzer Sonata*, this scene is suggestive of Anna’s potential for peripeteia and anagnorisis. She is beginning to become conscious of the true direction in which her illicit actions have led her—backwards.

In *La Bête humaine*, Séverine experiences railway motion parallax though under different circumstances. In chapter eight, after a conspicuous delay, she finally confesses to Jacques that she and Roubaud murdered Grandmorin. She then describes exactly what happened from her perspective, that is, the perspective of a passenger looking out of a moving train window. Her account of that night is implicitly juxtaposed with that of Jacques, who witnesses the murder while looking in. She describes looking out her window as her husband struggles with Grandmorin. She sees “the black masses of trees” as they “furiously march by” (*La Bête humaine*, 191), and hears “this roar of the wheels, the likes of which she has never heard” (*La Bête humaine*, 191). Just as Anna misperceives the train platform moving away, Séverine similarly perceives the stationary trees as moving. Zola elects to convey Séverine’s deeply disturbed emotional state not
through her thoughts, but through a detailed description of her perceptions of the physical world as seen and heard from the rapidly moving train.

One key difference between Séverine’s experience of motion parallax and that of Anna is that the former’s emphasizes the speed, not direction, at which stationary objects appear to move like animate beings. Due to the high speed of the train, the trees not only appear to Séverine to move, they seem to be “furiously marching” like people. And they appear to move even faster when Séverine is outside the train with Roubaud, trying to return unnoticed to their compartment. As they walk along a running board attached to the train and holding onto a thin railing, Séverine comes in direct contact with the effects of speed: the wind knots her hair, her skirt swirls around her, and “behind my back, the countryside was flying by, the trees followed me in an enraged gallop, turning on themselves, twisted, letting out a brief cry as they passed by” (La Bête humaine, 194).

The shock of committing murder and the fear of getting caught cause her to see an altered reality in which massive trees frighteningly chase her. This altered reality she perceives makes palpable the intense experience of committing a crime while also traveling at a high speed.

That motion parallax is a consequence of speed is secondary to the more important point that Tolstoy wants to make, which is the misleading nature of our senses, specifically sight. Zola is more interested in the intense experiences that are byproducts of speed. Faster travel, in theory, makes it possible to see more of the world. Trips, which take days by carriage, take only a few hours by train. But Jacques’ Aunt Phasie suggests otherwise. She laments to him that even though she sees him passing her home daily on his train, he does not see her, and she insists “[t]hat’s no way of seeing the world” (La Bête humaine, 52). Phasie’s comment points to an irony of train travel: it enables one to
see so much and, yet, also miss so much. Her words can be understood both literally and
figuratively for she cannot see people’s faces because they are whizzing by so quickly. In
her mind, something is not right about not being able to see people. But even more
unsettling to her is the fact that the passengers do not see her. Train travelers are
indifferent to her suffering as her husband gradually poisons her to death to get his hands
on her small fortune, the actual existence of which is dubious. Her sense of identity, like
everyone else’s, rests in part on other people recognizing her and her suffering, which,
ultimately goes unheeded because no one is there to witness it. The effect on her is
distressing and dehumanizing.

Zola gives aesthetic form to these limitations in vision caused by speed. One way
in which he does so is by providing two different perspectives on a single event. This is
best exemplified by the two perspectives of Grandmorin’s death, presented in the novel.
As already noted, Séverine’s mobile perspective of the murder complements Jacques’
witnessing of it from a stationary point of view. The reader first learns of Grandmorin’s
murder in the second chapter, not from the perspective of the murderers, as one might
expect, but instead from that of a third character, Jacques. Zola provides an alternate
perspective on the railways by describing what Jacques sees from his up-close, stationary
vantage point as the train with a murder taking place on it rapidly passes him by. This
constitutes a third perspective on the railways, distinct from the panoramic overview of a
Parisian train station from Roubaud’s distant, stationary vantage point, and Séverine’s
view point from a moving train. Whereas Roubaud is able to view the railway station
clearly because of distance, Jacques is unable to discern everything taking place in the
coupe as the murder takes place because of his close proximity to the train as it rapidly
passes him by.
Jacques, very distinctly, at this precise quarter of a second, perceived, through the lit up windows of a carriage, a man who was holding another man knocked down on the seat and who was planting a knife into his neck, while a black mass, perhaps a third person, perhaps a fallen piece of luggage, was bearing down all of its weight on the convulsing legs of the murdered man. (*La Bête humaine*, 64-5).

Because of the immense speed at which the train passes by, he is unsure of what he sees, wondering whether it was a person falling down on the victim’s legs or whether it was an object. After this, he starts doubting whether he saw anyone get stabbed in the throat in part because witnessing a murder is so out of the ordinary and in part because of the speed of the train. The scene becomes a blur to him, and he begins to doubt himself and his faculty of seeing:

> Was he seeing right? And he was hesitating now, he no longer dared to confirm the reality of this vision that had been brought on and carried away in a flash…But everything was getting confused and was evaporating like in a dream…It was without a doubt only a figment of his imagination. (*La Bête humaine*, 65).

Jacques is only able to believe what he saw when he sees the result of what he thinks he saw, Grandmorin’s body, thrown out a train window, with its slit throat. Visual distortions caused by speed serve as a valid explanation for his inability to identify the murderers. When questioned about the murder by the authorities, Jacques denies that he would be able to recognize the killers, explaining, “Picture, after all, a train that must have been going at a speed of eighty kilometers an hour” (*La Bête humaine*, 87).

Although he did not see the faces of the murderers clearly, he eventually pieces the truth together and determines their identity. Nevertheless, he maintains in front of investigators that he cannot identify, nor even describe, the perpetrators, citing the high speed of the train as the reason, which the investigators accept as a plausible explanation. By presenting the murder through Jacques’ eyes, Zola ensures that the reader remains ignorant of the precise details of the murder until Jacques hears Séverine’s version of that
night. Her version complements his but still suggests incompleteness because we never learn of Roubaud’s perspective on that night. Zola’s uses different perspectives of the murder to point to the inadequacies of any one point of view. Zola conveys the subjective experience of motion, drawing into question what the eye can see and what “I” can know.

The juxtaposition of two perspectives on a scene involving a train is echoed when Flore decides to derail the Le Havre-Paris morning train carrying Séverine and Jacques at Barentin. Flore drags five horses attached to a cart across the rails and holds them there for the express purpose of killing the two lovers, who head to Paris every Friday morning together on the same train. A meter before the train is about to collide with the cart, a blink of a second prior, the narrator abruptly cuts to earlier in the morning in Le Havre, when Séverine boards the train on which Jacques works:

> At the very moment where the breast of the engine was going to hit the blocks [of stone], when it still had a meter maybe to go, during this invaluable time, she [Flore] saw Jacques very distinctly, the hand on the steering wheel of the gear shift. He turned, their eyes met in a gaze, which she found immeasurably long. That very morning Jacques smiled at Séverine as she descended onto the platform at Havre for the express as she did each week. (*La Bête humaine*, 238).

The narrator recounts their day right up to the point when the locomotive, La Lison, crashes into the dray. Then the narrator abruptly cuts to Misard, Cabuche, and Flore, through the eyes of whom the reader witnesses the consequences of the tragic collision:

> Jacques, frozen to his post, his right hand gripping the gear-shift, the other pulled on the whistle without him knowing it, waiting. And La Lison, smoking, blowing, in this high-pitched roaring which did not stop, rammed into the dray, with the enormous weight of the thirteen wagons that she hauled. Then, twenty meters from them, at the side of the track where terror froze them in their places, Misard and Cabuche, arms in the air, Flore, wide-eyed, saw this terrifying thing: the train rearing upright, seven wagons climbing one on top of the other, then falling back down with an abominable-sounding crack, into a shapeless debacle of wreckage. (*La Bête humaine*, 239).

It turns out that it is the reader who travels like a train passenger in the vehicle of the text, who must link these scenes together into a coherent whole. Mitterand characterized the
style of Zola’s descriptions like those of an Impressionist painter, but I would add that they are also post-Impressionist, anticipating Cubism with its explorations of geometrical forms, fragmentation, and multiple viewpoints. Zola encourages the reader to create his own panoramic view, which “goes hand in hand with the aestheticizing perspective [that was characteristic of the Naturalists],” for “both are intent on making wholes out of parts, stitching fragments, ‘slices’ and ‘tableaux’ into coherent patterns.”

Tolstoy uses motion parallax as a metaphor to question forward, linear progress, and Zola uses it to explore a modern phenomenon related to vision and speed. Whereas in the novels of the nineteenth century, dreams often served as the medium for expressing the classic disparity between reality and appearance, *La Bête humaine* and *Anna Karenina* thematize visual distortions and subjective visions to question man’s understanding of his reality. In both *La Bête humaine* and *Anna Karenina* vision is aestheticized through motion parallax as a way of representing human subjectivity.

One distinction between Zola and Tolstoy, however, is that while the former used subjective perceptions of the outside world to reflect a character’s inner state of mind, the latter was uninterested in the details of the physical world. As Ksana Blank puts it in one of the footnotes of her article entitled “Lev Tolstoy’s Suprematist Icon-Painting,” “Tolstoy’s characters see a world devoid of details.” Rather, Tolstoy is interested in conveying the effects of the external world on the inner workings of an individual’s soul. Blank observes that one way Tolstoy accomplishes this is through his abstract descriptions of characters based on solid colors and geometric shapes, such as a blue

rectangle or a black circle. Blank links Tolstoy’s abstract style to the Suprematist paintings of the avant-garde artist Kazimir Malevich (1879-1935). The geometric shapes found in both Tolstoy’s writings and Malevich’s paintings suggest a kinship based on “a point of view from within,” which Blank states “is characteristic of early Russian icons.”68 Icon-painting, Tolstoy, and Malevich all adopt an “inner perspective” “radiating…from…within the picture itself.”69 In one of the article’s footnotes, Blank also proposes “an alternative explanation for the similarities between Malevich and Tolstoy based on studies in cognitive psychology, the theory of visual perception, and the psychology of stress and anxiety. Emotional stress, excitement or anxiety can severely impair a person’s vision and the associative memory involved in the process of recognition of the image.”70 This point she raises is relevant to understanding vision in not only Tolstoy’s novel but also Zola’s.

Vision impairment in their novels is in the form of motion parallax. In La Bête humaine, that particular type of visual distortion is a symptom of emotions’ effect on one’s perception of reality, whereas in Anna Karenina, it is one of the negative effects of technology and the material world on the soul. Anna’s visual impairment is particularly interesting. Her experiences with trains are demonstrative of what happens when one sees too much. She cannot look beyond her carnal desires to see what is truly important in life. Seeing too much thus results in what Virilio calls “blindness,” which he equates with being “very much at the heart of the coming ‘vision machine.’” The production of sightless vision is itself merely the reproduction of an intense blindness that will become

68 Ibid., 76.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid., 78.
the latest and last form of industrialization: the industrialization of the non-gaze.”

Virilio ultimately concludes that “movement is blindness” and “immobility makes visible.”

