

L. N. TOLSTOY'S "THE KREUTZER  
SONATA" AS A WORK ON THE  
BODY POLITIC

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# Abstract

This thesis examines L. N. Tolstoy's representation of sexuality in late-nineteenth-century Russia through his novella, *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889).<sup>\*</sup> I draw on recent theoretical works of Michel Foucault and Alphonso Lingis to investigate the political and economic factors significant to the development of sexuality in capitalist cultures such as nineteenth-century Russia. I show that Tolstoy's depiction of the political empowerment and economic motivation behind sexuality are the most significant factors in shaping human sexuality, which concurs with the recent theoretical models.

I then show how women are subordinated to comply with male sexuality to achieve its political and economic ends. From this emerges a masculine view of women as subservient lower animals. I incorporate an historical account of human relationships with animals and how women became included in that lower order by men, which is vividly portrayed in *The Kreutzer Sonata* and supported by feminist theory.

After building a representative picture of sexuality and relations between the sexes, I demonstrate how Tolstoy articulates the protagonist in his novella to create a polemic against the foundations of that society. Tolstoy rehabilitates the status of a woman in favour of equality between the sexes, thus subverting all modes of life based on perceived masculine superiority. This thesis will conclude, therefore, that Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* is an indictment and condemnation of capitalist social organisation based on the exploitation of populations through their sexuality in Russia as in the West.

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<sup>\*</sup> This thesis is based on an analysis of the original Russian texts. However, I provide English translations of the Russian cited and references to English translations of the texts.

# **Introduction**

Leo Tolstoy's novella, *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889),<sup>1</sup> caused a sensation in Russia with its frank discussion on sexuality, the provocative attack it makes on sexual relations, as well as its risqué sexual content. It is a powerful and disturbing story about late-nineteenth-century family life in which moral expectations are in conflict with demands for increased sensual pleasures among the upper classes. Foremost is the masculine desire for sexual gratification and the consequences of living by the flesh that leads to discord, jealousy and eventually, the murder of a hated wife. From this scenario, the text reflects the prevalent cultural unease and anxieties surrounding a woman's body, her sexuality and the question of women's rights. As a retrospective look at a life lived badly, *The Kreutzer Sonata* focuses on the themes of sexuality, sexual morality and the social circumstances under which men and women unite.

The initial stir created by *The Kreutzer Sonata* introduced "половой вопрос" [the sexual question] to Russia's educated classes and had the intelligentsia totally absorbed in what quickly became a controversial debate on sexuality.<sup>2</sup> But for a work of art that made such an enormous impression on the minds of so many in its day, it is

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<sup>1</sup> All references to *The Kreutzer Sonata* are to the uncensored version of the text that is published in the authoritative 90 volumes of Л. Н. Толстой, *Полное Собрание Сочинений*. The official version of *The Kreutzer Sonata* published in 1890 has a number of alterations and multiple omissions made by a third party to meet the demands of repressive censorship regulations. In the course of my research, I have found the official text, which is generally available in Russian and used for English translations, to undermine the novella's artistic value and leave the work carelessly open for significant misinterpretations.

The English translations that accompany the Russian throughout this thesis are taken from Aylmer Maude's translation of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, which is based on the official censored version, but includes a large proportion of the altered or omitted passages as endnotes to the main text. Maude's translation is generally reliable, but where appropriate, I have made some adjustment to render the English as close as possible to the Russian.

Full bibliographic details of all citations and abbreviated references appear in the Bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> For extensive coverage on the reception of *The Kreutzer Sonata* and the debate on sexuality that surrounds the novella, see Møller, *Postlude to "The Kreutzer Sonata."*

almost incomprehensible that this masterpiece has received so little attention in an entire century following its publication. Even more surprising is the lack of criticism that focuses on sexuality—the central theme of the novella. This thesis, then, takes a logical step into the midst of a late-nineteenth-century world to relate the representation of sexuality in *The Kreutzer Sonata* to that social milieu.

The lack of critical inquiry into *The Kreutzer Sonata* is attributed to the general view that Tolstoy's later works, after *Anna Karenina*, are too dogmatic and of little artistic value compared with the earlier novels. Along these lines, the result in traditional literary criticism on *The Kreutzer Sonata* is reflected in the observations of David Herman: "As an illustration, Gustafson, Bayley, Wasiolek, Greenwood, and Christian in their roughly 1,500 collective pages on Tolstoi as a whole devote only a combined 16 pages to the story. Meanwhile, the best-known Russian surveys of Tolstoi's work usually concentrate on his three major novels and omit *Kreutzer Sonata* altogether.<sup>3</sup> While some Tolstoyan critics mention *The Kreutzer Sonata*, it is usually only with a brief outline of the plot, making some references to the reception of the novella or linking autobiographical features of the text to the artist. However, the last decade has witness renewed interest in *The Kreutzer Sonata*.

Firstly, that *The Kreutzer Sonata* takes its title from Beethoven's *Kreutzer Sonata* has led to numerous interpretations of the relationship between the literary and musical pieces. There are those who interpret Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* as a literary response or representation of Beethoven's sonata. Dorothy Green explores parallels in the structure of the two works, while Elizabeth Papazian considers Tolstoy's

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<sup>3</sup> Herman, 'Stricken by Infection,' p. 16.

novella to represent a literary adaptation of the presto of the musical work. Rachel Wilson takes another step by looking at Leo Janáček's *Kreutzer Quartet*, which is a musical adaptation of Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata*, investigating how it was conceived from Tolstoy's work. Mahoko Eguchi takes a technical look at Beethoven's piece to help explain some perceptive interpretations of the role of music in Tolstoy's work and the effect music can have on listeners such as the protagonist in *The Kreutzer Sonata*. In a similar vein, David Herman explores the role of music and art in general in *The Kreutzer Sonata* and the psychological impact it has on people, with specific reference to sexual relations. While all of these papers are innovative in their approach and reflect Tolstoy's fascination with art, which he to some extent explores in the novella, *The Kreutzer Sonata* is not essentially concerned with art as a literary theme. A musical interpretation therefore does not lead to a satisfactory or conclusive critical representation of *The Kreutzer Sonata*.

Looking at the text as a whole, rather than focusing on one theme such as music, the approximately seventy pages of *The Kreutzer Sonata* is almost entirely a monologue of a male protagonist's confession told in a train compartment to the first-person narrator who later retells the tale. Logically, then, a great deal of criticism focuses on that predominant character. Charles Isenberg, for example, in his book, *Telling Silence*, devotes one chapter to *The Kreutzer Sonata* and an analysis of its protagonist. Isenberg describes the setting in the train compartment as an artistic frame which symbolically imprisons the protagonist, forcing him to confront the truth of his ill-lived former life to which he confesses. Out of this "truth," Isenberg includes a Freudian psychological analysis to conclude that the protagonist was driven to a state of delusional jealousy by failing to understand himself and his society. But, as a madman, in his recollections of

the past he now sees through that delusion. According to Isenberg, this allows the protagonist to acknowledge his own guilt related to the mistreatment and murder of his wife, to which he was previously oblivious. Similarly, in 'The Kreutzer Sonata as a Tragedy of Forgiveness,' Robert Bird contests that the protagonist's confession reflects a realisation of guilt and a plea for forgiveness. However, Bird suggests that the protagonist never fully realises the essence of his guilty self or the extent of his crimes against women, which leaves him unable to reconcile the true nature of his former life as a typical male. On the other hand, Vladimir Golstein considers the protagonist to have no sense of remorse and presents him wholly as an unrepentant murderer who sees himself, not his dead wife, as the victim. Golstein argues that the protagonist first sets himself up as passive entity and continues to lay blame on external forces that apparently bear down and determine his fate completely against his will. In doing so, the protagonist is seen to be involved in an elaborate process of scapegoating and blame laying on anyone but himself. Golstein concludes that the protagonist aims ultimately for self-justification of his abuse of women and one's eventual murder, which prophetically reflects the obsession of our age of paranoid theories and self-justifying murders.

Henrietta Mondry finds another explanation for the murder of a woman in her Fyodorovian reading of *The Kreutzer Sonata*. Taking a philosophical approach to the text based on Nikolai Fyodorov's *The Philosophy of the Common Task*, Mondry finds that the murder is committed for the integral role it plays in achieving the final goal of mankind, which is to resurrect past generations of dead fathers and thus fulfil Fyodorov's interpretation of the aim of Christianity. By killing a wife, a man symbolically detaches himself from sexuality and the instinct to procreate, which



Mondry explains is amongst the factors hindering the resurrections. Now metaphysically castrated from his sexual instincts, the protagonist is a symbolic eunuch who is ready and worthy for his entry into the Kingdom of God.

