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Alienation Through Sensory Imagery in Tolstoy's *Resurrection*

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Abstract

Tolstoy was guided by an undeniable radicalism, particularly with respect to his religious convictions. For this very reason I am of the firm conviction that most — if not all — work produced by Tolstoy is inherently ideological. Considering how Tolstoy's ever-evolving theological dimensions informed a breadth of narrative choices, such as Pierre's youthful mysticism or Levin's conversion to Orthodoxy, Tolstoy's development as a religious thinker is worth bearing in mind in analyzing the language of his novels. The purpose of this thesis is to examine Resurrection (1899) through the lens of the aesthetic theory proposed by Tolstoy's polemical work What is Art? (1897). The novel attempts to navigate Tolstoy's radical reimagination of Christianity, which rejects the social hierarchies of the Russian Empire and Orthodoxy. Tolstoy believed that "Christianity in its true sense puts an end to the State" — a proposition echoing the radical politics that would define Russia in the 20th-century. However, while elements of Resurrection are deeply rooted in Tolstoy's ideological convictions, the same could be said for Anna Karenina and War and Peace. Resurrection rejects Tolstoy's established narrative style and replaces it with an aesthetic tone that reflects the author's radically evolving politics and theology. As a result, the paper attempts to understand how ideology informs the narrative choices and language of Resurrection. My analysis demonstrates how such a shift in storytelling by Tolstoy is crucial in understanding the cultural framework of late 19th-century Russian critical realism.

Keywords: Tolstoy, Aesthetics, 19th-century critical realism, Resurrection, Russian Literature

Introduction

In 1899, the Russian master of prose and narrative, Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy, delivered his first novel in over twenty years to an eager international audience. "How all of us rejoiced," one critic wrote on learning that Tolstoy was writing not a short novella but a full-length novel, "May God grant that there will be more and more!"[1] Though serially published in Russia, abroad it quickly outsold his first two novels. Ideological purpose was the focal point of Tolstoy's third major novel, and critical reception noted the difference in aesthetic quality between *War and Peace*, *Anna, Karenina*, and *Resurrection*. Whereas Tolstoy attempts to divorce ideology from aesthetics in his first two novels, it is not the case with *Resurrection*.

Furthermore, Tolstoy's ideological tradition cannot fairly be characterized by a single political, theological, or philosophical movement. He spent his life in ideological flux and his grand expanse of writing reflects the tumultuous nature of his ideologies. While *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* define his reputation as a writer, he went so far as to disown the novels in the wake of a spiritual breakthrough. *Resurrection* is considered to be an important text that explains the conditions that allowed for the Russian Revolution to flourish. In the essay "Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of Russian Revolution", V.I Lenin succinctly, though rather harshly, encapsulates the contradictions of the great Russian author:

> On the one hand, we have the great artist, the genius who has not only drawn incomparable pictures of Russian life but has made first-class contributions to world literature. On the other hand we have the landlord obsessed with Christ. On the one hand, the remarkably powerful, forthright and sincere protest against social falsehood and hypocrisy; and on the other, the "Tolstoyan", i.e., the jaded, hysterical sniveller called the Russian intellectual, who publicly beats his breast and wails: "I am a bad wicked man, but I am practicing moral self-perfection; I don't eat meat any more, I now eat rice cutlets." On the one hand, merciless criticism of capitalist exploitation, exposure of government outrages, the farcical courts and the state administration, and unmasking of the profound contradictions between the growth of wealth and achievements of civilisation and the growth of poverty, degradation and misery among the working masses. On the other, the crackpot preaching of submission, "resist not evil" with violence. On the one hand, the most sober realism, the tearing away of all and sundry masks; on the other, the preaching of one of the most odious things on earth, namely, religion, the striving to replace officially appointed priests by priests who will serve from moral conviction, i. e., to cultivate the most refined and, therefore, particularly disgusting clericalism.

Lenin highlights Tolstoy's ideologies that are in opposition with one another and describes Tolstoy as a man (and author) of contradiction. In turn, contradiction and opposition shape Tolstoy's narrative, all the while locating him in a larger historical framework.

Though *Resurrection* varies from Tolstoy's major literary achievements, I am of the firm belief that it is nonetheless a novel of exceptional literary merit. It does not pale in comparison to *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*, but rather offers something different. The purpose of

[1] Simmons, *Introduction to Tolstoy's Writing,* 1968

this thesis is to examine the aesthetic qualities of *Resurrection* that are informed by Tolstoy's late ideology. In reading it as a prelude to the Russian Revolution, I propose Tolstoy's analysis of class dynamics, rather than religion, as the primary ideology of *Resurrection*. I argue that Tolstoy replaces familiar aesthetics, specifically visual imagery, with the olfactory to emphasize social alienation in the Russian Empire. In *Resurrection*, class is represented through smell: odors linger as the novel unfolds, a reminder of who does and does not belong within the walls of the prisons. Through Tolstoy's narration of different smells, *Resurrection* examines class alienation under the microscope of the perfumed and the putrid.

Tolstoy's Ideological Tradition

The method of integrating ideology into his narrative shifts significantly in Tolstoy's later work, creating a gap between the three major novels (*War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina*, and *Resurrection*). While drafting *War and Peac*e in 1865, Tolstoy penned the following letter to a friend:

> The aims of art are incommensurable (as they say in mathematics) with social aims. The aim of an artist is not to resolve a question irrefutably, but to compel one to love life in all its manifestations, and these are inexhaustible. If I were told that I could write a novel in which I could indisputably establish as true my point of view on all social questions, I would not dedicate two hours to such a work; but if I were told that what I wrote would be read twenty years from now by those who are children today, and that they would weep and laugh over it and fall in love with the life in it, then I would dedicate all my existence and all my powers to it.