Yet, Tolstoy did not believe that the effects of movement could not be reversed. That potential resides in every one, but this corrective reversal is a process that takes time. There is no fast track to illumination. This may account for the narrator’s silence in *The Kreutzer Sonata* on his own stance with regard to Pozdnyshev’s ideas. He has not yet made up his mind, but through his dialogue with Pozdnyshev, who is the more dominant interlocutor, the seed for adaptive change has been introduced. Through his conversation with the “enlightened” Pozdnyshev, the narrator now possesses the potential for his views to evolve. This ability to reverse one’s beliefs is exemplified in *Anna Karenina*, through Levin. He manages this simply by walking. The following chapter will examine the effect of different modes of transportation on the psychic processes of the unconscious, which possesses the key to a true spiritual (r)evolution.

---

72 Ibid., 68 and 69.
Trains, Carriages, and Walks: Defragmenting the Subconscious

Consciousness does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly...It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness.

William James, 1890

Что старее, то правее.
[That which is older is truer.]
Russian folk proverb

In a letter dated 5 December 1883, Tolstoy wrote to Strakhov about Turgenev, who had died a few months earlier. To illustrate his preference for Turgenev over Dostoevsky, Tolstoy used the metaphor of a horse that “would get you there”:

There are splendid horses: a 1,000-ruble trotter, and suddenly a hitch; both the splendid horse and the athlete are not worth a brass farthing. The longer I live, the more I value people without hitches. You say that you reconciled yourself with Turgenev. But I started to love him dearly. And I am amused by the fact that he was without hitches and would take you there, whereas the trotter will get you nowhere on it, if, moreover, it takes you out of your way into a ditch. (63:142).

Tolstoy continued, saying that Turgenev would “outlive” Dostoevsky because the latter had “a hitch” [s zaminkoi] (63:142). One could imagine Tolstoy comparing Zola as well to a horse leading its rider nowhere. La Bête humaine, for one, does not concern itself at all with showing the reader a way out. We cannot, of course, fault Zola for not providing solutions to the issues raised in his novel (though critics did). But, in this regard, he is

radically different from Tolstoy, who shows in *Anna Karenina* not only a *way* out, but also the *means* by which man’s existential problems could be resolved. And, unsurprisingly, in Tolstoy’s world, the way out is definitely not by train, which leads one only to a state of parallax, where going forward takes one backward. The process of self-discovery and the path to life’s meaning cannot be streamlined, and attempts to do so lead a person into a backward direction. In *Anna Karenina*, it turns out that the slower the mode of movement, the greater the spiritual heights one can attain, suggesting an inverse relationship between physical motion and spiritual motion. That Levin reaches his spiritual epiphany at the novel’s end while walking is very significant. Walking can take a person out of a state of parallax.

This correlation between physical and spiritual journeys is hardly new in literature.2 Tolstoy’s unique contribution resides in the expression of this correlation through the interior monologues of Dolly, Anna, and Levin in the second half of *Anna Karenina*. An incredibly astute observer of human psychic processes, in his novel he details characters’ innermost thoughts while performing mundane tasks, such as taking a stroll. No scholar has yet examined the fact that each major interior monologue in the novel occurs while a character is in transit: Dolly is in a carriage; Anna is also in a carriage and then in a train; and Levin is outside walking. Only through this juxtaposition of their interior monologues does the relationship between different forms of transportation and spiritual progress become apparent.

---

2 Two notable works in the Western tradition in which we see this theme is John Bunyan’s 1678 work *Pilgrim’s Progress*, which was later satirized by Nathaniel Hawthorne’s allegorical short story, “Celestial Railroad” (1843). It tells the story from a first-person point of view one man’s journey to the Celestial City by train. Tolstoy was less than enamored with Bunyan’s story. Irina Reyfman, “Tolstoy the Wanderer and the Quest for Adequate Expression” (unpublished paper presented at The Neo-Formalist Circle Conference – Tolstoy 100 Years On, Mansfield College, Oxford, September 13-15, 2010). We should not forget Dante’s fourteenth-century epic poem *Inferno* or Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* from the same period.
As it turns out, in *Anna Karenina*, different types of physical movements can promote or impede the process of self-reflection, which can lead to spiritual progress. In this chapter, I will first provide a context for the metaphor of movement in Tolstoy’s early and late fiction and non-fiction works. Then, I will examine the influence of motion on the interior monologues of the characters. These monologues ultimately constitute what I consider to be Tolstoy’s “realism of interiority.” Although one of Tolstoy’s aims in writing *Anna Karenina* was to depict the political and economic implications of the railways, his core concern was the way they interfered with an individual’s inner life and ability to contemplate. For contemplation is essential, in Tolstoy’s view, to the development of an individual’s personhood.

In Tolstoy’s other works, before and after his conversion, the characterization of spirituality in terms of movement recurs. In his 1898 treatise *What is Art?* (*Chto takoe iskusstvo*?), Tolstoy wrote, “Mankind ceaselessly moves from a lower, more particular and less clear understanding of life toward one that is higher, more general and clearer” (30:68).³ Vertical upward movement emblematizes spiritual evolution, which brings a person closer to the meaning of life. For Tolstoy, becoming one of “the fittest” had nothing to do with physicality. Instead, it involved engaging oneself in the process of discovering the “divine self.”⁴

In *La Bête humaine*, the divine self, along with God, is completely absent. Only reason has the potential to serve as a counter-balancing check to man’s hidden animal, but even that proves ineffective against the overpowering nature of the beast within. Most

---

of *La Bête humaine* chronicles Jacques’ efforts to manage his animal instincts and resist committing murder. He is, however, ultimately doomed to fail just as the morally bankrupt political system in France will be unable to stop itself from engaging in its war with Prussia. His behavior is constrained and determined by the era and space in which he lives, rendering change impossible. Tolstoy, in contrast, had his own theory of “evolution.” Contemplation, he held, though not a quick process, could eventually lead individuals to greater self-awareness and an understanding of life’s significance.

That Tolstoy privileged carriage rides to train rides is evident in his writings and in his personal life. The memoirs of Tolstoy’s brother-in-law, Stepan Andreevich Behrs (1855-1909) describes Tolstoy’s aversion to the railways and his exaltation of traveling by horses:

> Lev Nikolaevich was never able to stand the railways. In his works he would often express this aversion. After traveling by the railway, he always complained about the sensation experienced in the wagon. On his way home from the station he would compare the railway to traveling on horses and would praise the latter. He rejected the use of the railways on principle, especially for simple folk, and did not like the affected politeness of the conductors and the feeling of alienation that prevailed among the passengers. Accordingly, as if in contradiction to the general spirit, he loved to accost everyone in the wagon. He would often travel in third class and then would climb into that wagon, where mostly muzhiks were sitting.⁵

The belief that not all modes of transportation are equal is evident in *Anna Karenina*, in an exchange between two acquaintances of Aleksei Alekseevich concerning his decision to return his business travel allowance for twelve horses. Instead, to save his commission money, he takes the train to the distant provinces where he has official business to handle. The commission’s decision to provide for horses in the first place is incomprehensible to Princess Betsy Tverskoy, who explains her point of view in a

---

rhetorical question: “Why pay for post horses, when everyone knows that the railways are everywhere now?” (18:391). Annoyed by the assumption that trains are the better way to travel, Tverskoy’s interlocutor, Princess Miagkaia, retorts, “It’s fine for you to say that... when you have I don’t know how many millions, but I very much love it when my husband goes to perform audits in the summer. It’s healthy and pleasant for him to ride around, and at my home it has been arranged that money goes to retaining a carriage and coachman” (18:391). Princess Miagkaia statement attests to the salubrious effect of horses and carriages on travelers, trumping the convenience of the railways.

The most intriguing illustration by Tolstoy of the qualitative differences between carriages and trains is in a neglected passage from The Kreutzer Sonata. While in the countryside, Pozdnyshov becomes consumed by the idea that his wife is committing adultery in his absence and immediately decides to return home to his wife to catch her in the act. In describing the return home by carriage and train, he remarks on the differences between the experience of his carriage ride, which is so pleasant that he forgets the purpose of his journey, and that of his harrowing train ride home:

I had to travel for thirty-five versts by carriage and eight hours by the black devil [chugunka]. The carriage ride was marvelous. It was a freezing autumn with a bright sun. You know that season when horseshoes imprint themselves onto the slick road. The roads are smooth, the light is bright, and the air is invigorating. It was good to be traveling in a tarantass. When dawn broke and I set out, I felt more at ease. Glancing at the horses, at the fields, at passersby, I would forget where I was going. Sometimes it seemed to me that I was simply riding, and that nothing of what had called me back existed. And I was especially glad to forget myself like that. When I did recall where I was going, I told myself: “It will be apparent later. Don’t think.” On top of that, midway through the trip an event took place that held up my journey and distracted me even more: the tarantass broke down and needed to be fixed. This breakdown had great significance in that it made it so that I arrived in Moscow not at five o’clock, as I had calculated, but at twelve o’clock and at home by one o’clock, since I didn’t make the express and had to travel on the passenger train... But this peaceful state of mine, the possibility of overcoming my feeling ended with the carriage ride. As soon as I entered the train carriage, something completely different began. This eight-hour transit in the carriage was something terrifying for me, which I will never forget in my whole life. Whether it was because, having sat down in the carriage, I vividly imagined already having arrived, or
whether it was because the railway had such an agitating effect on people, at any rate once I sat down in the carriage, I was no longer able to take control of my imagination, and it began ceaselessly to paint for me pictures, with an extraordinary vividness, that ignited my jealousy, one after another, and one more cynical than the next, and all of it was about what was happening there without me, and how she was betraying me. I burned with indignation, spite, and some kind of peculiar feeling of intoxication with my humiliation while contemplating these pictures, and I could not tear myself away from them; I couldn’t help looking at them, couldn’t erase them, and couldn’t help evoking them. Not only that, but the more I contemplated those imaginary pictures, the more I believed in their realness, as if the vividness with which these pictures presented themselves to me served as proof that what I imagined was reality. Some kind of devil, as if against my will, invented and prompted in me these most terrifying imaginings. (27:63-4).

Pozdnyshhev’s experiences of traveling by carriage and by train could not be more different. The first line of the passage belies a negative association with trains with its notable usage of the now obsolete word for the railways, originating from the peasantry, *chugunka*. Pozdnyshhev employs *chugunka* here, instead of the more neutral and standard phrase *zheleznaia doroga* used by him everywhere else in his story, to suggest an identification with the peasantry’s demonization of the railways. He appears to share the peasantry’s belief that the diabolical machine is a sign of the apocalypse. In an article on the beginnings of the railways, the author writes that Russian peasants believed that the devil had been captured and encased in the steam engine where he was set to work relentlessly propelling the train. The construction engineer, A. I. Shukenberg, recounts observing three old peasant women executing a wild dance near a railroad crossing, throwing their skirts high into the air, so as to scare the devil imprisoned in the engine and to prevent him from escaping and invading their homes.

The link between the train and the devil is made more explicit near the end of the quoted excerpt, when Pozdnyshhev exclaims that, while traveling in the train, “some kind of devil” had taken over his free will, forcing terrible images onto his mind. David Bethea

---


explains in *Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction* why the train as perceived “threatening”:

Because it moves, like “atheistic” logic, along iron rails without any higher reason for being and because it reaches its destination, which in these apocalyptic fictions is often associated with death, with only a mechanical explanation of how it got there. Since the train is perceived as a *self-enclosed* ensemble of origin/destination, coach rails, and telegraph, the passenger feels *cut off* from nature and the outside world and begins to experience the space-time of the journey in *relative terms.*

In contrast, horse-drawn carriages are generally partially covered by a collapsible hood, allowing the passenger to have direct contact with the open air and to see the immediate surroundings. Pozdnyshev’s ride in the tarantass causes him to become absorbed not only in his thoughts but also in everything going on around him. Ordinary details become pleasant distractions: the time of year, the bright sun, wheel imprints on the smooth road, the horses, the fields, and passerbys. He is mentally more at ease despite riding in a tarantass, which was known to be physically uncomfortable due to its lack of springs. Nevertheless, he is so absorbed in the present moment that he forgets himself and his final destination.