Although the protagonist achieves the highest Christian ideal in his symbolic detachment from sexuality outlined by Mondry, there remains the question related to the protagonist's sexuality before his escape from it, which is representative of male sexuality in general and dominates a large proportion of his confession. The most substantial body of literature dealing with issues of sexuality, indeed the largest single work on *The Kreutzer Sonata*, is Peter Ulf Møller's *Postlude to "The Kreutzer Sonata."* Møller takes an historical look at the composition and reception of Tolstoy's novella and provides an extensive and insightful commentary on the contemporaneous debate on sexual morality in Russia extending over three hundred pages. This work also includes accounts of the representation of sexuality by other artists of the day as well as philosophical views and responses related to the debate on sexuality and *The Kreutzer Sonata*, including those of Vladimir Solovyov and Vasiliy Rozanov. Although Møller's book is extensive, by the author's own definition *Postlude to "The Kreutzer Sonata"* aims at creating a "literary-historical" context for *The Kreutzer Sonata* and not a critical analysis or interpretation of the representation of sexuality in Tolstoy's novella itself.

Barbara Heldt, however, takes a critical look at male sexuality and the representation of women in *The Kreutzer Sonata*. In her short chapter, 'Tolstoy's Path toward Feminism' in *Terrible Perfection*, Heldt first points out that *The Kreutzer Sonata* is often received as an extreme form of Tolstoy's misogyny for his presentation of masculine domination through a patriarchal protagonist whose patriarchal attitudes and sexuality lead to the physical mistreatment of women and the eventual murder of his

wife. However, Heldt argues that Tolstoy intentionally creates a misogynist protagonist and exposes his abuse of women to emphatically condemn, not advocate masculine domination and patriarchal culture.<sup>4</sup> Heldt contends that: “It would seem that misogyny rules throughout. But Tolstoy is attempting a more difficult feat,” which is, according to Heldt, the representation of a society in which “the description of sexual politics as they exist, are the same as those made by feminists today.”<sup>4</sup> Heldt’s perceptive analogy concurs with and is integral to this thesis; it will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Four.

This thesis aims, then, to fulfil the need for a more thorough investigation into the controversial central theme of sexuality in *The Kreutzer Sonata* that caused such a stir in its day, but remains almost entirely unaddressed in critical inquiry into the novella. This will not only add new and interesting dimensions to the literary work and its creator, but will also illuminate a great deal about late-nineteenth-century Russian life and the historical cultural, social, political and sexual elements with which it is structured. *The Kreutzer Sonata* is thus an important moment in Russian literature, in need and worthy of the thematic attention I give to its representation of sexuality in late-nineteenth-century Russian society.

In Chapter One, I will define the typical attributes of male sexuality by example of the protagonist of *The Kreutzer Sonata* who speaks at length about his sexuality from childhood through to marriage asserting that he is a representative of ninety-nine per cent of males in his society. Relating the protagonist’s constant claims that external forces essentially shape male sexuality against the will of the individual to Michel

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<sup>4</sup> Heldt, ‘Tolstoy’s Path toward Feminism,’ pp. 45, 47.

Foucault's theory of sexuality in *The History of Sexuality*, I will demonstrate that this phenomenon represents what Foucault contests is the intentional socio-political intervention and manipulation of the development of sexuality to serve the political wants of the state. Foucault explains that in capitalist Western nations of the last few centuries, governments sought to rapidly increase their populations by promoting a sexuality that focuses on maximising the procreative potential of human beings. This essentially relies on targeting males and creating in them a strong and constant desire for sex. By then ensuring women are receptive to these male needs, the resulting frequent and productive sexual encounters will theoretically lead to a sharp increase in birth rates. While Foucault draws on Western nations to formulate his theory, Tolstoy demonstrates that capitalist Russia was politically on par with the West and that in Russia too there were numerous tactical devices employed to maximise population growth through a politically prescribed sexuality. The retrospective account of the life of the male protagonist in *The Kreutzer Sonata* runs completely concurrent with Foucault's theory as an example of how, indeed, male sexuality became institutionalised and was conditioned according to Western and the Russian government requirements.

However, Foucault contends that a social prescription for sexuality goes beyond increasing populations also to directly feed the immediate economy. While Foucault focuses on a theory for strategies to increase birth rates and does not elaborate on his suggestion of an economically useful sexuality, the protagonist in *The Kreutzer Sonata* is witness to overwhelming evidence of Foucault's suggestion; every aspect of sexuality in *The Kreutzer Sonata* is described by the protagonist as having an underlying financial dimension and economic motivation. To fully investigate and explain the mechanics of this phenomenon, I draw on *Foreign Bodies* (1997), the recent anthropological work of

Alphonso Lingis. Lingis confirms Foucault's suggestion of an economically useful sexuality and Lingis' theoretical proposals help to more fully articulate the protagonist's observations of the economic uses of sexuality in his society. Lingis proposes a "libidinal economy" that operates within and as part of the greater monetary economy. Lingis explains that sexual desire creates a demand for a body, sensuality expresses that desire and aids in promoting available bodies, and sexual relations between the sexes are the transactional exchange of bodies and services that a body can provide. Lingis formulates that the financial dimension in this "libidinal economy" is based on the cash and exchange value of bodies and their services. The protagonist in *The Kreutzer Sonata* speaks at length on the dynamics of how both men and women actively participate in economic exchanges through their sexual relations that create enormous wealth in the greater economy. I will demonstrate that, as Foucault suggests, as Lingis articulates theoretically, and by fictional example of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, the economies of the body are as capitalist as the state.

In Chapters One and Two of this thesis, it will be shown through the example of *The Kreutzer Sonata* that the politics and economics that Foucault and Lingis describe rely essentially on the subordination of women and masculine dominion. In their subordinate position, women quickly become viewed as objects of male sexual expression resulting from his politically inflamed libido, then a perpetual incubator for his politically valued progeny as well as sexual commodities evident from Chapter Two. Thus, as feminist writer Elizabeth Grosz explains in *Volatile Bodies* (1994), a woman to a man is conceived wholly as a biological and physical being. For women in those days, when Cartesian binary oppositions dominated ideology, Grosz explains that

*biological* and *physical* were synonymous with *animal* and, therefore, so too was a woman.

The animals and the female human beings that were equated to the biological and physical by cultural definition were therefore the negative opposition to the positive image of a spiritual male. As Grosz deduces, it did not take long for this thought to translate into the reality of everyday life, which is vividly portrayed in *The Kreutzer Sonata*. The male protagonist expresses his unquestionable belief in a dominant male and his view that women are essentially animals in the male eye. The evidence is overwhelming; the protagonist's account of his former life is based on a view that his wife is categorically a "животное" [an animal], and he employs the word *животное* [animal] and its derivatives approximately thirty-five times in his references to his wife and women in general. *The Kreutzer Sonata* is testimony to how men thus displace women out of the human world and into a subordinate order as Grosz conjectures.

Much of Chapter Three of this thesis is based on an inter-textual analysis of *The Kreutzer Sonata* and Tolstoy's short story, 'Kholstomer: The Story of a Horse,' to draw out the parallels between the masculine treatment of women and animals as one and the same oppressed subspecies. The link between women and animals is then propped in Chapter Three by Joyce Salisbury's *The Beast within*. Salisbury takes an historical look at the relations between animals and human beings. Salisbury makes the connection between men's views of animals and how women became included as part of that other non-human group in the patriarchal mind. She explains that both animals and women were mistreated like inferior beings. I show by drawing on Grosz and Salisbury and by the comparative example of *The Kreutzer Sonata* and 'Kholstomer' how women were

subordinated to the status of lower animals and the extent to which males dominated them.

In Chapter One, I explain that for political reasons a woman is taken into a man's home where she is held captive as a procreative animal. She is seen as a necessary outlet for male desire and forced into a submissive relationship with men ultimately to bear as many offspring as possible in her reproductive years. Then, in Chapter Two, a woman is seen as a commodified object that has various economic uses to a man. Again, women are abused and exploited by men. In Chapter Three, the identity of a woman as an animal in the male mind is revealed and exposes the typically misogynist views of women that have dominated many cultures, including Russian, for many centuries, only to be enforced with the rise of capitalism, which I will demonstrate relies on women's subordination. This is the typical picture of late-nineteenth-century life that Tolstoy has his protagonist paint as a representative of ninety-nine per cent of males that results from the politics and process Foucault and Lingis describe, which Grosz and Salisbury help to explain.