Resurrection disavows the concerns raised by Tolstoy in the letter. It is a novel that condemns "the violence of government, the injustice of man-made laws, the hypocrisy of the Church"[2]. Through such a didactic mode of storytelling, *Resurrection* grapples with the contradictions outlined by Lenin, and Tolstoy's self-awareness incessantly pervades the narrative. Mikhail Bakhtin ironically described *Resurrection* as "the most consistent and perfect example of the socio-ideological novel not only in Russia but in the West as well." [3] Yet Tolstoy's morality is not ideologically static: there is a distinct evolution reflected in his writing, signaling a changing world outside and inside of Russia.

Resurrection is endowed with Tolstoy's precise realistic detail: the fleeting innocence of the protagonists' first romantic encounter, Katyusha Maslova's heart-wrenching trial, and the careful description of prisoners mirror the literary merits of his early novels. Ultimately, what distinguishes *Resurrection* is the negation of aesthetically appealing narrative to underscore the social injustices suffered by the likes of Maslova. In *War and Peace*, Maslova's suffering may have been mediated through Tolstoy's philosophy of history or subdued by ethereal scenes of nature in *Anna Karenina*. In *Resurrection*, Tolstoy does not attempt to justify Maslova's suffering. Rather, he writes a novel rooted in the injustices perpetrated by the Russian Empire, crudely exposing the internal mechanisms of the imperial punitive system.

[2] Simmons, *Introduction to Tolstoy's Writing,* 1968

[3] Bakhtin, *Discourse in the Novel,* pp. 253

Tolstoy began *Resurrection* with a demonstration of his narrative mastery — readers are enticed with the vivid visual image of a newfound spring abuzz with life, warmed by a blazing sun and entrenched in the sweet aromas of flowering trees:

> The sun was hot, the green grass was recovering, and it grew through any place where it hadn't been scraped away, coming up between the paving stones as well as on the civic greenswards, while the birches, scented leaves, and the linden-buds swelled to bursting. Jackdaws, sparrows, and pigeons built their bears with the chirpiness of springtime, and flies buzzed against the sun-heated walls. Joy was everywhere, in plants and birds, insects and children[4].

Though Tolstoy's intimate understanding of the natural world proves difficult to resist, *Resurrection* will not linger on such "God-given worldly beauty"[5] for long. The smell of spring is dispelled by the abrupt introduction of a provincial prison. Setting up the conflicting environments — natural and man-made — is a pivot to the chief theme of *Resurrection*. It is a novel that attempts to discern the nature of redemption through the eyes of a guilty nobleman and a wrongfully convicted prostitute. Tolstoy's final major novel is a pinnacle narration of philosophy and theology, a moral treatise on sex and power, and a final attempt at 19th-century critical realism. It is also a reconfiguration of aesthetic theory, a literary project that tries to refute and undermine the prevailing literary aesthetics. Though it does depart from the familiar narrative aesthetics of *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*, it would be unjust to categorize *Resurrection* as the chief ideological novel of Tolstoy. After all, Tolstoy's canon is endowed with his principles on the individual, family, and history. While much of his late work *is* rooted in a didactic approach — for instance, *The Death of Ivan Ilych* or his "simple" stories for the Russian peasantry — Tolstoy's firm conception of truth and morality are consistently present in his novels, though in a state of natural evolution. Instead of understanding Tolstoy's lack of objectivity as an artistic fault, I hope to provide an analysis of Tolstoy's deviation from established writing patterns, as well as the created (and intended) effect. It is worth turning our attention to what, exactly, Tolstoy refutes in *Resurrection* to understand the distinct methods used to distance its narrative from the established canon of his early fiction.

Defamiliarization as Social Critique

Tolstoy's attempt at combining artistry and outright ideology created a shift in his familiar imagery. *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* are characterized by Tolstoy's attention to the microscopic, creating his characters out of a mosaic of details. Viktor Shklovsky describes the device as *ostranenie* (defamiliarization): "Tolstoy makes the familiar seem strange by not naming the familiar object. He describes an object as if he were seeing it for the first time, an event as if it were happening for the first time".[6] Famously, Natasha's account of the opera[7] in Book VIII of *War and Peace* is an example of the device.

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[4] Tolstoy, Briggs. *Resurrection*, Part I, Chapter I, pp. 5

[5] Ibid.

[6] Shklovsky, "Art as Device", pp. 160

[7] *War and Peace*, Book VIII: "The floor of the stage consisted of smooth boards, at the sides was some painted cardboard representing trees, and at the back was a cloth stretched over boards. In the center of the stage sat

The method of making reality strange allows Tolstoy to present truth in a matter he deems fit. As follows, it is inherently a subjective evaluation of convention, creating an ideological undertone to Tolstoy's narration. Though Formalism attempts to divorce literary aesthetics from a cultural-historical approach, such a separation is not always fruitful in analyzing Tolstoy's literary work, especially with respect to Resurrection. Shklovsky notes that for Tolstoy, defamiliarization, or "estrangement", was not just a method of narration limited to his first two novels:

> Seeing things outside their context led Tolstoy to the estrangement of rites and dogmas in his late works, replacing the habitual religious terms with their usual meanings — the result was strange, monstrous; many sincerely regarded it as sacrilegious and were deeply offended. But it was the same method that Tolstoy used elsewhere to experience and show his surroundings. Tolstoy's perception unraveled his own faith, driving him toward things he had been long unwilling to approach.[8]

In a moral, philosophical, religious, and literary sense it is an essential quality of Tolstoy's perception of life. At its core, defamiliarization is used by Tolstoy as a critique of aesthetics, often targeting the decadent high culture of the Russian Empire. In the paper "Estranged and Deranged Worlds: The Grotesque Aesthetics of Tolstoy's *Resurrection*," Ani Kokobobo proposes that Tolstoy uses defamiliarization as a major mode of narration in *Resurrection*. In the same manner that Natasha pieces together the disfigured opera, Prince Dmitri Nekhlyudov's fragmented account of various prisons across the Russian Empire amounts to a depiction of an institutional whole.