Another important distinction between the two forms of transportation is that, unlike trains which have an iron-clad itinerary timed down to the minute, carriages have a greater chance of reaching their final destination far off schedule due, for instance, to a break-down. That may explain why traveling by carriage is associated with distance (thirty-five versts), whereas traveling by train is associated with time (eight hours). This

---


9 D. Mackenzie Wallace (1841-1919), known for his two-volume work entitled *Russia*, described the Russian tarantass in a newspaper article “as a phaeton without springs. The function of springs is imperfectly fulfilled by two parallel wooden bars, placed longitudinally, on which is fixed the body of the vehicle. It is commonly drawn by three horses—a strong, fast trotter in the shafts, flanked on each side by a light, loosely-attached horse that goes along at a gallop.” D. Mackenzie Wallace, “The Tarantass—A Russian Vehicle,” *The New York Times*, April 8, 1877, web (20 May 2010).
switch in measurement, from distance to time, corresponds to a difference in mentality between carriage rides, the duration of which is to some extent unpredictable, and train rides, which are predictable down to the second. One of the marked features of Pozdnyshev’s carriage ride is that it does not arrive on time to the train station because of the unforeseen mishap with the carriage. Yet he remains unfazed even though it forces him to take the local train instead of the express as he had originally planned on taking. The significance of missing the express is in his reaction, or lack of one. Contrary to the reader’s expectation, he relishes the delay as it allows him to spend time at an inn with its innkeeper, while waiting for the carriage to be mended. He is immersed in the whole process of traveling and derives pleasure from it rather than just the part involving getting from one point to another.

The pleasantness of his carriage ride immediately disappears as soon as he boards the train. Pozdnyshev’s experience illustrates the railroad’s “agitating effect on people.” One of the potential dangers of train travel is sensory overload. Tolstoy reminds the twenty-first century reader of the physical discomforts of train travel in the early stages of railway travel, long forgotten in today’s age of speedy, relatively comfortable transportation. Yet, in the late nineteenth century, train travel was physically and mentally exhausting:

The muscles grew tired, and so did the individual sense organs. The rapidity with which the train’s speed caused optical impressions to change taxed the eyes to a much greater degree than did pre-industrial travel, and the sense of hearing had to cope with a deafening noise throughout the trip. Thus the traveler’s entire organism was subjected to a degree of wear and tear that did not exist in pre-industrial travel, as well as the purely psychological stresses which were repeatedly emphasized by contemporary authors.¹⁰

The moment Pozdnyshev sits down in the train, he imagines “already having arrived.” This is the complete opposite of his experience in the tarantass, in which he is so absorbed in the process, the present moment, that he forgets about the future. The train, being so fast, makes him think about his arrival and forces him to believe that the future has already become the past. It is as if the English poet and critic John Ruskin (1810-1900) was correct in blaming trains for reifying passengers by turning them into parcels that ignore the passing landscape and are focused only on their destination.\textsuperscript{11}

Additionally, the problem with trains is that they imprison, immobilize, and accelerate people, preventing “luminous contemplation,” which is necessary to arrive at some meaningful “spiritual truth.” As Paul Virilio, quoting Petrarch, puts it in \textit{The Art of the Motor} (\textit{L’art du moteur}, 1993), a study of the negative impact of modern-day transportation and communication technologies on society:

\begin{quote}
The innumerable forms and images of visible things, let in one after the other, gather together and pile up at the bottom of the soul….They weigh it down and worry it; the soul isn’t made for this; it can’t hold so many deformed objects. From this springs that plague of phantoms who dissipate our thoughts and whose pernicious variety bars the way to luminous contemplation.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

Tolstoy’s main concern is that upgrades in transportation have degraded our personhood. This notion of his is perfectly embodied with motion parallax, which is symptomatic of and a metaphor for this inverse relationship between speed and “luminous contemplation.”

Anna’s inability to reflect on her decisions and their consequences while traveling by train is not unique to her. Even the irreproachable Levin cannot avoid succumbing to the agitating effects of the railways. Still smarting from Kitty’s rejection of his marriage

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 38-9.
\textsuperscript{12} Virilio, \textit{The Art of the Motor}, 61.
proposal in part one, Levin becomes disoriented and confused while in the train, returning to the countryside from Moscow:

A confusion of notions overwhelmed him, a dissatisfaction with himself, shame about something; but when he got out at his station... he felt that gradually the confusion was clearing up and the shame and dissatisfaction with himself passed. He felt this as soon as he caught sight of Ignat and the horses, but when he put on the sheepskin brought for him, got into the sleigh while wrapping himself up, and drove off, thinking about the impending orders at the estate and glancing at the trace horse, formerly a Don saddle horse, over-ridden but bold, he began to understand what had happened to him completely differently. He felt like himself and did not want to be anyone else. He now only wanted to be better than he had been before. (18:98-9).

Levin’s disorienting train experience parallels Anna’s trip from Moscow to St. Petersburg (discussed in the previous chapter). He finds relief from his dysphoria only upon disembarking from the train. He is especially comforted when he sees his driver and trace-horse, which is a Don horse. To this day, the Don horse, which was used by Cossacks and Russian soldiers, is one of only two breeds still extant and indigenous to Russia, the other being the Orlov Trotter, which was named after its breeder Count Alexery Grigorovich Orlov-Chesmensky (1737-1808). The breed, named after the river Don in southern Russia, is famous for its exceptional ability to endure, capable of withstanding extreme heat and freezing temperatures. Don horses proved to be especially useful in the War of 1812 against Napoleon. Levin, while bundled up in sheepskin, is instantaneously comforted by the sight of his Don horse. Physically enveloped in the natural world, Levin regains his sense of composure after his harrowing experience incarcerated inside the mechanical iron horse. His train ride is juxtaposed with his sleigh ride home, by the end of which he feels hope for a better life. Tolstoy’s narrative strategy

---

makes it clear that it would not have been possible for Levin to have attained an optimistic perspective while in the train.

The thematization of the relationship between physical and non-physical movement is made palpable in Anna’s illicit affair with Vronsky, which is from the very start associated with a railway journey. They meet for the first time at the Moscow train station and the (misfortunate) end of their affair is apparent even before beginning just as all train trips have a predetermined destination. Their relationship begins on the platform of the Bologoye train station. In the frenetic atmosphere of telegrams being received and a hammer striking iron in the distance, Vronsky reveals his feelings for Anna in terms of movement rather than emotion: “I am going [edu] in order to be wherever you are” (18:109). Vronsky’s use of the present tense Russian verb denoting movement specifically by vehicle implies and underscores that he is traveling by train to be with her. When they re-board the same train, their fates become rapidly and inextricably conjoined, following a path analogous to a railway journey—teleological, pre-determined, and unstoppable.

Those aspects of their relationships are also embodied in the steeplechase scene. Although it involves horses, the predominant themes of the steeplechase episode are speed and death. The prestigious Emperor’s Cup four-verst (2.5 miles) steeplechase takes place in Krasnoe Selo near St. Petersburg on an elliptical course in front of a pavilion filled with the St. Petersburg elite. The event in real life was so popular that “for the second running of the Emperor’s Cup (and for several years after) special trains were put in service to carry the crowds from Petersburg to Krasnoe Selo.”

Steeplechases evolved from a race course based on natural obstacles encountered en route from church to

---

church, such as ditches and fences, to carefully constructed race tracks. In the Russian steeplechases at that time, the racing horses were predominantly English, as is the case in *Anna Karenina*. The replacement of Russian horses for English ones in racing corresponded to an actual trend in Russia, whose national breed, the Orlov Trotter, was replaced by European thoroughbreds as the breed of choice by the 1860s. Such a replacement was indicative of another way in which Russia westernized. Furthermore, steeplechases were probably problematic in Tolstoy’s view because it was a spectacle rewarding speed. There is no fast track to the “steeple.”

Vronsky not only wants to win this race; he wants to win by a large margin. As he nears the finish line, although in position to be the clear winner, he, against his better judgment, drives Frou-Frou to go faster than he himself is able to manage, forcing him to compensate by adjusting his position in the saddle. This slight movement results in Frou-Frou breaking her back and dying shortly thereafter. Vronsky’s overpowering desire to prevail does not lead to the anticipated win but instead results in a tragic, unintended death.

Gustafson interprets this scene as a series of “delineated segment[s] repeating paradigmatically the thematic action of the work[s]” for Vronsky’s desire for Anna ends in her death. Nabokov sees in the steeplechase race a synecdoche for the whole novel, which he likens to a race among couples, especially Anna and Vronsky, and Levin and Kitty. For most of the novel, the former seems to be “ahead” of the latter couple in that Anna and Vronsky are together, but in the end, the Levin-Kitty unit interests the narrator.

---

15 Cruise, “The Sources for the Steeplechase in *Anna Karenina*,” 3.
The speed at which the Anna-Vronsky plot line moves is inversely proportional to their happiness and is a contributing factor to their premature deaths. Levin and Kitty, on the other hand, are still alive and happily married by the end of the novel. Although the slower couple, they end up the “winners.” The steeplechase and the final fates of the Levin-Kitty and Anna-Vronsky pairs cast into question the competitive advantage of speed.

A racing metaphor also appears in War and Peace. In one of War and Peace’s well-known philosophical digressions on history, the omniscient narrator expounds upon the “absolute continuity of movement” by relating the paradox by Zeno of the Eleatic School, “Achilles and the Tortoise” (11:264). Zeno’s paradox asserts that even a fast runner like Achilles would never be able to overtake a slow tortoise already ahead of him. The rationale is that Achilles must constantly cover a distance previously surpassed by the tortoise before catching up to it. Thus, contrary to our empirical knowledge, Achilles can approach but will never reach his final destination. Therefore, Zeno concludes rather dramatically, motion is illusory. Tolstoy draws a parallel between the absurdity of the infinite division of space assumed in the paradox and the equally nonsensical attempt in historical science to uncover the truth by taking randomly small units for examination. Opposed to this approach, the narrator of War and Peace, according to Jeff Love in The Overcoming of History, seeks out an alternative “means of describing the whole of a historical event or process by grasping the interrelation of its parts in their continuous, and continuously changing, motion.”

---

17 Nabokov, Lectures in Russian Literature, 198.
18 I am grateful to my colleague Karin Beck for drawing my attention to this passage in War and Peace.
19 Jeff Love, Overcoming of History in War and Peace (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 74.
seemingly infinite number of miniscule parts, the narrator finds inspiration in calculus, a nineteenth-century discovery, which makes it possible, through integration, to calculate the sum of infinite divisions. Love suggests that Tolstoy felt that there might be an alternative way of constructing a narrative, one that “emerges from combinations of smallest narrative configurations into greater wholes that mimics the central flexibility of calculus, its capacity to negotiate between the part and the whole so that, as a consequence of their inner reciprocity, neither is sacrificed to the other.”