However, in Chapter Four, I investigate how, following the death of his wife, the protagonist of *The Kreutzer Sonata* is shocked into a re-evaluation of his former life as a typical male. He questions the validity and denounces the basis of a society built on the politics Foucault describes, in which women are held in constant sexual relations and childbirth and raising. He also questions and rejects the mechanics of a male-dominated world that makes economic use of a woman's body, which Lingis describes. The protagonist re-evaluates the status of a woman as an animal, which results from the social institutions discussed in Chapters One and Two. He no longer finds a woman to be an animal, but in a most revelatory discovery for a male, he finds that she is, in fact,

a human being. The protagonist then questions masculinity in an attempt to reconcile how the invalid political structures, unjust economic exploitation of women and the male misconceptions of femininity can constitute the such firmly established foundations of society. He finds men responsible for constructing an ill-founded world in which the most esteemed position for women is in a subordinate role to men.

Compared with Robert Bird above, I contest that the protagonist does fully identify the nature of masculinity and his life as a typical male. In contrast to Vladimir Golstein above, I will show that the protagonist does acknowledge his guilt and feels great remorse for his former actions as a male. I will describe how the protagonist sheds his former self-righteousness to denounce all that constitutes a male-constructed world described in Chapters One to Three, and attempts to rehabilitate the image of a woman in a man's eye. *The Kreutzer Sonata* thus represents "Tolstoy's path toward feminism," which Heldt suggests. In *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Tolstoy then throws into question the basis of societies created and dominated by males to serve their political aims, which is particularly evident in the late-nineteenth-century Russian world that this thesis explores.

# **Chapter One**

## *Political Aspects of Sexuality*



In *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault explains that in rising capitalist Western countries of the past few centuries, their populations' sexuality became institutionalised and controlled to serve the state. The state exercised its power to actively deploy and implement a sexuality that was politically and economically useful. State intervention and control of an individual's sexuality aimed to ensure the development of a collective sexuality that conforms to that desired standard. A century ago, Tolstoy depicts a world in which sexuality is indeed the target of state intervention and social conditioning. While Foucault bases his theory on historical observations in the West, Tolstoy reveals that pre-Revolutionary Russia was both politically and sexually on par with its Western neighbours. In *The Kreutzer Sonata*, the story of the protagonist, Pozdnyshev, mirrors Foucault's theory with remarkable clarity. Pozdnyshev claims that he is the victim of external forces that intervene with the development of his sexuality and manipulate him according to an external social prescription. In late-nineteenth-century Russia, in a country avidly striving toward capitalism as with its Western counterparts, Pozdnyshev's life is a striking example of how an individual is conditioned by the external pressure of state power to serve the greater needs of his country through a politically constructed sexuality.

*The Kreutzer Sonata* begins by entering into a debate on relations between the sexes held by late-nineteenth-century upper class Russians on a train bound for an unknown destination. The conversation turns to marriage and the meaning of love and runs headlong into a heated exchange with Pozdnyshev who is compelled to interject and assert his opinion. He is a tense man, prematurely greying. His shifty glances and sporadic nervous chortles indicate his unease with the topic at hand. He identifies himself as the one who murdered his wife because of a love based on false pretences

and the lust for a woman whom he never knew outside their sexual relations. Pozdnyshev objects to the possibility of marriage based on true love, which a modern woman suggests. He believes that in his upper class circles, ninety-nine per cent of marriages are wholly physical and based simply on the hunt for and pleasure derived from sexual, not intellectual, intercourse.

The heart of Pozdnyshev's complaint is that he is a victim of social conditioning that shapes him into a man whose sexuality holds him in a perpetual state of sexual desire. Pozdnyshev claims that his life is not a monumental exception of a life that is lived badly. He ardently asserts that he is a typical representative of a member of a sick society and that his marriage is a typical picture of late-nineteenth-century upper class family life. He blames his upbringing for the sexual obsessiveness he develops and the subsequent abuse of women to fulfil his desires, which culminates in the murder of his wife. Having been acquitted for the murder he committed, he now "puts society on trial"<sup>1</sup> and exposes and questions the social influences that shaped his sexuality in an attempt to make sense of his life.

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<sup>1</sup> I borrow this concept from Shoshana Felman's 'Forms of Judicial Blindness,' which makes a fascinating comparison of *The Kreutzer Sonata* and its parallels with the recent O. J. Simpson trial. Quoting an editorial in the *Boston Globe*, Felman points out: "many commentators are arguing that America, not simply Simpson, was on trial.... That's too big a thought,' the article concludes." Indeed, it is a "big thought," but not necessarily "too big." Felman applies the same analogy also to late-nineteenth-century Russian society, and "In both cases, the husband points an accusing finger toward the social order and the social institutions; the husband's case is argued, in both stories, not so much as a defence against murder but as a *prosecution (and indictment) of society*." This perceptive analogy is critical to Pozdnyshev's tale. It is precisely his society and the social structuring which parallels Foucault's theory that he sees as responsible for the inevitable death of a woman. Moreover, his acquittal by members of that society, as with Simpson, for a brutal murder, which he is clearly guilty of and even confesses to, raises interesting questions concerning the ethics of that society. Felman, 'Forms of Judicial Blindness,' pp. 742, 759.

Like in Foucault's theory on sexuality, Tolstoy implicates social influences as the foremost cause of society's fall into sexual immorality. Foucault contends that citizens of the state are the subjects of a political programme designed to manipulate and control individuals' sexuality to serve the greater collective needs of the rising capitalist nation. Pozdnyshev's recollections told to a nameless passenger bear striking resemblance to Foucault's theory. Sexuality in the late-nineteenth century is indeed a sexuality that is a regulated government issue. Foucault explains:

Through the political economy of population there was formed a whole grid of observations regarding sex. There emerged the analysis of the modes of sexual conduct, their determinations and their effects, at the boundary line of the biological and economic domains.<sup>2</sup>

Examining Pozdnyshev's life demonstrates in practice the Foucauldian theory of the biological and economic domains being a locus of attention and intervention in the development of a state sanctioned sexuality. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault suggests that in the seventeenth century sexuality became institutionalised and regulated with the aim to maximise the biological urge in human beings to procreate in order to serve the socio-economic needs of Western countries. This coincides with the rise of capitalism when rapid population increase was a paramount concern. The Western and, by example of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Russian governments considered a productive sexuality integral to the stability and financial success of their capitalist regimes.

Before this, sexuality of the classical age was more liberal. "It was," as Foucault points out, "a time of direct gestures, shameless discourse, and open transgressions...."

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<sup>2</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 26.

But,” because such unregulated sexuality with its “transgressions” that could often result in unproductive, wasted sexual energy,

twilight soon fell upon this bright day, followed by the monotonous nights of the Victorian bourgeoisie. Sexuality was carefully confined; it moved into the home.... The legitimate and procreative couple laid down the law. The couple imposed itself as a model, enforced the norm, safeguarded the truth.... A single locus of sexuality was acknowledged in social space as well as at the heart of every household, but it was a utilitarian and fertile one: the parents’ bedroom.<sup>3</sup>

The ideal was promoted as a productive heterosexual family unit: “organization of the ‘conventional’ family came to be regarded...as an indispensable instrument of political control and economic regulation.”<sup>4</sup>

Pozdnyshv strives for this ideal “conventional” family life for many years. He eventually marries a woman suitably of his own class, and has five children in about as many years—a sterling effort and a desirable outcome for the capitalist regime.

However, in retrospect, Pozdnyshv sees nothing desirable in his former life. Far from the “возвышенная, чистая семейная жизнь” [elevated and pure family life] that he was assured of, he views his subsequent married life as a “страшный ад” [terrible hell].<sup>5</sup> He asserts that this is the result of being coerced by social pressure into a life based only on the fulfilment of his “животная потребность” [animal need] to copulate.

Pozdnyshv goes further to make the explicit claim that the men of his class are not the creators of their own destinies. Despite all external appearances of propriety in upper class life, he suggests that males are actually kept like animal breeding stock: “Мужчины нашего мира содержатся и кормятся, как случные жеребцы” [The men

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<sup>3</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 122.