What is Art?, published in 1897, deploys defamiliarization as a tool of social critique. Tolstoy's definition of art is an apotheosis of his rejection of Russian Orthodox dogmas and a reevaluation of what it must look like per his understanding of Christianity. Informing his criticism of Orthodoxy was the social hierarchies of the church, which he considered antithetical to the teachings of Christ. As a result, *What is Art?* seeks out a version of art that is not inherently hierarchical. In grappling with such a hierarchy, the essay presents defamiliarization outside of the fictional lens celebrated by the Formalists. Tolstoy deconstructs cultural productions to expose the labor required to maintain art: "For the production of every ballet, circus, opera, operetta, exhibition, picture, concert, or printed book, the intense and unwilling labor of thousands and thousands of people is needed at what is often harmful and humiliating work." Tolstoy speculates that the primary quality attributed to art by the cultural milieu is the presence of beauty; in turn, the question "what is beauty" produced an intellectual standstill among Tolstoy's philosophical predecessors.[9]

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some girls in red bodices and white skirts. One very fat girl in a white silk dress sat apart on a low bench, to the back of which a piece of green cardboard was glued. They all sang something. When they finished singing their song the girl in white went up to the prompter's box and a man with tight silk trousers over his stout legs, and holding a plume and a dagger, went up to her and began singing, waving his arms about."

[8] Shklovsky, "Art as Device", pp. 167

[9] "The Germans answer the question in their manner, though in a hundred different ways. The physiologist-æstheticians, especially the Englishmen: Herbert Spencer, Grant Allen, and his school, answer it, each in his way; the French eclectics, and the followers of Guyau and Taine, also each in his way; and all these people know all the preceding solutions given by Baumgarten, and Kant, and Schelling, and Schiller, and Fichte, and Winckelmann, and

Tolstoy summarizes the general principles of beauty espoused by the philosophers in Chapter III: beginning with Baumgarten (1735) and ending with Knight's *Philosophy of the Beautiful* (1893), he provides an exhaustive list of the varying definitions of aesthetics and beauty. According to Tolstoy, subjective philosophers are concerned with pleasure and the objective with absolute perfection. In turn, the dominant doctrine upon which art rests on is the marriage of beauty and pleasure; whether the "objective" or "subjective" schools of thought, "both notions of beauty come down to a certain sort of pleasure that we receive, meaning that we recognize as beauty that which pleases us without awakening our lust."[10] Tolstoy furthers his point by engaging with the work of Folgeldt, who believed that to preserve art we cannot demand it to be moral, but rather demand art be important. Such a formulation, according to *What is Art?*, is the premise of aesthetic standards. Therefore, if art is dictated by pleasure and importance, it can only be understood by a select group of people: "So that the theory of art, founded on beauty, expounded by æsthetics, and, in dim outline, professed by the public, is nothing but the setting up as good, of that which has pleased and pleases us, i.e. pleases a certain class of people."[11]

Tolstoy's counter to art as pleasure is "universal" Christian art — it can only be universal if it expresses a religious feeling, defined by Tolstoy as the relationship of mankind to one another through a collective consciousness of God. Thus, his aesthetic theory becomes intertwined with his theory of Christian morality: art must center God to qualify as "good". There is no room for beauty as understood by Tolstoy because the established standard of beauty cannot fall under either category without creating some semblance of social hierarchy. Nekhlyudov and Maslova respectively represent two subsets of Russian society and their interactions with one another depict the alienating effects of class: the absence of beauty in *Resurrection* parallels Tolstoy's attempt to emphasize and reconfigure the social hierarchy between them.

Resurrection **in Context**

Nekhlyudov's spiritual reckoning decades after his assault of Maslova, her mistrial as a product of the jury's inattentiveness, and their laborious journey to Siberia satirize the institutions that watch over the Russian Empire. The relationship between Maslova and Nekhlyudov began with a power imbalance: she was the ward of Nekhlydov's aunts, wholly reliant upon the good nature of his family to maintain any sort of position in the world. Her status, in turn, was in-between worlds — "the girl was half-lady, half-servant"[12]. Before her involvement with Nekhlyudov, Tolstoy described Maslova as possessing desirable qualities of the two Russian worlds; she was sensible and intelligent, while familiar with the labor of the lower class. As the prince's and Maslova's involvement progressed against her wishes, the gap between their social standings widened. Maslova's pregnancy and eventual loss of the child

Lessing, and Hegel, and Schopenhauer, and Hartmann, and Schaller, and Cousin, and Lévêque and others" (*What is Art*, Ch. V).

[10] Tolstoy, Maude, *What is Art?*, Chapter III

[11] Tolstoy, Maude, *What is Art?*, Chapter V

[12] Tolstoy, Briggs. *Resurrection*, Part I, Chapter I, pp. 9

catapulted their stories into two vastly different strata of existence, leading her to a life of sexual servitude and the ignorant Nekhlyudov to a life of noble idleness.

Though Tolstoy is no stranger to superficial depictions of class relations within the Russian Empire, *Resurrection* is more provocative in its portrayal of revolutionary ideas. Despite the absence of a Russian middle class at the end of the 19th-century, Maslova's social position is endowed with a degree of mobility previously unrepresented in Tolstoy's earlier work; her in-between state created a semblance of choice that would ultimately be shattered at the hands of a powerful nobleman. Arguably, *Resurrection* does not abide by the standard system of nobleman, soldier, peasant, serf: prior economic gulfs between prisoners are blurred by their shared fate of imprisonment. Alongside the depiction of Maslova and prisoners of common origins, Part III offers a careful description of various political prisoners — revolutionaries and Marxists — en route to Siberia.