This narrative strategy corresponds to the architectonics of Anna Karenina. As remarked earlier in this dissertation, the novel’s architectonics encourages the reader to read by going forwards and backwards to uncover the relationships between the different parts, as well as between the part and whole. If we read as it would seem Tolstoy wanted us to, juxtapositions begin to emerge. These juxtapositions can be combined into a larger configuration. One such juxtaposition that is of particular interest here is that of visible physical movements—by walking, carriages, or trains—and the invisible spiritual movements of three characters in particular. Combined, they can form an elegant triptych in a reader’s mind.

Among the many associations the train has in Anna Karenina, one of them is the irresistible urge to imagine the future. After Vronsky confronts Anna at the train station, he returns to his seat on the St. Petersburg train and is unable to sleep in part because “in his imagination, making his heart stand still, floated pictures of the possible future” (18:111). Tolstoy’s trains force upon their passengers an anticipation of anticipated events, preventing them from living in the present or reflecting on the past.

20 Love, Overcoming of History in War and Peace, 76.
That is precisely Pozdnyshv’s state of mind when he rides the train back to Moscow. The pre-determined schedule and path of the train correspond to the progression of Pozdnyshv’s fears solidifying into an incontrovertible truth. External stimuli encountered during his carriage ride—the random passing pedestrian, the moon, the carriage breakdown—are completely absent while he is on the train. Consequently, to his detriment, nothing prevents him from dwelling on anything other than his journey’s purpose and these false images of his wife carrying on an affair with a violinist. Anna, too, sees vivid images while on the train back to St. Petersburg. “[I]mages and sounds…strike her with unusual vividness” (18:107).

Pozdnyshv’s murder of his wife seems just as inevitable as Anna’s suicide. And the impression upon the reader is that he has lost control over his thoughts and actions, making his wife’s murder a fait accompli. His repeated use of the phrase “not being able to” suggests an absence of free-will. Just as train travel requires no action from the passenger, thought also becomes unnecessary because the unconscious has overtaken his mind. No truth or logic unifies these terrifying images. There is only verisimilitude, which becomes the sole basis for accepting these images as the truth.

Pozdnyshv’s train episode raises epistemological questions about what is real and how we recognize it as such. The answers are subtly and cleverly revealed in the interior monologues of Dolly, Anna, and Levin. To argue the significance of this connection, I will draw from a revelatory essay by Boris Gasparov on Doctor Zhivago (1957), entitled “Temporal Counterpoint as a Principle of Formation.” Gasparov argues that “[t]he whole of Doctor Zhivago is structured on the ‘contrapuntal’ principle of irregular movement of time and ‘relativity’ of various events progressing at different
speeds.”

Gasparov continues, “This unevenness of [train] movement corresponds to sudden changes of lighting, perspective, sound, and also the consciousness of the hero.” This correspondence between movement and a hero’s consciousness is applicable to Anna Karenina. The railway journey corresponds to the consciousness of Anna, while carriage rides and walks correspond to the consciousness of Dolly and Levin, respectively. Different modes of conveyance—by train, carriages, and walking—can promote or interfere with the process of the unconscious surfacing to the conscious. Tolstoy metaphorizes physical journeys to represent psychic processes.

Dolly’s journey by a horse-drawn carriage initiates a productive session of contemplation that ultimately leads to a consequential reversal in her perspective on her life. Dolly resolves to visit Anna and Vronsky in Vozdvizhenskoe and inquires about renting horses from the village, but Levin, sounding like Tolstoy in the letter about Turgenev, insists that “they’ll undertake it, but they won’t get there” (19:179). Dolly borrows his team of four horses and a relay composed of work and saddle horses (19:179). The narrator pointedly mentions that although this relay of horses was “very unattractive,” it would be “able to get Darya Alexandrovna there in one day” (19:179).

The emphasis here clearly stresses the absolute certainty that this set of horses, unattractiveness and speed notwithstanding, would ultimately get her there. The certainty of an arrival, however, is counter-balanced by a certain ambiguity about the destination. There, or any concrete point of arrival for that matter, is oddly never specified. In fact,

---


that word is not even mentioned in the original Russian by either Levin or the narrator. Presumably, it is left to be understood as wherever Anna and Vronsky reside. Nevertheless, this omission in the text creates an opening for the reader to ponder where exactly the horse-drawn carriage will take Dolly.

The physical journey is pleasant enough: “the road was nice, the carriage comfortable, the horses ran happily” (19:180). Unlike Pozdnyshev, however, Dolly is not relaxed in the carriage. Her anxieties about her children surface in her conscious mind. Dolly, sitting alone in the carriage with nothing to do, has time to reflect on her life. Her first thoughts are of her children:

At home, while taking care of the children, there never happened to be time for her to think. But now already, during this four-hour drive, all the thoughts previously held back suddenly crowded into her head, and she rethought her entire life as never before and from very different sides. She herself perceived her thoughts as strange. First she thought about the children, about whom—though the princess, and more importantly, Kitty (she depended on her more), promised to look after them—she nevertheless was worried. “What if Masha starts to act up again, what if Grisha is hit by a horse, and what if Lily’s stomach is even more upset.” But then questions of the present started to be replaced by questions of the near future. She started to think about how this winter in Moscow they needed to get a new apartment, to replace the fur furniture in the living room and make a coat for their older daughter. Then questions of the more distant future started to present themselves to her: how will she guide her children into adulthood. “It’s easier with the girls, she thought, but what about the boys? (19:180).

This part of Dolly’s interior monologue is composed of a series of questions prompted by her anxieties about the well-being of her children in the present, the future, and then the more distant future. Time expands in her mind during her four-hour journey.

Her string of questions about the future takes an unexpected detour into her past, into the terrain of her memories. Anxious questions about her children’s future remind her of the pain of childbearing. This, in turn, makes her “involuntarily” recall a conversation with a young peasant woman, whom she had just encountered at an inn (19:181). The young woman relates losing a child but without expressing any remorse,
explaining that one more child would have only caused more anxiety. This reaction initially repulses Dolly, but her impression alters while she reviews the episode inside the carriage. Reminded of her own difficulties with bearing and rearing children, in addition to the pain of losing one of her own children, Dolly finds “in these cynical words [of the young woman], there was some truth” (19:181). Dolly identifies with the girl because she is dissatisfied with her life, which is completely consumed with raising her children. This alteration in her attitude occurs “involuntarily.”

Disturbed by her identification with the woman’s cynicism, Dolly attempts to exert some control over her mind by seeking out an immediate distraction, and asks the coachman how much further it is to their destination. She consciously tries to distract her mind, a possibility that is afforded to those in Tolstoy’s world not traveling by train. To distract herself further, Dolly, like Pozdnyshev, observes the activity going on outside as she passes by. But, instead of being distracted, Dolly sees seemingly content peasant women and concludes that their lives are happier than hers. This thought leads Dolly to another comparison, one between herself and Anna, expressed in terms of questions: “But they attack Anna. What for? Am I really any better? I at least have a husband whom I love. Not as I would have wanted to love, but I love him, but Anna didn’t love hers. What is she guilty of?” (19:182). These questions indicate a reluctance to blame Anna for her actions and an inclination to view her actions favorably. But the fact that Dolly’s doubts are expressed in interrogative form suggests that her answers are still unclear. Unbeknownst to Dolly, her unconscious has initiated a course of inquiry to be resolved later.

The chapter concludes with Dolly thinking about the men who are possibly attracted to her, leading her to imagine simultaneously Anna’s love affair and a parallel
love affair of her own. This moment of “parallel thinking” is indicative of Dolly’s desire to be like Anna, but it is not in her nature. According to Gary Saul Morson, the difference between the two women is that Dolly possesses enough self-restraint to control desires: This is illustrated by her resisting the temptation to pull out a mirror from her small handbag to look at herself “out of embarrassment before the coachman and office clerk traveling with her…In this novel, mirrors recall Anna, who frequently looks at herself, and so Dolly’s checked action suggests both her attraction to and repulsion from Anna’s choice.”23 Dolly possesses what Anna lacks, but it is more than just self-restraint, as we shall see.

Dolly’s interior monologue provides a rare glimpse into her state of mind by introducing a number of worrying questions that represent the beginnings of an inquiry into her life, including her children, her marriage, and loss. The answers for now, however, elude her. Rather significantly, they do not come to her while inside the carriage. They arrive later, only after she spends the day observing Anna and Vronsky’s relationship and their decadent lifestyle. At the end of the day, Dolly reverses her initial impressions of Anna’s relationship with Vronsky and disabuses herself of the notion that everyone else is happier than she herself is. Dolly recognizes Anna’s and Vronsky’s discontent and then her own contentment with her children.

With all her soul she had felt sorry for Anna while talking with her; but now she couldn’t force herself to think about her. Recollections of her home and children rose up in her imagination in a kind of new radiance, with a special charm that was new for her. This world of hers appeared to her now so precious and dear that not for anything did she want to spend an extra day outside of it and decided that she would leave tomorrow without fail. (19:217).

Dolly realizes that her children, though an endless source of worries, are also her true source of happiness. Recognizing this, she is finally able to conclude her inquiry of doubt originally initiated in a carriage. Eventually, she becomes cognizant of what her unconscious already knew, that her children are indeed precious to her.

Instead of spending another day with Anna and Vronsky as originally planned, Dolly decides to leave after only one. She departs in the carriage “with patched splash-boards” and the “different colored horses” (19:218), of which she had originally been ashamed upon seeing Anna’s elegant and spacious char à banc. Although Dolly’s modest carriage and her poorly dressed driver indicate a lack of material wealth, especially in comparison with Anna, her newfound awareness of her contentment with her life exemplifies a more valuable kind of wealth.

Only inside this modest carriage borrowed from Levin did Dolly finally have a moment to reflect on her everyday life, her anxieties, and memories. Buried in her unconscious, they all surface involuntarily and somewhat haphazardly in her conscious mind. Over the course of her interior monologue, Dolly exercises all five of what Tolstoy considered to be our main intellectual faculties: “the faculty of imagination, the faculty of memory, the faculty of comparison, the faculty of drawing conclusions from these comparisons, and, finally, the faculty of putting these conclusions in order” (46:271).24 The “order” of her thoughts, however, is not determined by logic, ethics, or aesthetics, but, rather, it takes its own shape (obrazuetsia, the root of which means image and icon). Just as “the icon is an image which embodies and reveals divine truth,”25 Dolly’s stream of consciousness initiates a process of recollection that facilitates her traversal of a

---
24 This was taken from a diary entry written at some point between March and May 1847.
25 Gustafson, Resident and Stranger, 203.
vertical distance toward a higher understanding of her life. Her interior monologues both in the carriage and at the estate of Anna and Vronsky, serve as a textual map of her road to self-inquiry. And so the narrator and Levin were correct—the horses do get her there.

Anna, in stark contrast, never gets anywhere. She does everything possible to prevent herself from contemplating her past so as to remain blind to the unhappiness caused by her relationship with Vronsky. During her visit, Dolly notices Anna’s “strange new habit…‘as if she was squinting at her life in order to not see everything’” (19:204). Anna herself laments that “it is terrible that it is impossible to rip the past out by the roots. It is impossible to rip out, but it is possible to hide the memory of it. And I will hide it” (19: 337). Recognizing the impossibility of excising the past from her memory, Anna repeatedly attempts to induce an amnesia sustained by her willful blindness to her unhappiness. Vronsky, at least, acknowledges their unhappiness. “Despite the complete fulfillment of what he desired for so long, [he] was not completely happy” (19:32). Yet, he does nothing to rectify his situation.