<sup>5</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 20, 15; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 129, 121.

of our world are kept and fed like breeding stallions].<sup>6</sup> It is Pozdnyshev's use of the passive word *содержатся* [to be kept or maintained] that is most telling. Rather than living according to his own wishes, Pozdnyshev suggests that he, like all men of his class, is but a passive subject "kept" by the state<sup>7</sup>—powerful words in light of Foucault's claims.

Tolstoy's political overtones of being kept like animals corresponds to Foucault's idea that citizens are subject to control by external power imposed on them by the state. This is precisely the ideal sought by capitalist governments, which is concealed behind a façade of propriety. Behind the scenes in upper class life, social institutions sought merely to pair off couples of desirable social standing to mate like animals and produce as many upright offspring as possible. Denying marriage based on love, Pozdnyshev 'seconds' Foucault's notion; Pozdnyshev professes that behind outward claims of idealistic love and marriage, "у нас люди женятся, не видя в браке ничего, кроме совокупления" [people among us marry not viewing marriage as anything except copulation].<sup>8</sup>

Pozdnyshev looks back on his life and is astounded at its baseness. However, as Foucault points out, living for copulation and successful, rapid reproduction is the expected utilitarian role of citizens that optimises desirable procreation for the benefit of

<sup>6</sup> Толстой, «Крейцера соната», p. 303; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 213.

<sup>7</sup> Vladimir Golstein refers to Pozdnyshev's repetitive use of the passive in his speech throughout the story. He points out: "through the use of passive constructions Pozdnyshev...presents himself as a helpless passive entity." Golstein claims that this is in order to produce "the rhetoric of evasion" that Pozdnyshev uses as "scapegoating" in an attempt to escape blame for his actions. However, I contest that the constant passive usage is a key artistic point indicating that Pozdnyshev is indeed "a helpless passive entity," but because of the forces that are very much beyond his control, to which Foucault attests. Golstein, 'The Rhetoric of Evasion,' p. 435.

<sup>8</sup> Толстой, «Крейцера соната», p. 15; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 121.

the state and economy. To avoid the baseness that Pozdnyshev sees in this condition from surfacing earlier, and in order to regulate a population thus, Foucault explains that sexuality became institutionalised at all levels, employing a complex of tactical devices. Society's aim was to encourage sexual promiscuity so that it would lead to a rapid increase in the birth rate. In addition, to mask the unseemly reality of sexual promiscuity, sexual activity was tactically encouraged, albeit with an air of decency, in order that society could retain its upright stature.

Educators, doctors, scientists, artists, parents, children; everyone became inextricably bound in the web of tactical devices that aimed to regulate sexuality. Foucault attests that "sex was not something one simply judged; it was a thing one administered..., managed, inserted into systems of utility, regulated for the greater good of all, made to function according to an optimum." Foucault continues:

...sexual conduct of the population was taken both as an object of analysis and as a target of intervention; there was a progression from the crudely populationist arguments of the mercantilist epoch to the much more subtle and calculated attempts at regulation that tended to favor or discourage—according to the objectives and exigencies of the moment—an increasing birthrate.<sup>9</sup>

The tale told by the protagonist of *The Kreutzer Sonata* runs concurrent to Foucault's theory surprisingly closely. As a passive subject of the state, Pozdnyshev depicts a late-nineteenth-century society in which individual freedom exists only in the mind; the reality is that the state has ultimate control over its conditioned subjects, including their sexuality. As a mere pawn in the greater social milieu, Pozdnyshev's life from childhood, through adolescence and even as a married adult, supports the Foucauldian notion that he, like most of his class, is possessed of an implanted sexuality

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<sup>9</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, pp. 24, 26.

that has been moulded and is manipulated to conform with state wants. As Pozdnyshev retells the past, he will demonstrate precisely how governments institutionalise sexuality and manipulate their populations through biological and psychological means to serve social and political ends.

Pozdnyshev's recollections go right back to childhood where the first signs of state intervention are evident. At the age of thirteen, Pozdnyshev already displays unease with his sexuality. It becomes apparent that his troubles are the result of an inner struggle between his natural feelings regarding his adolescent sexuality and the conflicting impression that he receives from what is the accepted prescribed sexuality in society that surrounds him.

Pozdnyshev will give way to what he sees as his childhood innocence as the power of the social prescription takes control. Foucault too makes clear this point of intentional intervention in the development of child sexuality: "The sex of children and adolescents has become, since the eighteenth century, an important area of contention around which innumerable institutional devices and discursive strategies have been deployed."<sup>10</sup>

According to Foucault, the aim of the cumulative effect of the devices and strategies in place is to foster a population in a perpetual state of desire to unite with the opposite sex in order to reproduce. Pozdnyshev recalls that at thirteen years old "уже женщина, не какая-нибудь, а женщина, как сладкое нечто, женщина, всякая женщина, нагота женщины уже мучала меня" [already women, not some particular woman but women as something to be desired, women, every woman, woman's nudity,

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<sup>10</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 30.

tormented me].<sup>11</sup> Even before any real sexual experience, Pozdnyshv displays this tormenting desire for women.

A young male in desire for a woman's body is the ideal political disposition for Pozdnyshv that will ensure a fertile future as he seeks out and unites with women to fulfil that desire. Foucault elaborates:

The deployment of sexuality established one of its most essential internal operating principles: the desire for sex—the desire to have it, to have access to it, to discover it, to liberate it, to articulate it in discourse, to formulate it in truth. It constituted 'sex' itself as something desirable.<sup>12</sup>

Although Pozdnyshv's desire for women complies with what the state considers desirable, in his pre-sexual years he suffers tremendous anxieties that suggest that the political ideal encouraging promiscuity is counter to Pozdnyshv's morals.

Pozdnyshv expresses his concerns as a youth in the following account:

Я не знал еще женщин, но я, как и все несчастные дети нашего круга, уже не был невинным мальчиком: уже второй год я был развращен мальчишками.... Уединения мои были нечистые. Я мучался, как мучаются 0,99 наших мальчиков. Я ужасался, я страдал, я молился и падал. Я уже был развращен в воображении и в действительности, но последний шаг еще не был сделан мною. Я погибал один, но еще не налагая руки на другое человеческое существо.

I had not yet known any woman, but, like all the unfortunate children of our class, I was no longer an innocent boy. I had been depraved two years before that by other boys.... My solitude was not pure. I was tormented, as ninety-nine per cent of our boys. I was horrified, I suffered, I prayed, and I fell. I was already depraved in imagination and in fact, but I had not yet taken the last step. I was perishing, but I had not yet laid hands on another human being.<sup>13</sup>

There are two causes of Pozdnyshv's childhood anxieties that are evident in his recollection. First he recognises the 'fall,' which identifies the act of copulation and the

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<sup>11</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 17 – 18; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 125.

<sup>12</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 156.

<sup>13</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 17 – 18; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 125.



use of women as a sin when the woman is reduced merely to an object of desire and an outlet for male sexual release. Although, as Pozdnyshev says, he has not yet had sexual intercourse, he has sinned and suffers in the epigraphic sense, in which sex crimes are committed equally in the mind as they are in reality.<sup>14</sup>

Inextricably linked to the imaginary sexual world of an adolescent are the solitary physical pleasures that accompany the thoughts. Masturbation is the physical manifestation of his thoughts that finalises and confirms them as if in reality. As such, and as would be in real life, he sees the objectification of women to be immoral. His anguish intensifies. The second cause of anxiety is the culturally imposed guilt that Pozdnyshev feels for committing another sin: the act of masturbation itself. In that society, as will be explained, masturbation was necessarily taboo.

Both of Pozdnyshev's troubles are childhood issues addressed by the state to control sexuality right at its roots. In different ways, Pozdnyshev's anxieties associated with the immorality of his thoughts of women as sex objects and the guilt of masturbation become the tools that are used (against him) to make "sex desirable" as he becomes increasingly sexually active.