In isolating the common thematic element of Tolstoy's institutional critiques, it becomes clear that the chief "institution" *Resurrection* is reckoning with is class-based. The novel is steeped in alienating opposition — nature and society, damnation and redemption, prisoner and convict — but its chief contrast is the entwinement of wealth and poverty. Through the voyeurism of a nobleman such as Nekhyludov, Tolstoy tells the story of Maslova, a prostitute with no social or economic standing. Narrative dissonance is created by telling Maslova's story from the perspective of Nekhlyudov. Readers are not granted access to Maslova's psyche outside of predominantly surface-level accounts, but the nature of their relationship is best explained by her:

> '....I'm a convict, and you're a prince, and you've no business to be here,' she called out, totally transformed by rage and snatching her hand away. 'You want to use me to save your soul,' she went on, anxious to unburden herself of everything that had welled up in her spirit. 'You've used me for your pleasure in this life, and you want to use me to get your salvation in the world to come. You disgust me…'[13]

By characterizing the chief ideological thesis of *Resurrection* as class-based, discerning the aesthetics of Tolstoy's narrative becomes more straightforward; in turn, the religious elements of Resurrection can be read as a means of establishing a sense of universality. Tolstoy's abandonment of familiar visual imagery propels the looming ideology of Resurrection. Bearing in mind Tolstoy's argument that art is designed for the pleasure of a select group[14], *Resurrection* serves as an antithetical body of work to such an audience. The ideology of Resurrection is a provocation, and Tolstoy's application of sensory imagery informs the response. The absence of aesthetically pleasing narrative in the novel, though jarring in contrast to the language of his previous work, aims at cultivating the image of an unnatural, alienated world that largely strips Russian nobility of redemptive qualities. According to George Steiner, *Anna Karenina* "brings language closer to the sensuous activities of farm life, to the sweet smell

[13] Tolstoy, Briggs. *Resurrection*, Part I, Chapter 49, pp. 190

[14] Tolstoy, "What is Art", Chapter IV: "So that the theory of art, founded on beauty, expounded by æsthetics, and, in dim outline, professed by the public, is nothing but the setting up as good, of that which has pleased and pleases us, *i.e.* pleases a certain class of people."

of a cow shed on frosty nights or the rustle of the fox through the high grass."[15] *Resurrection*, in turn, brings language closer to the sights and smells of suffering inflicted by the ruling class.

The effect is achieved through the smells that accompany Tolstoy's employment of confined space and its effects on the human body. Kokobobo wrote that the jarred body of the dead merchant in the courtroom created an overarching image that lingered throughout the novel.[16] While death and decay do indeed haunt the narrative, I would argue that the imagery used to described the degraded living, imprisoned, and poor body is of greater concern. Particularly, the markers of vital physicality — excretion, perspiration, drunkenness — pervade the text.

In her dissertation, Megan Luttrell examines the shift in Tolstoy's visual aesthetic, all the while emphasizing that his artistic quality does not diminish in later work:

> Tolstoy's earlier works are more richly detailed than the later ones, which focus more on Tolstoy's ideological messages and internal realities, rather than a meticulously described external world. This is not to say that the visual is absent from later Tolstoy, but rather that it changes in nature.[17]

The visual aesthetics of Tolstoy's early work analyzed by Luttrell caters to the audience as an evocation of pleasure. According to *What is Art?*, the visual is not the sole procurer of aesthetically pleasing narrative. Aesthetic quality is attributed to various sensory experiences:

> So it turns out that the conception of art as consisting in making beauty manifest is not at all so simple as it seemed, especially now, when in this conception of beauty are included our sensations of touch and taste and smell, as they are by the latest æsthetic writers. [18]

To a certain extent, Tolstoy *does* use visual imagery to emphasize ideological alienation in *Resurrection*: for instance, the net dividing the visitors and the prisoners in Nekhlyudov's first visit to Maslova. However, I would argue that he replaces familiar visual aesthetics with olfactory imagery — the sense of smell. As a result, *Resurrection* employs scent to underscore the "ideological messages and internal realities" described by Luttrell.

Unlike sight and other senses—taste, touch, sound— smell "has a direct line to our pre-cognitive brain functioning and the emotional memories associated with each odor"[19] It ignites recognition, spanning across borders and time. The putrid nature of excretion and the sourness of perspiration are universally offensive, evoking feelings of familiar repulsion. In its universality, scent becomes a symbol of class: the nobility is perfumed while the peasantry smells of sweat. Tolstoy's description of the peasantry's sweat is often positive insofar as the

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[15] Kokobobo, "Estranged and Degraded Worlds: The Grotesque Aesthetics of Tolstoy's Resurrection" pp. 7

[16] Kokobobo, "Estranged and Degraded Worlds: The Grotesque Aesthetics of Tolstoy's Resurrection" pp. 8: "For instance, when looked at through the lens of Bakhtin's theory, the corpse of the merchant that spills out from every orifice, breaching boundaries between the inside and the outside, is the quintessential degraded subject that functions as a focal point for the grotesque in the novel. As John Bayley puts it, the body of the merchant 'poisons the air of the whole novel'"

[17] Luttrell, *Color, Line, and Narrative: Visual Art Techniques in Lev Tolstoy's Fiction*

[18] Tolstoy, Maude, *What is Art?*, Chapter II

[19] Lin, Meng-Hsien, et al. "Olfactory Imagery and Emotions: Neuroscientific Evidence"

peasant embodies characteristics of morality. Within the prisons of *Resurrection*, the peasants encountered by Neklhyudov are rarely such figures of morality, and their smells are not reminiscent of hot days spent laboring on grand pastures. Rather, the olfactory imagery used to describe the prisoners — Maslova in particular — highlights the nature of their degrading confinement. Unlike the nobleman or peasant, the prisoner seems to smell of putrefaction, decaying despite being a living body. Sense of smell implies physical proximity, but Nekhlyudov's inability to overcome disgust despite his closeness accentuates his alienation from the prisoners.