Anna acknowledges their situation for what it is only when it is too late, on the day of her suicide. The last day of Anna’s life is notable for the series of interior monologues in which she engages over the course of about five and a half hours, from 3PM to 8:30PM on a sunny day in May 1876. During this time, she takes three carriage rides and then one by train. Her first carriage ride that day is to the Oblonsky’s to solicit advice from Dolly regarding her now shameful relationship with Vronsky. This is a reversal of the beginning of the novel, when Anna advises Dolly on Stiva. On her way to Dolly’s,

amidst the ceaseless clattering of the wheels and the quickly changing impressions in the clear air, reviewing afresh the events of the last few days, she saw her situation completely differently from the way it seemed to her at home.
Now, both the thought of death no longer seemed to her so terrifying and clear, and death itself no longer presented itself as inescapable. (19:336).

The sound of the clattering wheels and the changing scenery denote the forward movement of her carriage. Meanwhile, Anna is traveling backwards figuratively, “reviewing afresh the events of the last few days,” and her perspective on her situation completely changes. Death, which had previously seemed inevitable to her, no longer seems so. She is hopeful. Further movement of the carriage is signaled by Anna taking note of the different signboards. Her thoughts stray from Vronsky with each passing signboard, becoming increasingly fragmented. One minute she sees a sign for an office, then for a dentist, then for Filippov the Baker. The baker’s sign makes her think about dough, then the Mytishchi springs, then blinis, and then, finally, a relic of her memory surfaces, her visits with her aunt to Russia’s holiest place, the Trinity Monastery. She recalls that one used to get there by horses and carriages (19:336). But what seemed so “wonderful” then, when travel was limited to carriages, has now become “insignificant” and “forever unobtainable” (19:336), even though faster transportation exists. The forward-moving carriage provides external distractions that trigger memories and thoughts from Anna’s unconscious, directing her thoughts away from her immediate concerns and desires. Tolstoy slows down Anna’s thought process in order to show us how the material world can in the slightest, almost imperceptible ways, alter and direct our interior life. It is worth noting that just as a driver, not Anna herself, guides the trajectory of her carriage ride, so also the movement of her thought processes is guided by the external landscape.

Anna’s plans to ask Dolly for advice are foiled once she realizes that Kitty is also there. Believing that Kitty resents her, Anna cuts her visit short and departs feeling even
worse than before. In the carriage ride home, her emotions and insecurities betray her. She becomes convinced that Kitty hates her though that is untrue. Her thoughts, however, as in her previous carriage ride, are abruptly interrupted by new ones triggered by her observations of her surroundings. Her thoughts shift abruptly when she notices a portly gentleman, who mistakes her for someone he knows and nods to her. Anna then considers the possibility that she does not know herself. (She doesn’t.) Soon she sees two boys stopping at an ice-cream vendor. At this point, she returns to her initial thought that Kitty hates her and then extrapolates from this particular situation a more general and simplistic conclusion: everyone hates each other. She then notices a sign for Tiu'tkin the Coiffeur. She makes a joke, but realizes that there is no one to share it with. Again, from one particular instance, she draws the general conclusion that nothing is funny and, even more extreme, everything is vile. Despite the cynicism of her thoughts, there is a bright side: “these thoughts… carried her away so much that she even stopped thinking about her situation” (19:341). With all the distractions, her carriage ride proves to be oddly therapeutic.

It is only when she sees the hall porter that she remembers Vronsky and her telegram to him. Feeling anxious and desperate to escape the house, she heads to the Nizhny Novgorod railway station, determined to catch the 8:02 evening train to Obiralovka. As soon as her carriage takes off for the third time, “again the impressions began changing one after another” (19:342). She tries to pick up the thread of her thoughts from the previous ride and remembers leaving off at the thought of Vronsky’s friend, Yashvin. She then proceeds to recall his theory that “hatred is the only thing that links people” (19:342). While thinking about that, she mentally addresses some people riding inside a coach passing by her. She tells them that it is impossible for them to
escape themselves. But then her carriage makes a turn and she sees something new, a drunken factory worker (19:342). Alterations in her stream of consciousness respond to and correspond with the movement of the carriage. Such alterations are impossible to experience while inside one of Tolstoy’s trains, in which characters feel as if they have already arrived. It is during this particular carriage ride, when she feels utterly rejected by Dolly, Kitty, and Vronsky, that a figurative light turns on in her mind. “And now for the first time Anna directed that bright light in which she saw everything upon her relations with him, which she had avoided thinking about before” (19:342). Just as there was for Ivan Il’ich shortly before his death, a light came on in her mind, showing her, for the first time, her life as it really was. She starts thinking in real terms about the foundation of her happiness and begins to recognize her relationship with Vronsky as disgusting.

During her final carriage ride, Anna sees her life clearly, and when she arrives at the Nizhny Novgorod station, “she had completely forgotten where and why she was going” (19:344). Each time she gets out of a carriage, she cannot immediately remember the purpose of the journey. As for Pozdnyshev, the carriage ride enables her to become absorbed in the moment while simultaneously allowing her to reflect. Her thoughts change as quickly as the scenery outside her window, but the random scenes that she sees help her mind makes associations. A process of defragmentation takes place in these carriage rides, which supply a metaphorical distance from her problems. Just as it was with Dolly during her carriage ride, Anna’s perspective on her life is beginning to reverse, suggesting that she is beginning to become aware of the state of parallax she has been living in.

She experiences the metaphysical version of motion parallax; what she thought was good—her relationship with Vronsky—is now repulsive to her. This realization
opens up for her the possibility of a different life. Before getting on the train for Obiralovka, she “thought about how life could still be happy” (19:345). However, this potential to reverse the direction of her life instantly disappears forever because of a mere twenty-minute train ride to Obiralovka. As the train departs from the station, Anna experiences motion parallax. The people on the platform seem to be “rolling backwards” (19:346). In addition to alluding to the sensation she experienced on her train trip back to St. Petersburg, this illusion emblematizes Anna’s return to her “backward” way of thinking. Everyone she notices while on the train—some young men, a conductor, a woman with a bustle, a muzhik, and a little girl—all repulse her because they are ugly, unnatural, or dirty. After taking notice of this gallery of hideous people, she sits down, with a look of “terror on her face” (19:345). Whereas on the carriage, the quickly changing scenery caused her to make free associations between her surroundings and her thoughts, on the train, she thinks only about the deceptive nature of life and perceives her fellow passengers as suspicious. Even when she disembarks from the train, she cannot find any peace to think due to the commotion on the train platform. “Everything that had seemed possible to her earlier was now so difficult to formulate [soobrazit’], especially in the noisy crowd of all these deformed [bezobraznykh] people who would not leave her in peace.” (19:347; italics are mine). On the train, her thoughts become “de-formed” and resist forming a coherent whole [obrazobat’sia].

Her disorientation does not desist when she disembarks and walks along the platform. There she frenetically notices maids, young men, a boy selling kvas, the stationmaster, and bespectacled gentlemen either talking loudly or staring at her. And before she can calm down, she sees a goods train approaching. All of this contributes to her final conclusion that her life has come to the end of its line. It turns out that Anna’s
previous memory of her childhood monastery visits is a precursor to the gesture she
makes right before throwing herself in front of a train. Just as she had seen a man on the
train cross himself, Anna now crosses herself.

The habitual gesture of the sign of the cross triggered in her soul an entire
sequence of girlhood and childhood memories, and suddenly the darkness,
which for her covered everything, tore apart, and life appeared to her for a
moment with all her bright past Joys… And the candle, by which she was reading
the book filled with anxieties, deceit, grief and evil, flared up as a light brighter
than ever and lit up for her everything that had previously been in darkness,
sputtered, started to fade and went out forever. (19:348-351).

The gesture of crossing herself initiates a sequence that, strikingly, goes backwards from
her “girlhood to her childhood.” She sees her life in reverse, and as this happens,
everything that had been shrouded in darkness is momentarily revealed to her. Whatever
her previous doubts may have been, she no longer has any in part because she is now no
longer on a train. And now all has been unveiled before her eyes as motion in one
direction is arrested and motion in the opposite direction begins. The state of parallax she
had been living in has been undone as her amnesia dissipates and she enters into her
memories in reverse. So her physical death, like that of Ivan Il'ich, is a rebirth. But it is
also a tragic reminder of the high cost of spiritual progress. The way Anna arrived at this
moment of illumination suggests that truth has no set path, nor is it located in a particular
place or time, nor can one get there by mechanized motion.

To disprove Zeno’s motion paradoxes, Diogenes the Cynic simply walked around
without saying a word. His silence was intended to underline the sufficiency of the act
itself as an adequate counter-argument. It was not, however, since it did not address the
argument’s premise, that appearances are unreliable. Still, Diogenes’ simple proof places
great import on ambulation. That the last part of the railway novel Anna Karenina
reaches a climax when Levin takes a walk suggests that the mundane activity deserves
what it has never previously gotten, attention. Tolstoy privileges, above all, pedestrianism over carriages and trains because it is, simply put, pedestrian. It has many virtues to recommend itself: practically anyone can walk; it is a natural and free activity, unlike carriages and trains; it is self-propelled; it does not require a planned itinerary with predetermined arrival and departure points; it does not require a purpose or destination; roads and paths are not necessary to walking; and finally, the walker determines the path as he moves along and sets the pace, stopping and starting as he wishes.

The most peripatetic character in the novel is Levin. While walking, he hatches plans that he invariably abandons for another. His habit of changing his mind corresponds to the aimlessness and the unplanned nature of his walks. One evening, as Levin strolls down the main road to a village, he contemplates marrying a peasant woman as the best way to embark on a new direction in life. Although unsure of his plan, he resolves: “This night has decided my fate. All my previous dreams about family life are nonsense, not right” (18:291). Soon after making his decision, he hears a carriage approaching. As it passes him by, Levin catches a chance glimpse of Kitty, who is inside and recognizes him. Levin instantly reverts back to his old thought pattern of thinking about Kitty. He had previously resigned himself to not marrying her after she had rejected his marriage proposal, but he now realizes that she is the only one for him after all. The chance encounter between Levin and Kitty stands in marked counterpoint to Anna’s introduction to Vronsky at the railway station. As already noted, their fateful meeting at a train-station symbolizes the predictable and linear progression of their relationship, whose ending is apparent before it begins. Levin and Kitty’s story, on the other hand, is less predictable and a-linear. In fact, it is circular as Levin and Kitty return to each other after the first failed proposal.
Levin’s epiphany regarding his enduring feelings for Kitty is an example of how answers coming to a person rather than that person resolving issues by logic. Philosophy is equally deficient as a means of attaining the meaning of life. Despite reading and rereading “Spinoza, Kant, Schilling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer – those philosophers who did explain life in non-materialist terms” (19:369), Levin is nowhere closer to making sense out of his life. The answer eventually comes to him while walking “big strides along the big road, listening not so much to his thoughts (he still could not sort them out), as to the state of his soul, which he had never experienced before” (19:376). Thoroughly absorbed with “listening to his soul,” Levin shares a muzhik’s belief that one must “live for the soul” (19:376). This phrase sparks a chain reaction in his own soul, “transforming and bonding into one whole cluster of disjointed, impotent, separate thoughts” (19:376). In other words, his fragmented thoughts are a mess (“all is confused”), but nevertheless all resolves itself into a unified cluster (“all will shape itself”). This leads him to the grand conclusion that “one should not live for one’s own needs, that is, we should not live for what we understand, for what draws us in, for what we want, but one should live for something incomprehensible, for God, whom no one can either understand or define” (19:377). One should not live for reason or desire (as Anna does) but instead seek out spirituality or something greater than the self (beyond one’s desires and thoughts).