As is typical, Pozdnyshev's first sexual experience is solitary. Foucault also makes explicit the significance placed on masturbation and the importance it plays in the role of conditioning child sexuality. In addition, the case of Pozdnyshev's childhood is particularly relevant and makes an excellent example for analysis, as it was

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<sup>14</sup> *The Kreutzer Sonata* has a biblical epigraph from Matthew V: 28: "But I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 7; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 111.

specifically the upper-middle and upper class male children on whom attention was focussed for the political reasons outlined by Foucault:

As for the adolescent wasting his future substance in secret pleasures, the onanistic child who was of such concern to doctors and educators from the end of the eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth, this was not the child of the people, the future worker who had to be taught the disciplines of the body, but rather the schoolboy, the child surrounded by domestic servants, tutors, and governesses, who was in danger of compromising not so much his physical strength as his intellectual capacity, his moral fiber, and the obligation to preserve a healthy line of descent for his family and his social class...; it was in the 'bourgeois' or 'aristocratic' family that the sexuality of children and adolescents was first problematized....<sup>15</sup>

Not only was it seen as a waste of sexual potential and energy, but there were also medical concerns for the masturbating child's health. As child sexuality began to receive greater attention towards the end of the nineteenth century, a number of hypotheses relating to masturbation were formulated. On the one hand, there were genuine medical concerns that masturbation was linked to abnormalities in the development of sexuality, homosexuality for example, and the concern that by adulthood, a child would become sexually exhausted, infertile or impotent.<sup>16</sup> So because masturbation threatens the development of a so-called "conventional" sexuality in that it does not result in the potential for producing offspring, it was considered an undesirable act in the nineteenth century.

Masturbation became one of the first concerns of the child that received attention and intervention to curb it. As an unproductive activity it was sanctioned a "fraud against procreation," as Foucault puts it, and with the threat of being responsible for sexual abnormalities, it was labelled a "perversion"<sup>17</sup>—in either case, something to

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<sup>15</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, pp. 120 – 121.

<sup>16</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 150.

<sup>17</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, pp. 117 – 118.

be avoided at all costs. This led to “the war against onanism, which in the West lasted nearly two centuries.”<sup>18</sup> Foucault describes at length examples of the physical measures put in place at schools aimed to stop children from masturbating. He concludes that they were all aimed to ensure “a supervision and education of sex so well thought out that the youth’s universal sin would never need to be practiced.”<sup>19</sup>

Beside the placement of physical barriers, there was also a deployment of psychological controls imposed on children such as the young Pozdnyshev. For the most part, evidence suggests that this involved the intentional proliferation of false information to dissuade boys from masturbating. For example, masturbation was (mis)construed a sin in the biblical sense according to the story of Onan.<sup>20</sup> As well, there were more sinister scare tactics employed. Myths were presented as medical fact that had children believing they were in real danger of bodily harm: blindness, to take the most common example; but even the threat of death was reported in some cases by physicians.<sup>21</sup> All of these means, both physical and psychological aimed at preventing masturbation.

However, the control of masturbation was not simply a matter of prohibition in the hope of eradication. It became part of a more complex strategy. Brought up in a

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<sup>18</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 104.

<sup>19</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 29.

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Boyarin points out the common misconception that masturbation is biblically a sin: “The Onan story in the Bible itself has, of course, nothing to do with masturbation at all.” Daniel Boyarin, ‘Are There Any Jews in “The History of Sexuality”?’ p. 337.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Laqueur cites an historical text of the day: “We find in the annals of medicine,’ explains Larousse’s *Grand dictionnaire* in 1875, looking back for its lay audience on a century’s observations, ‘plenty of cases of five, six, and eight year old children dead as a result of masturbation.’” Thomas Laqueur, ‘Credit, Novels, Masturbation,’ p. 122.

milieu of fear and superstition surrounding child sexuality, it is not surprising that Pozdnyshv suffers torments in his mind. Following Foucault's theory, it is, paradoxically, Pozdnyshv's indulgence in masturbation and the guilt he feels that the state relies on as a support mechanism that helps construct a "conventional" sexuality. Although masturbation was made taboo and a prohibited act, it was also acknowledged as an inevitable part of growing up. In the majority of cases, therefore, a child will break the prohibition. He will then feel the guilt of crossing that cultural boundary and the fear of retribution for his sin or bodily harm.<sup>22</sup> It is this culturally contrived guilt and fear that the child is supposed to experience, in that he will feel vulnerable to becoming immoral and seek out the "conventional" prescribed sexuality as recompense.

This is the complex nature of state intervention of which Foucault speaks. Rather than simply imposing and enforcing a sexual dogma that would expose the state's manipulation of a population, a child was to be seen as the creator of his own sexuality. That is, in reality intervention was very real and undoubtedly did exist, but it was carefully hidden: "the control of infantile sexuality hoped to reach... [its objective] through a simultaneous propagation of its own power and of the object on which it was brought to bear." Foucault continues to explain this most interesting phenomenon:

Educators and doctors combated children's onanism like an epidemic that needed to be eradicated. What this actually entailed...was using these tenuous pleasures as a prop, constituting them as secrets, (that is, forcing them into hiding so as to make possible their discovery)... The child's 'vice' was not so much an enemy as a support; it may have been designated as the evil to be eliminated, but the extraordinary effort that went into the task that was bound to fail leads one to suspect that what was demanded of it was to persevere, to proliferate to the limits of the visible and invisible, rather than to disappear for good.... In

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<sup>22</sup> "He" indicates that it is specifically the masturbation of male children that came under scrutiny. There is no evidence to suggest that female masturbation was ever an area of contention, nor that it even existed as a so-called "fraud against procreation."

appearance, we are dealing with a barrier system; but in fact, all around the child, indefinite *lines of penetration* were disposed.<sup>23</sup>

Following this argument, the adolescent is left intentionally, as is Pozdnyshev, in constant conflict with his biological urges, knowing that in most instances, as Pozdnyshev does, he will commit what is deemed a sin. Once he becomes sexually active, specifically with a woman, he can put his frustrations behind him, as sexual gratification in acceptable sexual relations nullifies the need to masturbate and feel guilty. This process removes a sin and lays the foundations for the procreative male that is the ideal sought by capitalist governments.

Because sex with a woman provides a legitimate and satisfactory outlet for sexual desire, the hope is that this would become the preferred activity for young men. Deviating from this socially formulated norm in acts that were unproductive would hopefully not occur, as the social stigma attached to any such deviations—that is, any non-procreative sexual activity—was sufficiently strong to prevent it. The sexuality of a population develops along these lines, where active heterosexual sex becomes the mainstay; achieving and maintaining this status quo relies on manipulation of a child to ensure the procreative potential of a population is optimised. Thus, Pozdnyshev is supposed to feel: “My solitude was not pure.” Accordingly, the means by which he eventually becomes pure—or as he imagines himself: “ангел” [an angel],<sup>24</sup> no less—is through increasingly frequent sexual relations with women.

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<sup>23</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, pp. 41 – 42.

<sup>24</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 27; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 138.

However, although contact with a woman alleviates the guilt of masturbating, Pozdnyshev's first sexual experience outside his imaginary world only confirms the reality of another source of guilt that he has yet to overcome. Again, intervention from without will deal with this guilt and manipulate him into fulfilling his prescribed role in society.

Pozdnyshev is led into sexual relations under the impression from others that this is the answer to his childhood anxieties, concurrent with the argument above. Pozdnyshev recalls: “Я слышал, что мои борьбы и страдания утишатся после этого” [I had heard that my struggles and suffering would be over after that]. Expecting nothing but good from his first experience, Pozdnyshev recalls that on the contrary:

...я, пятнадцатилетний мальчишка, осквернил себя самого и содействовал осквернению женщины, вовсе не понимая того, что я делал.... Помню, мне тотчас же, там же, не выходя из комнаты, сделалось, грустно, грустно, так что хотелось плакать, плакать о погибели своей невинности, о навеки погубленном отношении к женщине.

...I, a fifteen year old boy, defiled myself and took part in defiling a woman, without understanding what I was doing.... I remember that at that moment, right there before I left the room, I felt sad, so sad that I wanted to cry—cry for the loss of my innocence and my relationship with women now sullied for ever.<sup>25</sup>

His sexual experience confirms what he suspected in his solitude; Pozdnyshev recognises his abuse of women merely as objects of male desire. The fact that the possibility of having cordial relations with women is lost greatly troubles Pozdnyshev. He imagines himself “не нормальный, а испорченный навсегда человек – блудник” [not normal, but a man depraved forever—a lecher].<sup>26</sup>

From that first sexual encounter, Pozdnyshev learns to indulge in casual sex at brothels as he learns to smoke and drink with the other boys at the gymnasium. Like

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<sup>25</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 18 – 19; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 125 – 127.

<sup>26</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 19; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 127.

the effects of the addictive poisons of nicotine and alcohol, sex chains Pozdnyshev to a sexual habit that perverts him:

Да-с, естественное, простое отношение к женщине было погублено навеки. Чистого отношения к женщине уж у меня с тех пор не было и не могло быть. Я стал тем, что называют блудником. А быть блудником есть физическое состояние, подобное состоянию морфиниста, пьяницы, курильщика.... Блудник может воздерживаться, бороться; но простого, ясного, чистого отношения к женщине, братского, у него уже никогда не будет.