The first three chapters of *Resurrection* are set up in parallels of sensory imagery, specifically the olfactory. By presenting the varying smells that accompany Maslova and Nekhlyudov, it becomes clear that the novel grapples with the outlined formula of aesthetic pleasure. Part I negates the familiar aesthetic experiences of beauty, the enjoyment of which is a product of a certain class.

The Body Confined: On Scent and Living in Degradation

Maslova is introduced on the morning of her standing trial for the poisoning of the merchant Smelkov. The image of a warm spring day offered by Tolstoy in the opening paragraph is quickly soured by the scent coming from the prison. Maslova, having yet to emerge from the prison, is preceded by a wafting stench.: "The warder unlocked the cell door with a clang of iron, and it swung open, emitting a blast of air that stank worse than the corridor."[20] As the door opens, Tolstoy moves to capture the sensory struggle between the natural beauty of the day and the enclosed, physical setting of the prison:

> Even in the prison yard the air was fresh and invigorating, coming in on the wind from the town. But in the corridor the air was heavy with typhus and saturated with the stench of sewage, tar, and putrefaction, and it immediately reduced all newcomers to a state of depression and despondency.[21]

As she walks out, Tolstoy paints an image of the woman who would become a central figure of his final novel:

> This woman's face wore the kind of pallor seen on the faces of people who have been shut away for a long time, the colour of seed potatoes kept in a cellar. The same applied to her stubby little hands and her full white neck, or as much of it as could have been seen above the big collar of her cloak. The strongest feature of her face was her eyes, jet black against the dull pallor of her skin, glittering despite some puffiness, and brimming with life; one of them has a slight cast in it.[22]

Though Tolstoy has been dubbed "the seer of the flesh",[23] the extent to which Maslova's physicality is introduced is notably different from the manner with which he describes the physical characteristics of other female protagonists. On one hand, there are familiar attributes given to Maslova that would mark her throughout the novel—particularly, her slanted eyes are

[20] Tolstoy, Briggs. *Resurrection*, Part I, Chapter I, pp. 6
[21] Ibid.
[22] Tolstoy, Briggs. *Resurrection*, Part I, Chapter I, pp. 4
[23] Merezhkovsky, "L. Tolstoy and Dostoevsky", 1901

noted by Nekhlyudov in his interactions with her. But Tolstoy's extended overview of what Maslova looked like as she left the prison for her trial, counters the typical defamiliarized nature of introducing his characters. In *Anna Karenina*, for instance, Tolstoy brings Anna to life through the eyes of Vronsky. He does not introduce Karenina's appearance from head to toe as he did with Maslova, rather settling on one characteristic and stitching her physicality together as the novel progresses:

> As he [Vronsky] looked round, she too turned her head. Her shining gray eyes, that looked dark from the thick lashes, rested with friendly attention on his face, as though she were recognizing him, and then promptly turned away to the passing crowd, as though seeking someone. In that brief look Vronsky had time to notice the suppressed eagerness which played over her face, and flitted between the brilliant eyes and the faint smile that curved her red lips. It was as though her nature were so brimming over with something that against her will it showed itself now in the flash of her eyes, and now in her smile. Deliberately she shrouded the light in her eyes, but it shone against her will in the faintly perceptible smile.[24]

Maslova and Karenina possess a striking number of similarities: curling black hair, full bosoms, and lively eyes. Each encapsulated femininity, and while both of them were ultimately punished for their sexuality, unlike in *Anna Karenina*, Maslova's social standing forced her to capitalize on her physical appearance. In *Anna Karenina,* narrative estrangement captures the moment Vronsky and Karenina meet, and the palpable connection between the pair is made clear as Anna is reduced to her tantalizing eyes. In contrast, Maslova is not yet subjected to such estrangement by the author and would only be described in such a manner when interacting with Nekhlyudov. Defamiliarization is introduced into *Resurrection* through the physical setting of Chapter I—nature in contrast with the prison and the city. Kokobobo notes that "the expanded scope of defamiliarization becomes evident from the start of the novel when Tolstoy seeks to expose the very creation of cities as fundamentally flawed." [25]

The events that led to Maslova's conviction are relayed as she is marched off to the courthouse. After the birth and death of Nekhlydov's child, Maslova was left unemployed and impoverished, forced to search for work after a life spent largely sheltered from the realities of hard labor. Her position as an unmarried (and thus unprotected) woman left her with few choices of employment; moreover, regardless of the job she would take on, her beauty would welcome the attention of men (whether wanted or not). Tolstoy details the options presented to her:

> Maslova had two choices: either the humiliating business of being in service, with all the unwanted attentions of men and some casual sex on the quiet, or a form of sex that was secure, sanctioned, open, legalized and well paid. She chose the latter.[26]

Maslova's life in a brothel provided her with a facade of security she no longer had access to. It was a life characterized by a demeaning routine. After waking up from a night of sex, Maslova would ready herself for the day ahead:

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[24] Tolstoy, Maude, *Anna Karenina*, Part I, Chapter 19.
[25] Kokobobo, "Estranged and Degraded Worlds: The Grotesque Aesthetics of Tolstoy's Resurrection" pp. 3
[26] Tolstoy, Briggs. *Resurrection*, Part I, Chapter I, pp. 13