Once Levin arrives at this revelation, he continues to walk along the road, “noticing neither heat nor fatigue,” and goes off the road. He has diverged from the path he was on and finds himself somewhere in the woods and settles down on the grass (19:378). Sitting there, he notices a green bug trying to crawl up a blade of grass but hindered by a leaf. Levin removes the leaf and bends down another blade of grass to make a path for the insect to crawl across. Meanwhile, he asks himself, “What makes me
happy? What did I discover?” (19:378). The reader is then told parenthetically, as though in an insignificant aside, that the bug ends up not crossing on the blade bent down by Levin but instead “spread its wings and flew away” (19:378). The insect’s unexpected action of foregoing the easy path made for him by Levin reminds us that movement cannot only be characterized by speed but also by directionality. The upward, vertical movement of the bug corresponds to a metaphysical movement of the soul, indicating a harmony between Levin and nature. Levin’s upward movement contrasts with Anna’s “fall.” She describes the sensation she experiences to her brother: “I feel like I’m flying with my head downwards into some kind of abyss, but I must not save myself. And I cannot” (18:450).

Levin’s experience is evocative of St. Augustine’s maxim: “from the exterior to the interior, from the inferior to the superior” [ab exterioribus ad interiora, ab inferioribus ad superiora]. His walk, with his meandering “motion of thought” [khod mysli] (19:396 and elsewhere in the novel), is diametrically opposed to the linear and teleological thinking associated with the railways. The forward movement of the train, its teleological character, is a metaphor for the deterministic nature of thinking in terms of cause and effect.

Tolstoy makes clear that Levin’s realizations, which come from within rather than from without, are nothing new. They are past knowledge resurfacing “from somewhere locked-up” (19:376). After the insect flies away, Levin disavows Darwin and the attendant notions of “infinite struggle,” and learns the ultimate spiritual truth: “to live for God, for the soul” (19:378). Then, Levin returns to his question about the nature of his discovery only to conclude that he has discovered nothing. “I only realized what I know.”
(19:378). Levin has experienced what Socrates called *anamnesis*, which contrasts with Anna’s self-induced and self-sustained amnesia.

Socrates’s proof of anamnesis, as demonstrated in Plato’s *Meno* (380 B.C.E.), relies on the notion of an immortal soul reincarnated for eternity. Reincarnation makes it possible for knowledge to be passed on but it is forgotten and can only be recollected through inquiry (81c-d):

> As the soul is immortal, has been born often, and has seen all things here and in the underworld, there is nothing which it has not learned; so it is in no way surprising that it can recollect the things it knew before, both about virtue and other things. As the whole of nature is akin, and the soul has learned everything, nothing prevents a man, after recalling one thing only—a process men call learning—discovering everything else for himself, if he is brave and does not tire of the search, for searching and learning are, as a whole, recollection.²⁶

Socrates’ “Theory of Recollection” implies that *a priori* knowledge is stored in the soul and cannot be acquired by logic or by empirical evidence, such as by sight. Only memory is required to recall everything else. But in the nineteenth century, Tolstoy seems to be saying, the railways physically and mentally interfere with the process that is so necessary for spiritual progress. For the sake of speed, we have ignored our access to this inborn knowledge. Tolstoy’s version of anamnesis differs from that of Socrates in one other respect: the spark for recalling everything comes not from within but instead from without, from the *muzhik*, whose “[w]ords…had the effect of an electric spark in his soul” (19:376). Thus, Tolstoy finds solace from his anxieties concerning modernity by looking back to the past and to the native Russian peasant.

Another component of Socrates’ proof is “Meno’s Paradox” or “The Paradox of Inquiry” (80d): “How will you look for it, Socrates, when you do not know at all what it is? How will you aim to search for something you do not know at all? If you should meet

with it, how will you know that this is the thing that you did not know?" These are the same questions Levin grapples with since the good cannot be rationalized for it “is outside the chain of cause and effect” (19:691).

Interfering with this process of anamnesis are the senses, which can be misled. The narrator in War and Peace illustrates this issue, using the movement of the train:

“All time I see the movement of a steam locomotive, I hear a whistling sound, I see the opening of the valve and the movement of the wheels; but from this I have no right to conclude that the whistling and the movement of the wheels are the cause of the steam locomotive’s movement” (11:266-7). This example taken from everyday life is used to make the case that evidence acquired through our senses reveals nothing about the mechanism behind a phenomenon, in this case, sight and hearing do not tell us what enables the train to move. Tolstoy’s train example here illustrates a separation between experiential evidence and reason. This division already “had been made, and in the strongest terms, a hundred years before Plato by Parmenides. But he and his disciples [e.g., Zeno] paid a fantastic price for this emancipation. They won it by consigning to illusion…the whole of the physical universe.”

Such an extreme position, to the point of even relegating motion to the status of illusion, did not appeal to Tolstoy. He believed that it might be possible to discern the truth from a “cosmic perspective.” Distance affords clarity. Gary Saul Morson argues that Anna Karenina operates under the principle of “a sort of moral inverse square law”:

---


“the further we are from a situation the clearer it seems to be, while situations before our
eyes—say, in our own family—tend to baffle us.”\textsuperscript{30} This helps account for the clarity of
thought characters experience when pondering their lives when traveling alone, provided
that they are not in a train. Through physical distance, one also achieves a mental
distance that allows one to gain clarity. Yet, Tolstoy also suggests that our “moral
obligation” is greater to those nearest to us, that is, “our immediate family.”\textsuperscript{31} Tolstoy
applies a kind of moral relativity in relation to our attachments to a person.\textsuperscript{32} But these
obligations that are closest to us can be the most difficult to see, like the blurred
stationary objects viewed from a moving train window.

Tolstoy’s profound belief in the cosmic perspective helps account for the similar
conclusions of \textit{War and Peace} and \textit{Anna Karenina}. Levin turns to the epistemological
methodologies of astronomers, whose conclusions are based on potentially misleading
observations regarding the movement of stars.

“Really don’t I know that stars don’t move?” he asked himself, looking
at a bright planet that had already changed its position with respect to the highest
branch of a birch tree. “But looking at the movement of the stars, I am not able
to imagine the earth’s rotation, and I’m right in saying that stars move.

“And would the astronomers really be able to understand and calculate
anything, if they were to take into account all the various complex movements
of the earth? All their astonishing conclusions about the distances, weight,
movements and disturbances of the heavenly bodies are based only on the
visible movement of the luminaries around the immovable earth, on that very
movement which is now before me, which has been that way for millions of
people over the course of ages, and has been and will always be the same and
can always be verified. And just as the conclusions of astronomers that were not
based on observations of the visible sky in relation to the same meridian and the
same horizon would be idle and shaky, so my conclusions would be idle and
shaky if they were not based on that understanding of the good which always
has been and will be the same for everyone, and which is revealed to me by

\textsuperscript{30} Gary Saul Morson, “Tradition and counter-tradition: the radical intelligentsia and classical Russian
literature,” \textit{A History of Russian Thought}, ed. Derek Offord (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
2010), 152, Google Books, web (9 August 2010).

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 152.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
Christianity and can always be verified in my soul.” (19:398-9).

The changing position of the stars with respect to the birch branch observed by the naked eye suggests that the stars moved, but Levin knows that that is contrary to what he knows to be true. Empirical evidence based on vision proves to be misleading. The unreliability of vision, especially when one is in motion, undercuts the validity of experiential knowledge and raises an epistemological question about identifying the good. Levin, like Socrates, is convinced that knowledge is “based on that understanding of the good which always has been and will be the same for everyone, and which is revealed to me by Christianity and can always be verified in my soul.” The truth about what is good is intrinsically known. The harmony between Levin’s spiritual movements and nature is emblematized by the motion of the green bug. The novel’s final interior monologue captures the correspondence between Levin’s spiritual movements and the cosmic movement of the stars.

*War and Peace* concludes with the narrator drawing a parallel between cosmology and history. Just as astronomers needed to disavow the immobility of the earth to establish its movement, historians needed to dispel their belief in free will to acknowledge “our dependence on the external world, on time, and on reasons” (12:341). The narrator continues, “In the first case, it is necessary to repudiate the consciousness of a nonexistent immobility in space and recognize a movement not felt by us; in the present case – it was just as necessary to repudiate a nonexistent freedom and recognize a dependence not felt by us” (12:341). The narrator asserts here that certain significant truths—the movement of Earth and our dependence on temporal and spatial conditions—are imperceptible to our senses. Yet, we must acknowledge them if we want to
understand what influences our actions. Only then will we be able to understand ourselves better.

The interior monologues of Dolly, Anna, and Levin operate under the principle of temporal relativity. The one who travels slowest, travels the furthest. This inverse relationship between time and distance stresses direction as opposed to a speedy arrival. As Gary Jahn put it in his analysis of *Anna Karenina*, for Tolstoy, “[t]rue life is not bound in time and space.” By narrating the characters’ interior monologues while they are in motion, Tolstoy italicizes the relativity of human time. Individuals move at different speeds depending on the form of transportation. Walking, although the slowest, turns out to be the best way for recollecting and thus the pedestrian travels the greatest vertical distance. In contrast, going by a fast train gets the passenger nowhere. Despite advances in transportation, or perhaps because of them, anamnesis is still important in helping the divine self reveal itself to an individual. Truth, as demonstrated in Tolstoy’s aesthetics, is not a place; it is an undetermined path (*hodos*) to the truth, created as the individual treads upon it. This path is not fixed. Similarly, the meaning of the novel varies depending on the shifting constellation of free associations created by the reader.

---

Conclusion

In a Modern State of Mind

Приближался не календарный—
Настоящий Двадцатый Век.
[Approaching was not the calendrical—
but the real Twentieth Century.]
Anna Akhmatova, Poem Without a Hero

"Life is a train of moods like a string of beads."¹
Ralph Waldo Emerson, Experience

In a 1913 paper entitled On the Beginning of Treatment, Freud suggested the following script as a model for young psychoanalysts to use on patients to get them talking about themselves: “So say whatever goes through your mind. Act as though, for instance, you were a traveler sitting next to the window of a railway carriage and describing to someone inside the carriage the changing views which you see outside.”²

Freud draws an analogy between what the mind’s eye sees and what a passenger views from the window of a moving train. In his address to inexperienced psychoanalysts, Freud goes on to say that a patient must express every single occurring thought, however insignificant, irrelevant, or distasteful it may seem to the patient. Just as travelers have no choice about the scenery outside the train window, patients undergoing psychoanalysis must similarly relinquish control over their minds and be willing to rattle off their

thoughts in a manner that might seem fragmented and illogical. From the emerging mumbo-jumbo, the psychoanalyst is supposed to be able to uncover the hidden associations among the seemingly random thoughts and from them derive a narrative explaining the patient’s unconscious. Thus, it becomes possible to discern meaning from a succession of images not unified by logic.