Yes, my natural, simple relationship with women was spoilt forever. From that time on I have not had, and could not have, pure relations with women. I had become what is called a lecher. To be a lecher is a physical condition like that of a morphinist, a drunkard, or a smoker.... A lecher may restrain himself, may struggle, but he will never have those pure, simple, clear, brotherly relations with a woman.<sup>27</sup>

It becomes evident that relations with women other than sexual that Pozdnyshev laments over losing are not politically desirable, nor are they encouraged. Although morally correct in his adolescent thoughts, it is what he sees as the immoral sexual intercourse between the sexes that society encourages. After all, “brotherly” relations presumably denotes a non-sexual affair with a woman that may not lead to the bearing of offspring.

In the discussion with the modern woman in the opening of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Pozdnyshev makes the point clear that such ideal cordial relations with women do not exist in his society. The woman proposes to Pozdnyshev the notion of a love between men and women based on such “pure” relations: “Разве вы не допускаете любви, основанной на единстве идеалов, на духовном сродстве?” [Don’t you acknowledge love based on identity of ideals, on spiritual affinity?] As a middle-aged man who was subject to a life of social conditioning and lived according to the state-prescribed sexuality that was imposed on him, Pozdnyshev refutes what he sees as her

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<sup>27</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p.19; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 127 – 128.

total naïveté; Pozdnyshev guffaws: “Духовное сродство! Единство идеалов!... Но в таком случае незачем спать вместе?” [Spiritual affinity! Identity of ideals!... But in that case there’s no need to sleep together?]<sup>28</sup> By distinguishing between love and sex as two separate entities, one spiritual, the latter physical, Pozdnyshev defines the criteria for sexual intercourse as the result of physical attraction. Any other relations with women presumably will not lead to procreation, as men and women would commune on a non-sexual level. This is obviously an undesirable condition for people of the capitalist state. For this reason, despite the woman’s idealism, according to Pozdnyshev, spiritually based relationships as a rule do not exist, nor does he see them encouraged or promoted in the circles around him. Such relationships do not maximise sexual contact between the sexes.

However, Pozdnyshev acknowledges that he did once sympathise with the woman’s beliefs and imagined that he based his marriage on those ideals. In contrast, because of the force of intervention, he is soon living blindly in a state where sex is more desirable than conversation. He realises this only after his marriage. A few days into his honeymoon, Pozdnyshev horror-struck realises:

Какая гадость! Ведь подразумевается любовь духовная, а не чувственная. Ну, если любовь духовная, духовное общение, то словами, разговорами, беседами должно бы выразиться это духовное общение. Ничего же этого не было. Говорить бывало, когда мы останемся одни, ужасно трудно. Какая-то это была Сизифова работа...и остались мы друг против друга в нашем действительном отношении друг к другу, т. е. два совершенно чуждые друг другу эгоиста, желающие получить себе как можно больше удовольствия один через другого.

What nastiness! Love is supposed to be spiritual not sensual. Well, if the love is spiritual, a spiritual communion, then that spiritual communion should find expression in words, in conversations, in discourse. There was nothing of the kind. It used to be dreadfully difficult to talk when we were left alone. It was like the labour of Sisyphus.... We were left confronting

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<sup>28</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 14; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 120 – 121.



one another in our true relations: that is, as two egoists quite alien to each other who wished to get as much pleasure as possible from each other.<sup>29</sup>

The final step in Pozdnyshev's sex education shows how a contradictory social morality that encourages lewdness between the sexes replaces his once moral view. Although he identifies the immorality of the accepted norm imposed on him, he will eventually become conditioned to conform to that status quo. As in the case of masturbation, fear and guilt associated with what is actually a normal and natural event for children are falsely implanted to serve the state. On the other hand, in this case, it is also within the state's power to erase real guilt of a real sin should it threaten to undermine the scheme to manipulate a population. Thus, rather than imposing false guilt to curb a natural action, the guilt of a true wrong is in this case removed. As Foucault emphasises, because the state wishes to perpetuate lust for sex, it must have sexual promiscuity perceived as an acceptable, legitimate activity.

Pozdnyshev feels in his heart that his lust for a woman's body without concern for her emotions is unbecoming conduct and simply a crude abuse of women. Concerned that such guilt could threaten to reduce his sexual potential by making abstinence from sex more desirable than participation, his guilt in his mind is removed and replaced with the comfort that his actions are acceptable and encouraged practices in that society. The falsehood that his casual sexual relations are moral and desirable in society replaces the reality of his immorality.

Pozdnyshev recognises in his childhood the conflict between a moral existence and that which is promoted to encourage casual sexual relations. He comments on the

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<sup>29</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 27, 32; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 138, 144.

lack of morality that surrounds him. Pozdnyshev recalls thinking that lust for a woman is wrong:

Правда, есть это в заповеди, но заповеди ведь нужны только на то, чтобы отвечать на экзамене батюшке, да и то не очень нужны, далеко не так, как заповедь об употреблении *ut* в условных предложениях.

It is true in the Commandments, but then the Commandments are only needed to answer the priest at Scripture examination, and even then they are not very necessary, not nearly as necessary as the commandment about the use of *ut* in conditional sentences in Latin.<sup>30</sup>

Pozdnyshev notes that not only is there a lack of religious faith in his society, but that there is also a contradictory interpretation of religious teaching. Immorality or sin in the biblical sense is misconstrued and espoused as a desirable morality that assists in promoting sexual promiscuity as desirable and legitimate. Referring to his disturbing visit to the brothel when he lost his virginity proper, Pozdnyshev comments on the view held by society of that 'fall':

...я пал потому, что окружающая меня среда видела в том, что было падение, одни — самое законное и полезное для здоровья отправление, другие — самую естественную и не только простительную, но даже не невинную забаву для молодого человека. Я и не понимал, что тут есть падение, я просто начал предаваться тем отчасти удовольствиям, отчасти потребностям, которые свойственны, как мне было внушено, известному возрасту, начал предаваться этому разврату.... Так от тех старших людей, мнения которых я уважал, я ни от кого не слышал, чтобы это было дурно. Напротив, я слышал от людей, которых я уважал, что это было хорошо.

...I fell because, in the set around me, what was really a fall was regarded by some as a most legitimate function good for ones health, and by others as a very natural and not only excusable but even innocent amusement for a young man. I did not understand it was a fall, but simply indulged in the half-pleasure, half need, which, as was suggested to me, was natural at a certain age.... And so I never heard those older persons whose opinions I respected say it was an evil. On the contrary, I heard the people I respected say it was good.<sup>31</sup>

The power of years of social conditioning begins to bear fruit as Pozdnyshev gives way to living according to a prescribed ideal. He, as is typical for young men in

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<sup>30</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 18; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 126.

<sup>31</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 18 – 19; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 126 – 127.

his upper class circles, begins to indulge in casual relations with women with increasing frequency. Thus, immorality becomes the social basis for upper class life in Russia, as in the West. Pozdnyshev's semi-conscious recognition of the immorality of his youth is shifted to his unconscious by the agreement of his sexuality with that promoted as ideal in society. He unwittingly becomes the very spirit of those forces he despises, but that overpower him. Contrary to the identification of his 'fall' several years before, Pozdnyshev can, with all sincerity, pronounce that: "Жил до женитьбы, как все живут, т. е. развратно, и, как все люди нашего круга, живя развратно, был уверен, что я живу как надо" [Before my marriage I lived as everyone does, that is, dissolutely; and while living dissolutely I was convinced, like everyone in our class, that I was living as one has to].<sup>32</sup> While in retrospect he realises the poverty of his immoral situation as a lecher, Pozdnyshev continues:

Я не был соблазнителем, не имел неестественных вкусов, не делал из этого главной цели жизни, как это делали многие из моих сверстников, а отдавался разврату степенно, прилично, для здоровья... и наивно был уверен, что я вполне нравственный человек.

I was not a seducer, had no unnatural tastes, did not make that the chief purpose of my life as many of my associates did, but I practised debauchery in a steady, decent way for health's sake and I was naïvely confident that I was quite a moral man.<sup>33</sup>

As is evident, the most powerful influence on Pozdnyshev's sexuality is the agreement of his actions with society. He lives according to the dominant discourse in a society that conditions him. Foucault describes this phenomenon as the most powerful tool in the intervention of a population's sexuality:

Toward the beginning of the eighteenth century, there emerged a political, economic, and technical incitement to talk about sex.... There was steady proliferation of discourses concerned

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<sup>32</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 16; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 123.