> …the pampering of the body and hair with water, creams, and perfume, trying on dresses and arguing over them with the proprietress, long consultations with the mirror, putting on make-up, attending to eyebrows; sweet treats and fatty foods; then putting on a silk dress that leaves nothing to the imagination…[27]

She lived in such a manner for seven years until her imprisonment. Tolstoy spends a considerable breadth of Chapter II recounting her history of employment before narrowing his attention on Maslova's experience in the brothel. Maslova's personal history is told rather frankly — despite noting the superfluous qualities of her boudoir routine, she is not being condemned. The only authorial morality on display is against the institutional forces that sanctioned Maslova's involvement with the brothel.[28] Consequently, Maslova's pampering of her body is seen as an extension of government-approved activity. As long as she is following the law and is desirable to the legislators that may frequent her establishment, Maslova is allowed — perhaps even expected to — care for her physical condition. Once confined in prison, such care is no longer supported by the government.

Nekhlyudov's Role: The Observer and The Observed

To understand the role of the "observer" and the "observed" one cannot turn to the material possessions that constitute their existence. Given the nature of Nekhlyudov's nobility, it is not at all surprising that he owns land, was once fashionable in his dress, and travels by carriage. However, what does it mean to be able to afford disgust? Alongside the contrast of wealth and poverty is the intermingling of the clean and unclean. After all, if Nekhlydov's spiritual salvation was to be achieved through his closeness to the prisoners, it could be presumed that his sensory perceptions of the world around him would no longer mark him as a foreign body. Tolstoy does not yield to such an assumption.

Nekhlyudov is introduced through his morning routine, mimicking Maslova's routine of pampering herself at the brothel. As Maslova is en route to her trial, Nekhlyudov "was still lying in his rather crumpled bed."[29] Readers are provided with a character akin to the nobility of *War and Peace:* a petulant prince smoking a cigarette in bed as he recalls the previous day spent in the company of a wealthy family, whose daughter he was expected to marry. Nekhlyudov's morning is characterized by tending to his body:

> ...[Nekhlyudov] bustled out ponderously into the adjoining dressing-room, which reeked of man-made odors: lotions, eau de cologne, hair cream and scent. He washed his hands with scented soap, scrupulously cleaned his long nails with little brushes and washed his face and thick neck in a large marble basin, then he walked through into a third room just off the bedroom where a shower-bath stood waiting for him.[30]

Much like with Maslova, the smells that would accompany Nekhlyudov from one room to another are provided within his introduction to the text. However, whereas Tolstoy describes

[27] Ibid.
[28] From Part I, Chapter I, pp. 13: "...with the approval, and even active encouragement, of a government concerned with the welfare of its citizens, and for nine women it ends in painful disease, premature decrepitud and death".
[29] Tolstoy, Briggs. *Resurrection*, Part I, Chapter I, pp. 14
[30] Tolstoy, Briggs. *Resurrection*, Part I, Chapter I, pp. 15

Maslova from an omniscient point of view, relaying her exact physical appearance from head to toe, the description of Nekhlyudov is significantly limited to the prince's perception of the world. He is not the one being observed: an exact description of Nekhlyudov's physical appearance is not provided. The prince emerges into *Resurrection* through a plume of "man-made odors" and the applications of various scented lotions to his muscular body. Through Nekhlyudov's point of view, Tolstoy begins constructing the world of the nobility, which grows more alien in the princes' search for spiritual redemption.

Nekhylduov's morality is not presented as an extension of his class, as perhaps was the case with Tolstoy's early heroes. He represents the alienated perspective of Russian nobility and his social position casts the prison in an unfamiliar light. Presumably, the realities of prison life are not uncommon to the lower spheres of Russian society; if Maslova was the primary perspective offered in *Resurrection*, her account of confinement would lack the strangeness relayed by Nekhlyudov's observation. Neklhyudov's foreign presence at the prison becomes apparent as he visits Maslova for the first time. Upon entering the visiting room, he is struck by "a hundred voices blending together in one deafening roar", a product of the room's spacial design:

> The room, with windows in the back wall, was divided in two from ceiling to floor not by one but by two wire-netting curtains…The prisoners were on one side of the netting, with the visitors on this side. They were separated by two curtains, a good seven feet apart, which made it impossible not only to pass anything over, but even to make out the details of anyone's face…[31]

The effect is Nekhlyudov's introduction as an observer of the closed environment. He is amazed that "the soldiers, the warder, the visitors and the prisoners carried on as if accepting that this was how things had to be."[32] In turn, by Part III Nekhlyudov grows aware of being watched by the collective gaze: "...Every time he mingled with them and sensed their eyes on him, as they were now, he experienced an agonizing feeling of shame and an awareness that he was to blame for their condition." [33]

Regardless of Nekhlyudov's disillusionment with the social order of the Russian Empire, he cannot help but perpetuate social hierarchies even within the prison system itself. While Maslova's relocation to the political ward in Part II was an earnest attempt at securing her safety, it is nonetheless an extension of Neklhyudov's power. Consequently, even the carceral hierarchy could not evade the isolating effects of Tolstoy's olfactory imagery: for instance, the foul air of the political prisoners was sweet in contrast to the general population. Tolstoy provides extensive contextual background to the imprisoned men and women that Nekhlyudov meets in Part I, such as the group of peasants imprisoned for their expired passports or the intimate portrayal of Maslova's cellmates, but the vast majority of the convicts inf Part III are reduced to their physicality. Indeed, beyond the first part of *Resurrection*, much of the novel does evade the non-political convicts, offering snippets instead of personal accounts. In this

[31] Ibid.
[32] Tolstoy, Briggs. *Resurrection*, Part I, Chapter 41, pp. 165
[33] Tolstoy, Briggs. *Resurrection*, Part III, Chapter 10, pp. 442

respect, Maslova is an exception; as much as Tolstoy allows for her personhood to remain intact, it was a product of extraction from the general mass of inmates.