The meaning behind Freud’s metaphor is clear. But why exactly does he use the train to illustrate his point? He could have alternatively used other metaphors, for instance, the experience of flipping through a series of photos or the more familiar image of an “unfolding scroll.” Is it possible that the visual experience of railway journeys could have contributed to the modern conception of the unconscious, glimpses of which we can only capture in fragmented bits, a process that is similar to the way Jacques witnessed bits of a murder scene from the window frames of a moving train? Is this in any way connected to the disjointed interior monologues in Anna Karenina or to the moment of analepsis, or flashback, in the train derailment scene of La Bête humaine? Was Leskov, in “The Pearl Necklace,” perhaps hinting at the increasing attention devoted to what characters see and think instead of plot? The final section of my dissertation will revisit passages already explicated in earlier chapters within the framework of the aforementioned questions, answers to which will be educated conjectures at best. This conclusion is intended to be suggestive, not conclusive. I understand modernism not to refer to the specific literary period, represented by the likes of Marcel Proust, Virginia Woolf, and James Joyce, but to a state of mind. Some of the literary techniques modernist writers employed can be seen in the earlier works Anna Karenina and La Bête humaine, which can be viewed as proto-modernist works. My concluding chapter will link the spread of the railways to fragmentation as expressed in those two novels. My conjecture
is that trains had something to do with the expression of subjectivity through
fragmentation.

I believe that Zola’s emphasis on exteriority had less to do with creating
narratives that objectively documented the material world and more to do with a keen
interest in finding new ways of representing in novels how our eyes perceive the world.
Today’s rehabilitators of Zola’s reputation have interpreted the splicing techniques he
employs as being “precinematic” and so “innovative” that they were precursors to “a yet
to be invented act.”3 Susan Blood reminds us that over sixty films have been based on
Zola’s novels, and the most important ones have undergone several adaptations.4 La Bête
humaine was made into a black-and-white film twice by two canonical filmmakers, in
1938 by Jean Renoir and in 1954 by Fritz Lang. As for Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina, its
interior monologues capture how the mind’s eye processes the interior world. The
difficulty of adapting interior processes to the visual medium of film may explain why,
unlike Zola’s novels, no cinematic adaptation of Tolstoy’s novels is ever wholly
satisfactory. But what Anna Karenina and La Bête humaine share is the “eye,” which is
vital to understanding not only the world but also our selves. The attention that Zola and
Tolstoy pay to the relationship of vision to exteriority and interiority, respectively,
italicizes the inadequacies of conventional representations of the act of seeing.

The advent of trains led to a number of scientific discoveries that, contrary to
expectations, affirmed what artists already knew—the subjective nature of human
experiences. Train movement was instrumental not only in enhancing our understanding

---

4 Ibid., 49.
of visual phenomena, such as motion parallax, but also in confirming that the Doppler effect, which had first been proven for air and ether waves, applies to sound waves. The commonplace example of the Doppler effect for sound is the shift in pitch—from high to low—that an observer hears when an ambulance siren passes by. Trains enabled scientists to prove the existence of this phenomenon having to do with sound waves. Although the Austrian physicist Christian Johann Doppler (1803-1853) hypothesized that the effect applied to sound waves, he first proved its application to light waves. Doppler had observed that a moving ship encountered more waves than a stationary one and supposed that such a phenomenon must also exist for air and ether waves. In 1842, he delivered a lecture at the Royal Bohemian Society of Science, entitled “Über das farbige Licht der Doppelsterne und einiger anderer Gestirne des Himmels” (“On the coloured light of the binary stars and some other stars of the heavens”), and published it in the following year. He posited that stationary stars that appear white or a pale yellow will change color when in motion: if the star is receding from Earth, the color of the star will appear to an observer to shift toward the red end of the spectrum, indicating a longer wavelength or lower frequency (red shift); if the star is advancing toward Earth, the star will shift toward the violet end of the spectrum, indicating a shorter wavelength or higher frequency (blue shift). One of the many consequential discoveries the optical Doppler effect made possible was the proof of the expansion of the universe by the American astronomer Edwin Hubble (1889-1953) in 1929. His proof was based on the increase in the red shift of distant galaxies, which meant that they were moving further away.

(Tolstoy might well be referring to the Doppler effect at the very end of Anna Karenina,

---

when Levin contemplates how astronomers know that stars move without seeing them do so.)

Three years after the publication of Doppler’s treatise, in 1845, on the 3rd and 5th of June, a Dutch chemist and meteorologist, Christoph Hendrik Diederik Buys Ballot (1817-1890) conducted a series of experiments using a locomotive traveling at 40 mph from Utrecht to Amsterdam to prove the Doppler effect for sound waves. The locomotive pulled an open flat car from which musicians sustained the G-note on their trumpets. Meanwhile, stationary musicians with perfect pitch wrote down the note they thought they heard. Buys Ballot noted the change in pitch of the played notes as the train approached, passed by, and receded. In the same year, Doppler carried out a similar experiment with two groups of trumpeters. One group was inside a moving train carriage to be pulled past the train station in which the other group was situated. While both groups played the same note, Doppler observed a dissonance as the train passed by. In 1846, Doppler revised his principle to take into account the motion not just of an object but also of an observer in relation to the source. What the Doppler effect as well as motion parallax established was a scientific basis for the necessity of a frame of reference to determine the speed, distance, and direction of a moving object.

Trains contributed not only to our scientific understanding of reference frame but also to relativism with regard to space and time. In *The Railway Journey*, Schivelbusch elaborates upon “a subjective perception of space-time” introduced by the railways. Instead of conceptualizing distance in terms of spatial measurements, it becomes possible

---


to perceive space temporally, according to a trip’s duration, which is relative to and
dependent upon a train’s speed. (This explains Pozdnyshev’s association in *The Kreutzer
Sonata* of carriages with the spatial measurement of versts and trains with duration.)

Trains have also created an experience of space that is disjointed. As Erwin Straus
describes it, “The modern forms of traveling in which intervening spaces are, as it were,
skipped over or even slept through.”

An altered sense of space corresponded to a new perception of time, also
introduced by the railways. The possibility of standardizing time became real and, more
importantly, a necessity. Unlike carriages and stagecoaches, trains left at precise times,
i.e., 6:27, making minutes all the more important. Although debates on instituting a world
time preceded the invention of the steam locomotive, the standardization of time was first
instituted by railroad companies out of necessity. The lack of synchronization among
clocks throughout a region posed a problem for the railways, and a “supraregional
schedule,” which had previously been impossible, became absolutely essential. During
the 1840s, individual English railway companies cooperated with each other to
standardize time.” In 1847, Greenwich Mean Time, which was established in 1675 and
maintained by the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, became the standard time valid on
all English lines.

In 1884, Washington D.C. hosted the International Meridian Conference on time
standards, with twenty-five nations in attendance, including Russia and France. At the

---

8 Quoted here from Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, 53. For the original, see Erwin Straus, *The

9 Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, 12.

10 Ibid., 48.

11 Ibid., 48.
conference, a resolution was passed placing the zero meridian at Greenwich. France and Brazil abstained from voting. The other countries, although voting in favor of the measure, which was eminently practical, still took at least a few years to synchronize their national time with the GMT. In Russia, the time in St. Petersburg was inexplicably two hours, one minute, and 18.7 seconds head of the GMT.\textsuperscript{12} According to Stephen Kern, the Western European country which “had the most chaotic situation” was France, where some regions had four different times.\textsuperscript{13} The railroads used Paris time, but that was nine minutes and twenty-one seconds ahead of the GMT.\textsuperscript{14} In 1891, France made Paris time the official time, but the railways “still ran five minutes behind it so that passengers had extra time to board.” In 1913, one French journalist explained this “chaos” as a “function of national pride.” Although France was disgruntled with the zero meridian being located in England, it took solace in hosting the 1912 International Conference on Time, which established the necessary means to determine the accurate time and coordinate time signals worldwide, making universal standard time possible.\textsuperscript{15}

The international standardization of time brought about by trains was a man-made realization of objective Newtonian Time (\textit{Principia}, 1687), which viewed Time as an “equivale flow.”\textsuperscript{16} Newtonian Time, which provided the basis for “the conventional view of Time as an unvarying flow that can be measured by clocks and sundials,”\textsuperscript{17} remained unchallenged for almost two centuries until Einstein published in 1905 his remarkable

\textsuperscript{12} Kern, \textit{The Culture of Time and Space}, 13.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} J. B. Priestley, \textit{Man and Time} (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964), 86.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
Special Theory of Relativity, which proved that “Time is not absolute but relative to the position of the observer.” It is as though Einstein demonstrated the existence of a temporal version of the Doppler effect. The English writer J. B. Priestley remarks in his book-length essay *Man and Time* (1964) that “Newton’s idea of absolute time flowing equably was soon part of common thought, whereas after half a century, and after countless books, papers, lectures, and so on all devoted to it, Einstein’s theory of relativity has never taken hold of the public mind.”

Foreshadowings of Einsteinian Time, however, are palpable in both *La Bête humaine* and *Anna Karenina*. Zola and Tolstoy certainly recognized a dialectic between standardized Newtonian time and subjective time. This dialectic is especially pronounced in *La Bête humaine*, in which precise temporal markings are scattered throughout. They mark not only the exact hour but also the precise minute at which an event occurs. The first chapter is particularly heavily laced with various types of temporal markers. We learn early on that it is mid-February, and then later the reader learns that the year is 1869. A cuckoo clock shows Roubaud that it is 3:20PM, and his wife is late for their 3PM rendezvous. She is not coordinated with their schedule, which hints at the possibility that the married couple is out of sync with each other.

Not only do Roubaud and Séverine know the time because of clocks but they also deduce the time from the trains they see departing from the Paris station, which they can see from the window of the apartment they are temporarily staying in. That they can deduce the time from trains is indicative of lives dominated by railway schedules as a result of Roubaud’s assistant station manager position.

---

19 Ibid.
The precise time is clearly marked throughout the opening chapter of *La Bête humaine*—3:20, 3:30, 4:15, 4:25, 5:20, 6:20, and 6:27. The time markers are more frequent as the chapter arrives at its close. At the Paris train station, anticipating killing Grandmorin, Roubaud and Séverine are more conscious of the time and the time remaining until their train sets off. They notice that it is 6:27, three more minutes until their imminent departure. The narrator then builds up the anticipation even further by pointing out when only one minute remains before the train leaves on time. The countdown at the end of the chapter produces the sense that time has run out for the couple as well as for Séverine’s benefactor.

Railway time is juxtaposed with human time. When Séverine does finally arrive at the apartment, she and her husband enjoy a pleasant lunch together. But at 4:25 they have the fight that sets the rest of the novel into motion. It lasts, to Roubaud’s amazement, for “an hour, barely an hour, for so many things! He could have believed that the two of them had been devouring each other there for weeks” (*La Bête humaine*, 42). This thought reflects an awareness of a subjective experience of time and its disconnectedness from the actual time.