<sup>33</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 16, 299; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 124, 212.

with sex..., [a] multiplication of discourses concerning sex in the field of exercise of power itself: an institutional incitement to speak about it.<sup>34</sup>

This exercise of power through discourse that shapes Pozdnyshv's life begins in childhood, when a mind is impressionable and easily controlled. As Foucault puts it:

...since the eighteenth century [pedagogical institution] has multiplied the forms of discourse on the subject; it has established various points of implementation for sex; it has coded contents and qualified speakers. Speaking about children's sex, inducing educators, physicians, administrators, and parents to speak of it, or speaking to them about it causing children themselves to talk about it, and enclosing them in a web of discourses which sometimes address them, sometimes speak about them, or impose canonical bits of knowledge on them, or use them as a basis for constructing a science that is beyond their grasp—all this together enables us to link an intensification of the interventions of power to a multiplication of discourse....and all highly articulated around a cluster of power relations.<sup>35</sup>

It is precisely by the discourse on sex in society that Pozdnyshv's sexuality is shaped. In the examples above it is clearly evident that Pozdnyshv modifies his behaviour and lives according to what he hears from external sources. The dominant discourse in society initiates and develops his actions to correspond with it, rather than to his opposing inner feelings and voices that are eventually repressed and silenced by the power of that discourse.

Short of systematic brainwashing that became prominent in the twentieth century, the people themselves absorbed discourse in the public domain, rather than having a tyrannical leader dictating their actions. The power of this tactic is evident in the case of Pozdnyshv. He lives according to the wants of the state, in a perpetual desire for sex that leads to frequent sexual contact because he now believes it to be moral and hears it encouraged in discourse. The ideal position of Pozdnyshv as a

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<sup>34</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, pp. 23, 18.

<sup>35</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, pp. 29 – 30.

procreative male is then secure, for he sees himself as consciously choosing this path and can be satisfied in his belief that he is the creator of his own “conventional” destiny.

Central to a discourse that intends to justify people’s actions is the need for a factual, or at least credible, basis to support it. Aimed to keep men of Pozdnyshev’s class in a constant state of desire to procreate was the proliferation of discourse focussing on the validation of sex as a natural biological reproductive mechanism. To participate in frequent sexual activity was therefore promoted as a natural and necessary part of the human condition. Foucault explains that “deployments of power are directly connected to the body—to bodies, functions, physiological processes, sensations and pleasures.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, human sexuality of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—the pre-Freudian sexuality—was reduced merely to the physical body and justified as a biological process; that is, human sexuality did not go beyond the procreative functionary level common to all animals.

Discourse was the medium used to promote frequent sexual activity as necessary and desirable according to its status as a purely biological bodily function. This again involves the manipulation of a child’s mind based on his physiology and the functions of his body that are controlled to serve the state. As in the case of masturbation, dominant discourse was not always one hundred per cent scientific fact; it was in some cases scientifically based, but necessarily manipulated and falsely represented.

The basis for the desirability of sexual promiscuity in males was that every male has a biological urge to copulate, an urge that if not fulfilled, would be detrimental to his health. Therefore, regular sex was essential to one’s well being. Although this

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<sup>36</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, pp. 151 – 152.

theory no longer stands in modern medicine, and Pozdnyshv later realises the invalidity of the fact, it was dominant in the discourse as an established and generally accepted medical fact.

While Pozdnyshv speaks of male physiology only metaphorically, and Tolstoy appears averse to pronouncing language that may sound unseemly, Tolstoy allows an American, Eliza Burnz who writes to him in response to *The Kreutzer Sonata*, to speak on these matters on his behalf. In his article, 'On the Relations between the Sexes (1890),' written to elaborate on sexual matters in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Tolstoy includes a copy of a letter he received from Burnz that outlines the misrepresentation of scientific fact in public discourse that *The Kreutzer Sonata* also reflects:

It is customary for fiziologists and writers on the sexual organs and functions to asume that the spermatic secretion is analogous to the bile, pancreatic juice, saliva and uther secretions which are essential to human life, and which, when once formd, must be uzed and expeld from the system. The logical deduction from this theory is, that to ensure the perfect helth of every man and boy who has atained the age of fourteen or thereabout, he must expel this secretion at regular or irregular periods, either by inter-communication with one of the uther sex or by masturbation....<sup>37</sup>

Pozdnyshv refers to male physiology and the preventative biological mechanism for the periodic release of semen metaphorically as a “спасительный клапан” [safety valve].<sup>38</sup> He also holds the belief, created in the discourse that Burnz testifies to, of the necessity to open and close this “valve” in fear of real physical endangerment.

Burnz thus makes the connection between the power of discourse that shapes a child's mind and his actions:

‘As a man thinketh so is he.’ This is classic truth. If a boy obtains the impression, from books or from companions older than himself, that at the age of fourteen or fifteen the spermatic

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<sup>37</sup> Tolstoy, 'On the Relations between the Sexes,' p. 156. (The modified American English was advocated and promoted by Burnz and is retained for authenticity.)

<sup>38</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 24; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 134.

secretion is necessarily formed and accumulated, ... and that in order to keep his health he must in some way periodically throw off that secretion, his actions will immediately begin to correspond with his belief.<sup>39</sup>

According to medical advice, and because of the tabooisation of masturbation, doctors asserted that there was only one legitimate outlet for sexual release; intercourse with a woman was sanctioned as a necessary part of a young man's life. This becomes an accepted fact in everyday life and is pronounced as such by Pozdnyshev's elders.

Burnz outlines the result of the misconstrued scientific fact to suit political aims: "A further deduction is, that there exists a natural necessity for unrestricted inter-communication between the sexes, or since, since society will not sanction that, the establishment of houses of prostitution."<sup>40</sup> As is clearly evident from *The Kreutzer Sonata*, communion between the sexes is promoted as the ideal to maximise male reproductive capacity. However, according to the decorum of that society, procreation should not take place until within marriage. In the interim, a bachelor must be provided with an outlet for his sexual energy. As in America, in Russia, it is this deduction upon which Pozdnyshev is brought up. As Burnz affirms above, and Pozdnyshev explains, there was the establishment of brothels specifically to cater for young bachelors such as Pozdnyshev:

Попечительное правительство заботится об этом. Оно следит за правильной деятельностью домов терпимости и обеспечивает разврат для гимназистов. И доктора за жалованье следят за этим. Так и следует. Они утверждают, что разврат бывает полезен для здоровья, они же и учреждают правильный, аккуратный разврат. Я знаю матерей, которые заботятся в этом смысле о здоровье сыновей. И наука посылает их в дома терпимости.

A paternal government saw to that. It sees to the correct working of brothels, and makes profligacy safe for schoolboys. Doctors too deal with it for a consideration. That is proper. They assert that debauchery is good for the health, and they organise proper well-regulated

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<sup>39</sup> Tolstoy, 'On the Relations between the Sexes,' p. 156.

<sup>40</sup> Tolstoy, 'On the Relations between the Sexes,' p. 156.

debauchery. I know some mothers who attend to their sons' health in that sense. And science sends them to the brothels.<sup>41</sup>

State intervention was thus implemented to give unmarried men unlimited, safe access to women so that they would remain suitably sexually active until marriage. Hence the proliferation brothels. Prostitution as well became a state affair that was regulated and was subject to intervention according to the greater political plan. Aylmer Maude attests to the fact: "In Russia, as in other continental countries and formerly in England, the *maisons de tolérance* were under the supervision of the government; doctors were employed to examine the women, and, as far as possible, see they did not continue their trade when diseased."<sup>42</sup> Not only did the state provide regulated and safe access to sex, as a state concern, the financial spin-off from such houses cannot be ignored. Encouraging wealthy young men to visit brothels and part with their money in the name of health is a probable contributing factor to the proliferation of a vast network of brothels.

Thus Pozdnyshev lives from his teens through to his thirties believing that his frequent and anonymous sexual relations with prostitutes is the most legitimate function necessary for a young bachelor. It is largely by convincing a population like this that the state is able to achieve its desired result with a minimum of resistance. Compared with his former suspicions of the immorality of such a life, Pozdnyshev now does not question the synthesised role he plays in a society constructed on misinformation. In retrospect, Pozdnyshev sees the immoral nature of his youth. But because of the

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<sup>41</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 18; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 126.