An Illusion Shattered

The habituation of prisoners to repulsive odors is intentionally dehumanizing — disgust becomes a commodity and a measure of time spent in the fresh air. The intangible nature of scent is a symbol of moral decay that informs the ideology of *Resurrection*. Tolstoy's relentless narration of stench makes the novel aesthetically unappealing; as long as Nekhlyudov is following Maslova it cannot be evaded, and readers cannot turn their noses away. While Levin's spiritual awakening in *Anna Karenina* is narrated through the sensory experience of the harmonious natural world,[34] Nekhlyudov's awakening (or, perhaps, lack thereof) is more so relayed through the incessant observation of stench.

Nekhlyudov is given a way out of the promises he has made upon learning of Masova's engagement to Simonson in Part III, Chapter 17. Her announcement is immediately followed by Nekhlyudov's observation of a suffocating scene: the dying Krylstov being cared for by fellow political prisoners as he chokes on his blood. The prince cannot stand there for long and takes his leave, escorted out of the ward by a sergeant. The world that he has infringed on has rejected him and the object of Nekhlyudov's redemption severed her role in his journey to salvation. Though Nekhlyudov does not seem fazed by Maslova's engagement, her rejection forces him to take stock of reality. The "stinking corridors" he has been walking through suddenly take on a shape, and human bodies are revealed:

> Human bodies lay around heaped up everywhere, wrapped in prison cloaks. Only in the unmarried men's quarters were a few prisoners still awake, huddled in a corner by a lighted candle-end, which they blew out when they saw the sergeant coming, and there was one old man sitting naked under the lamp in the corridor, picking lice off his shirt. The foul air of the political prisoners' section smelled sweet if you compared it with the stifling stench here. The smoking lamp seemed to be casting its dim glow through a mist, and the air was hard to breathe. In order to get down the corridor without stepping on a sleeping figure or tripping over somebody, you had to look ahead, pick out an empty spot, put one foot down, and look for a place for the next step. Three people who had obviously failed to find any space even in the corridor had settled down in the entry cheek by jowl with the stinking *parasha*[35], which leaked at every seam. One of them was an old half-wit whom Nekhlyudov had often come across on the march. Another was a boy of about ten, who lay between two convicts with one hand under his cheek and his head resting on the leg of one of them.[36]

[34] From *Anna Karenina*, Part VIII, Chapter 19: "It was quite dark now, and in the south, where he was looking, there were no clouds. The storm had drifted on to the opposite side of the sky, and there were flashes of lightning and distant thunder from that quarter. Levin listened to the monotonous drip from the lime trees in the garden, and looked at the triangle of stars he knew so well, and the Milky Way with its branches that ran through its midst. At each flash of lightning the Milky Way, and even the bright stars, vanished, but as soon as the lightning died away, they reappeared in their places as though some hand had flung them back with careful aim."

[35] Russian prison slang for a tub

[36] Tolstoy, Briggs. *Resurrection*, Part III, Chapter 18, pp. 469

It is an obtrusive scene that consolidates olfactory and visual imagery. He is seeing the prison as though for the first time with the same clarity he regards the noble world he once inhabited. The bodies responsible for the smells that have haunted the corridors are revealed. By no means could this have been the first instance in which Nekhlyudov was forced to face the bodies of the prisoners — after three months of following the procession to Siberia, he was sure to have seen their sleeping conditions. It is no longer a fragmented, moralizing vision of suffering, accented by Tolstoy's attention to pervasive smells. Tolstoy reinforces Nekhlydov's foreign presence, thus bringing into question the very nature of reality. In Nekhlyudov's final visit to the prison with the Englishman[37], Tolstoy sardonically notes that "[He] opened his eyes, amazed to find where he was."

Upon Nekhlyudov's return to the inn, the cleanliness of his room is depicted with heightened awareness:

> A door on the left led into a clean room. The clean room smelled of wormwood and human sweat; a rhythmic snoring and sputtering issued from a mighty pair of lungs in a screened-off area, and a small lamp cast aside its red glow on the icons.[38]

In a paralleling collision of environments, his room stands in stark opposition to the prison corridor[39]. There is no dying Krylstov in Nekhlyudov's clean room, but rather a pair of unnamed, healthy lungs drawing in rhythmic breaths. The warm, glowing lamp does not reveal bodies piled atop each other, but the icons that adorn the wall of the inn. Tolstoy's use of parallels relentlessly shifts the narrative between the familiar and the unfamiliar to a disorienting degree. The images from the prison seep into Tolstoy's narration of Nekhlyudov's private life, all the while emphasizing the prevailing differences. Regardless of the time Nekhlyudov has spent traveling with the inmates, he retains a level of expectation for his private living space. Normalcy is synonymous with the scent of a cared-for environment. His room, in turn, smells of human sweat; it is not acidic or unbearable, but the same sweat produced by Levin and Prince Andrei. It is never a newfound experience for Nekhlyudov to enjoy the ease of a couch and warmth of a rug — if anything, the inns that he stopped at along the journey were a radical departure from the levels of comfort he once enjoyed.

As he undresses and makes up his bed on the oilskin couch, he lays down a rug and leather pillow for extra comfort. Paying no particular attention to making himself comfortable, he finally gets in bed and reflects on the day at hand. The little boy sleeping amidst the "oozing mess leaking from the slop-tub with his head pillowed on the prisoner's leg" lingers on Nekhlyudov's mind, with Tolstoy returning to the image twice over subsequent paragraphs. Yet that is the extent of Nekhlyudov's ruminations concerning the sleeping child. Rather than Nekhlyudov's own awareness, it is Tolstoy's authorial voice that makes the cleanliness of his inn and sleeping child such an unsettling image.