Roubaud and Séverine, who struggle to stave off feelings of guilt from having committed a crime, try to eliminate any human sense of time by taking solace in the predictability of the railway timetable. In chapter six, a month after the grisly murder, they find themselves, along with all the other railway workers, “subjected to a clockwork existence by the unvarying return of regulated hours” and “life went back to flowing—monotonous. And it seemed that nothing violent or abnormal ever happened” (*La Bête humaine*, 136). Yet, however hard Roubaud and Séverine try to suppress the memories of their crime by dissolving their human sense of time, their recollections are constantly on
the threshold of surfacing, threatening to destroy their peace of mind. When the right moment arises for Séverine to unburden herself to her lover Jacques, she describes her anxiety over committing murder in terms of time. Séverine tells Jacques that before killing Grandmorin, she “was no longer conscience of time nor of distances” (La Bête humaine, 191). Then, when the train entered a tunnel for three minutes, she felt that it lasted an hour (La Bête humaine, 192). And when Grandmorin tries to defend himself against the knife-wielding Roubaud, she knew that “the struggle” could not have lasted for more than a few seconds, but “it felt like it would never end” (La Bête humaine, 192). Anxiety caused her mind to perceive time as slowing down, making seconds feel like eternity.

Séverine articulates the extreme horror of what happened when her husband thrust the knife into Grandmorin’s throat in terms of time: “I experienced more in that one minute than in my entire previous life” (La Bête humaine, 195). This temporal intensity is precisely what Jacques wants to experience. He thinks to himself, “Oh! To strike with such a knife, to satisfy this distant desire, to know what it feels like, to taste this minute where one lives more than in a lifetime” (La Bête humaine, 196). Séverine’s confession marks the pivotal moment when Jacques’ urge to kill reemerges. He no longer regards her as sacrosanct because she had performed the very act he had never been able to. There is a parallel between the immense distances “annihilated” in shorter amounts of time because of trains, and Jacques’ desire to experience more in less time by annihilating a person. Later in the novel, when the Le Havre-Paris train transporting Séverine with Jacques is about to collide with the dray that Flore has placed in its way, the narrator uses the feeling of time compression to convey the high intensity of the situation. “It was scarcely ten seconds of a terror without end” (La Bête humaine, 237).
Intense experiences of time in Zola’s novel are markedly associated with the railways, pointing to an awareness of subjective time and the impossibility of regulating it in the same way public time had been standardized.

The train derailment scene near the end of La Bête humaine makes the precinematic features of the novel most apparent. As the scene of the collision nears, the narrator assumes a point of view similar to that of a witness watching the scene unfold, cutting from one person to another, from one part of the scene to a different one. When the locomotive is in view and approaching at full speed, the narrator describes Flore placing the dray on the tracks, and then quickly cuts to the dray itself with its cargo of two giant stones. The narrator draws our attention to the locomotive moving toward the obstruction, and focuses then on Misard, the level-crossing keeper, who is raising his arms and waving them, frantically trying to get the train to stop. The narrator focuses next on Cabuche, who tries to get the cart off of the track, but Flore pushes him away. Her eyes at that point, when the train is only a split second away from colliding with the dray, become locked in a gaze with Jacques, who is in the locomotive car. Then the narrative abruptly flashes back to an earlier part of the day, to the moment of the imminent collision, but from Jacques’ point of view. The cutting between scenes anticipates the visual techniques used in film.

Another proto-filmic technique that Zola employs is the freeze frame. Once the locomotive crashes into the dray placed across the tracks by Flore, the narrator instantly shifts his lens from the collision to a snapshot of Misard and Cabuche, with their arms in the air, watching the collision happen twenty meters “from the side of the track where terror glued them to their spots” (La Bête humaine, 239). The freeze frame, Jacques’ flashback, the juxtaposition of different frames, through accretion, exponentially
intensifies the horror experienced by the characters, which is palpably felt by the reader, starting from the moment Flore places the dray on the tracks to the aftermath. In other words, Zola uses precinematic techniques to exteriorize visually the characters’ inner emotions.

While *La Bête humaine* depicts the appearances and actions of characters in a wholly modern way, *Anna Karenina* renders the negative influence from the material world on man’s interiority through interior monologues that are fragmented. The monologues in *Anna Karenina* constitute what I consider to be Tolstoy’s “realism of interiority.” This, too, is decidedly modern. According to Nabokov, Tolstoy invented the stream of consciousness, or interior monologue, long before James Joyce took it to “an extreme stage of objective record” in the early twentieth century.\(^{20}\) Lydia Ginzburg makes an almost identical claim in her seminal work, *On Psychological Prose (O psikhologicheskoi proze, 1971).* According to her, Tolstoy entered the future. His works are full of astonishing artistic anticipations of that future (as has often been observed in the critical literature). One may find in him the seed of everything that twentieth-century literature would later elaborate to its full extent and come to regard as most characteristic of itself: “stream of consciousness” (its classic prototype is Anna’s inner monologue on the way to the station where she throws herself under a train), the unconscious, the subterranean currents of conversation, and the use of extended, vividly marked details.\(^{21}\)

But what Nabokov and Ginzburg, I think, missed was that Tolstoy did not intend Anna’s disjointed monologue to be representative of what occurs in everyone’s mind. Tolstoy believed that another kind of interior monologue was possible and even desirable, which he represented with Levin’s final interior monologue. Anna’s stream of consciousness is noticeably disconnected due to an inability and unwillingness to make the necessary

\(^{20}\) Nabokov, *Lectures on Russian Literature*, 183.

connections between her past and her present in the same way Levin does. His monologue, which is triggered by the *muzhik*’s words about living for the soul, is a “cluster” that emerges from “disjointed, impotent, separate thoughts” (19:376). Levin’s epiphanic moment is filled with meaningful associations that lead him closer and closer to his ultimate conclusion about the meaning of life, already detailed in the previous chapter of this dissertation. My point in this chapter is that self-discovery, according to Tolstoy, is a process of working through fragments to create a cohesive whole for oneself. Ultimately, this process can liberate man temporarily from the boundaries of space and time.

*War and Peace* concludes with the narrator drawing a parallel between cosmology and history. Just as astronomers needed to disavow the immobility of earth to establish its movement, historians needed to dispel their belief in free will to acknowledge “our dependence on the external world, on time, and on reasons” (12:341). The narrator continues, “In the first case, it was necessary to repudiate the consciousness of a nonexistent immobility in space and recognize a movement not felt by us; in the present case – it was just as necessary to repudiate a nonexistent freedom and recognize a dependence not felt by us” (12:341). The narrator asserts here that certain significant truths—the movement of Earth and our dependence on temporal and spatial constraints—are imperceptible to our senses. Yet, we must take them into account if we want to understand our actions and ourselves better.

By recognizing the effect of temporal and spatial constraints, Tolstoy believed that it was possible to liberate ourselves from them temporarily. In his unfinished *Recollections* (1902-6), he wrote, “Not only are space and time and cause forms of thought, and the essence of life is beyond those forms, but our whole life is a greater and
greater subjection of ourselves to those forms and then again a liberation from them.”

Tolstoy shows us that liberation is possible, through the interior monologues of his characters, in which non-physical motion is conveyed through the changes in associations in an individual’s mind. Interior monologues presuppose an associative property that does not rely on a linear, logical structure. Through free association, a person is potentially able to overcome the constraints of time and space, though only briefly.

In a short essay entitled “Re-writing Modernity,” Jean-François Lyotard reminds us of the Freudian meaning of “re-,” that is, “working through.” One way of working through our repressed feelings to unearth their origin is through the psychoanalytic technique of “free association”:

> It consists in paying the same attention to all the elements of the sentences uttered by a patient, no matter how petty or trifling they may sound. In short, the rule is: no prejudices, but suspension of judgments, responsiveness, and equal attention to all occurrences as they occur. The patient on his side must respect a symmetrical rule: he is required to let his speech go, to give vent to all “ideas,” figures, scenes, names, sentences, as they may come up into works, as they may occur, in “disorder,” unselected, unpressed.

It is a way to recover the past, but not so that it is re-presented literally or exactly. Rather, it will lead to a sketch, an image, an aura that potentially could lead to a process of emancipation. In Tolstoy’s case, it is emancipation from the confines of time and space. It is through reading for the architectonics of the novel, finding linkages, that re-writing is made possible. In place of technology, Tolstoy creates a technique for re-writing, which is, as Lyotard states, a form of resistance.

---

24 Ibid., 8.
25 Ibid., 9.
into “an opening” for the flood of consciousness.\textsuperscript{26} For this to occur, the patient must literally be patient since the process takes time. This explains why in 	extit{Anna Karenina} the slowest form of movement is the most rewarding. Tolstoy’s interior monologues are examples of rewritings, and they are mirrored in the architectonics of 	extit{Anna Karenina}, which encourage the reader to make free associations. Rewriting in the novel is a form of resistance, challenging linear narratives and deterministic thinking. Free associations create a different kind of configuration unbound by space and time, and the reader is encouraged to use their unique viewpoint, to generate meaning. The flexibility of this network, made possible because of subjectivity, is juxtaposed with the rigid and fixed network of the railways.

The questions posed by Zola and Tolstoy about the technology of their day beget a host of other ones about technology of our day. If the nineteenth century was the steam age, the twentieth century is undoubtedly the digital age, especially because of the internet, which came to the fore, like the railways, near the end of the century. For better or for worse, the internet has made it possible in a way to combine the projects of Zola and Tolstoy. Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, solicit information from users that exteriorize our interior—our likes, dislikes, thoughts, ideas, and even memories via photo uploads—for anyone in our “network” to see. Users’ personalities and thoughts are converted into text, which is then reified into data that marketers, in turn, can collect and interpret to generate individualized ads. These websites are constantly tweaking, refining, upgrading—in short, quickly evolving—in order to invent better ways of mining our minds for more data. The end goal is to construct the ultimate simulacrum of the human experience. Google has even managed to digitize the railway journey on its virtual

\textsuperscript{26} Lyotard, “Re-writing Modernity,” 8.
journey site, which went live in February of 2010.\textsuperscript{27} Ironically, we can now experience the Trans-Siberian railway as it traverses seven time zones, without ever stepping foot into Russia, or even a train for that matter. Videos were shot using cameras recording the ever-changing (and stunning) views from a Trans-Siberian train window while traveling from Moscow to Vladivostock. The site’s videos are among the most frequently viewed on YouTube.\textsuperscript{28} Because the videos only cover a certain segment of the journey, an internet traveler can customize the order in which the trip is experienced. But the increasing number of books on the impact of the internet on human behavior all point to its problematic and questionable nature.\textsuperscript{29} Today’s Tolstoys and Zolas must grapple with representing the impact on our consciousness of all this traveling without moving.

\textsuperscript{27} The site address is <http://www.google.ru/intl/ru/landing/transsib/en.html>.

\textsuperscript{28} I thank Marissa Mayer, Vice President of Consumer Products at Google, for bringing this to my attention.

Bibliography

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


Ono, Hiroshi, and Wade, Nicholas J. “Depth and Motion in Historical Descriptions of Motion Parallax.” *Perception* 34 (2005): 1263-1273.


Protopopov, M. “Pis'ma o literature. Pis'mo sed'moe.” *Russkaia mysl'* XII (1893): 210-228.


Appendix

Serial Publication Dates for the *Rougon–Macquart* novels in France and Russia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>France Serialized Form</th>
<th>Russia Serialized Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. <em>La Faute de l’abbé Mouret</em></td>
<td>Apr. 1875 rejected by all the Paris journals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. <em>La Débâcle</em></td>
<td>June 1892 Feb. – July 1892 (<em>La Vie populaire</em>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The work was not completely published because of censorship.

† A summary of the work was published, not a translation.