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[37] Depicted in Part III, Chapter 26, after Maslova's final rejection.

[38] Tolstoy, Briggs. *Resurrection*, Part III, Chapter 19, pp. 471

[39] Quoted in the paragraph above: The smoking lamp seemed to be casting its dim glow through a mist, and the air was hard to breathe. In order to get down the corridor without stepping on a sleeping figure or tripping over somebody, you had to look ahead, pick out an empty spot, put one foot down, and look for a place for the next step…

Conclusion

To a certain extent, Tolstoy's focus on Nekhlyudov reduces Maslova to a vehicle of salvation. Such a trope is often represented via the "mystical peasant" — Platon Karataev's spiritual guidance of Pierre Bezhukhov being the most stringent of such narratives. However, while Maslova's perspective is limited in contrast to the prince, she is nonetheless allocated the right to reject the role being ascribed to her. She does not lack awareness, nor does she entirely accept his presence. By relaying Maslova's conviction through the eyes of Nekhlyudov, the internal mechanisms of the Russian prison system evolve from a reeking, fragmented structure portrayed in Part I to a tangible force of institutional evil. As the novel unfolds the image of the prison grows more vivid, largely under the construction of Nekhlyudov's foreign gaze. Tolstoy fragments the prison system by making the prince follow Maslova to different facilities across Russia: after Maslova's rejection in Part III the veil of estrangement is shattered and Nekhluydov's senses are overwhelmed by the prison as though for the first time.

Nekhlyduov inverts the figure of Tolstoy's hero: unlike Levin and Pierre, there is no clear resolution to Nekhlyudov's disillusionment with the social conditions. Whereas Pierre's marriage or Levin's recognition of God created concrete definitions of a "moral life", Nekhlyudov was not granted such a progression. His revelation negated Tolstoy's established definition of a moral life:

> These people [the prisoners], no more guilty or dangerous to society than those left at large, were, first of all, locked up in prisons, halting-stations and labor camps, and then held for months and years on end in total idleness, material dependency, and alienation from nature, family, and work, in other words deprived of the conditions necessary for the maintenance of a natural moral life[40].

Moreover, Tolstoy undermines Nekhlyudov's development through unrelenting awareness of hygiene. *Resurrection* began with Nekhlyudov as the epitome of sanitation, emitting no odor other than that of a perfumed body, and the novel ends with Nekhlyudov once again welcoming the comforts he thought he had rejected. At the end of Part III, Tolstoy offers the following description of Nekhlyudov:

> ...For the first time in two months Nekhlyudov was faced with the prospect of familiar conditions, relative hygiene and comfort. For all the lack of luxury in the room to which Nekhlyudov was shown, he felt an enormous sense of relief after so much time spent in carts, pubs, and halting-stations. The first thing was to delouse himself: he had never been able to get rid of the lice after a spell in a halting-station. He unpacked and drove straight down to the bathhouse and then went on…

The prince's first order of business upon entering a lavish setting is to rid himself of the lice that have tormented him on the last leg of his journey. Introducing such a degree of degradation into the body of a nobleman is surely a departure from the man who emerged into the text through a cloud of perfume. The process of delousing has been reduced from an anomaly to a mere annoyance; this is the same Nekhlyudov that was distracted by lice crawling

[40] Tolstoy, Briggs. *Resurrection*, Part III, Chapter 19, pp. 471

through the beard of an imprisoned peasant[41] in Part I. However, Neklhlyudov was incapable of wholly separating himself from the life of comfort he once enjoyed, and its return is a moment of shameful relief.

Unlike Nekhlyudov, Maslova cannot walk away from the prison, and she cannot seek out comfort elsewhere. As a result, she refuses to accept the filth of the prison quarters while performing a form of labor she once categorically refused to do[42]. Simonson describes her as someone who never stops working: "[She is] Always washing and cleaning. She's done this room — this is the men's — and now she's on to the women's. But you can't get rid of the fleas. We're being eaten alive[43]. It is one of the few instances in Part III in which Tolstoy recognizes the living conditions from the perspective of a convict.

Though *Resurrection* centers around Nekhlyudov, Maslova is the primary character in the throes of spiritual development. Neklhyudov, ever focused on himself, does not come to such a revelation. Maslova accepts Simonson's proposal and does not forgo her promise even as she receives a pardon. Nekhlyudov yearns to lower himself to the conditions of prisoners to understand and alleviate their suffering; Maslova did not willingly lower herself. Finally, whereas Nekhlyudov can walk out and delouse himself in a bathhouse, Maslova continues East, cleaning the cells but never getting rid of the flees. In the final line of the novel, Tolstoy is ambiguous about the life Nekhlyduov will lead: "How this new period of his life will end only the future will show." Nevertheless, in this period of new life Nekhlyudov may wince when met with the smell of poverty.

[41] From Part I, Chapter 28: "he listened, but hardly understood what the good-looking old man was saying, because his attention was riveted to a large, dark-grey, many-legged louse that was creeping along the good-looking man's cheek"

[42] From Part I, Chapter 2: "And Maslova herself never even considered whether or not to do laundry work. She felt desperately sorry now for the laundrywomen with their white faces and skinny arms who led a life of hard labour in the front rooms…She was horrified to think that she might have gone into hard labour like that" Tolstoy, Briggs. *Resurrection*, Part I, Chapter I, pp. 12

[43] Tolstoy, Briggs. *Resurrection*, Part III, Chapter 11, pp. 448

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