<sup>42</sup> Maude's (trans.) annotation, Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 126.



agreement of his actions with society, and the hypocrisy of that society with its discourse that encourages male promiscuity, he does not doubt his morality and is able to maintain an outward air of righteousness. Pozdnyshv exposes the duality this creates in his nature: “Да, свинья я был ужасная и воображал себе, что я ангел” [Yes, I was a dreadful pig but imagined myself to be an angel].<sup>43</sup> This proves the power of the dominant discourse to which Foucault refers.

What Pozdnyshv experiences reflects clearly the beliefs of French-Swiss philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, to whom Tolstoy was dedicated for much of his life.<sup>44</sup> Rousseau proposes the notion, shared by Tolstoy, confirmed by Foucault, that a child is born pure and innocent, and will inevitably be conditioned by a civilised society. Not only is Pozdnyshv corrupted, but he also becomes comfortable with his immorality which he eventually perceives as morality according to what he hears in the discourse that surrounds him. In a highly civilised world that is committed to a programme of controlled population manipulation, external forces will inevitably affect individuals. In the case of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, a boy's innocence and beliefs are perverted, as immorality becomes the norm. The influence of Rousseau is clearly evident as Tolstoy elaborates on this idea in an article he published on education.

Man is born perfect—this is the great word uttered by Rousseau, and this word, like a rock, remains hard and true. Just born, man is the very image of the harmony of the true, the beautiful and the good. But every hour of life, every minute of time expands the spaces, the quantities and the time of these relations, which at the time of his birth were in perfect harmony, and every step

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<sup>43</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 27; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 138.

<sup>44</sup> Rousseau had a huge and lasting impact on Tolstoy's life. In 1901, Tolstoy is reported to have commented to Professor Paul Boyer in Paris: “I read all of Rousseau, all twenty volumes.... I more than delighted in him—I worshipped him. At the age of 15, I wore a medallion with his portrait around my neck in place of my natal cross. Many of his pages are so close to me that it seems that I wrote them myself.” Quoted in Barran, ‘Rousseau's Political Vision and Tolstoy's *What is Art?*’ pp. 2 – 3. There is much documented on Rousseau's influence on Tolstoy, but of interest here is Barran, *ibid.* and Orwin, ‘Synthesis and Influence of Rousseau,’ *Tolstoy's Art and Thought*, pp. 36 – 49.

and every hour threaten the destruction of this harmony, and every successive step and every successive hour threaten new destruction and do not hold out hope for the restoration of destroyed harmony....*Our ideal is behind, and not ahead of us.*<sup>45</sup>

Foucault does not explicitly refer to the control of people's sexuality as necessarily bad, nor as "the destruction of harmony." Nonetheless, the words of an eighteenth-century philosopher and a nineteenth-century thinker and his literary protagonist in the time frame that Foucault applies his theory is evidence of the universal power of social conditioning in the civilised world to which Pozdnyshev is exposed and to which Foucault refers.

With the biological basis for the need of sex, and the houses where the need could be fulfilled, Foucault adds that additional steps were taken to further increase sexual desire and thus "optimise" the procreative potential. The aim of state intervention was not only to ensure a sexually active population, but also to entail multiplying the desire for sex by the proliferation of external stimuli. Foucault explains other means at work to intensify the desire for sex and increase power over a population to more and more "make sex desirable" through

...the solidification of the sexual mosaic and the construction of devices capable not only of isolating it but of stimulating and provoking it, of forming it into focuses of attention, discourse and pleasure.... At issue is not a movement bent on pushing rude sex back into some obscure and inaccessible region, but on the contrary, a process that spreads it over the surface of things and bodies, arouses it, draws it out and bids it to speak, implants it in reality and enjoins it to tell the truth: an entire glittering sexual array, reflected in a myriad of discourses, the obstination of powers, and interplay of knowledge and pleasure.<sup>46</sup>

It is this "interplay of knowledge" and the stimulation of pleasure associated with biological functions that both Pozdnyshev and Foucault see as the fundamental

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<sup>45</sup> Cited by Orwin, *Tolstoy's Art and Thought*, pp. 47 – 48.

<sup>46</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 72.

basis for the power to control sexuality. That is, to systematically “produce knowledge,” “multiply discourse,” “induce pleasure” and thus generate “power.” Besides the production of knowledge and multiplication of discourse already mentioned above, Pozdnyshev speaks of examples of how pleasure is “induced” according to Foucault. He demonstrates how this contributes significantly to the generation of power to make sex more desirable.

Pozdnyshev focuses specifically on his highly sophisticated upper class setting. He believes all modes of life to be aimed ultimately at the stimulation of sexual desire to produce what Foucault later describes as the “glittering sexual array” that “spreads over things and bodies” that induces pleasure. As Pozdnyshev becomes comfortable with his immoral sexuality, the “desire” for sex increases. Pozdnyshev makes no concessions that this is the result of an intentional exercise of power at all levels involving the implantation of stimulants in all modes of life surrounding him. He sees this process as being designed ultimately to increase the libido of males and lure them into a life of sexual obsessiveness.

Pozdnyshev explains, for example, how his idle lifestyle and indulgence in excesses of rich foods is responsible for an unnaturally inflamed sexual appetite: “Ведь наша возбуждающая излишняя пища при совершенной физической праздности есть не что иное, как систематическое разжигание похоти” [You see our stimulating superabundance of food, together with complete physical idleness, is nothing but a systematic excitement of desire].<sup>47</sup> In his claim already mentioned: “Мужчины нашего мира содержатся и кормятся, как случные жеребцы” [Men of our world are kept and

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<sup>47</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 23; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 133.

fed like breeding stallions], it is the passive word *кормиться* [to be fed] that again reflects the theme of passivity. The suggestion is that men, while being “kept,” are intentionally “fed” rich foods to stimulate their libidos.

Pozdnyshev makes an explicit point of the conditions of his life that are intentionally imposed on him as a subject including the abundance of rich food that is responsible for sexual promiscuity in society. Pozdnyshev compares the way in which food is rationed to peasants according to their needs with the proportions and nature of food consumed by the upper classes.

[Крестьянин] поступает на железную дорогу, и харчи у него – каша и 1 фунт мяса. Но зато он и выпускает это мясо на шестнадцатичасовой работе с тачкой в 30 пудов. И ему как раз так. Ну а мы, поедающие по 2 фунта мяса, дичи и всякие горячительные яства и напитки, – куда это идет? На чувственные эксцессы.

When [a peasant] goes to railway work, his rations are buckwheat porridge and a pound of meat a day. But he works off that pound of meat during his sixteen hours' work wheeling barrows of half-ton weight, so it is just enough for him. But we who every day consume two pounds of meat, and game, and fish and all sorts of heating foods and drinks—where does that go to? Into excesses of sensuality.<sup>48</sup>

Pozdnyshev claims that his marriage, like most in his class, is based on artificially inflamed lust, not love, which is aroused because of the food he is fed. That is, he marries a woman only as the result of physical attraction, a closed “спасительный клапан” [safety valve] and quite emphatically, because of an excessive consumption of rich foods: “В сущности же эта моя любовь была произведением...избытка поглощавшейся мной пищи при праздной жизни” [In reality that love of mine was the result of...the excess of food consumed by me while living an idle life]. Pozdnyshev goes as far to suggest: “Все наши любви и браки, все большею частью

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<sup>48</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 23; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 133.

обусловлены пищей” [Our love affairs and marriages, for the most part, are conditioned by our food].<sup>49</sup>

The link between diet and libido suggested by Pozdnyshv is a view that Tolstoy, as well as those in the medical world, held. In his article entitled: ‘Unpalatable Pleasures: Tolstoy, Food and Sex,’ Ronald LeBlanc notes that “Tolstoy was not the first person, of course, to link eating meat with sexual arousal. Many of the American health reformers in the nineteenth century likewise preached the sexual dangers of carnivorousness.” Quoting Tolstoy, LeBlanc continues that eating animal flesh

‘serves only to develop animal feelings, to excite lust, to promote fornication and drunkenness.’ Tolstoy contends that a carnivorous diet stimulates a carnal appetite: eating animal food arouses animal passions. He argues, in fact, that one should abstain from eating not just meat, but any tasty food item from which one might conceivably derive gustatory enjoyment. After all, gastronomic pleasure, in Tolstoy’s chain of reasoning, leads directly and ineluctably to sexual pleasure.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, Pozdnyshv directly relates the consumption of rich foods, particularly meat, to an increase in sexual appetite. According to theory that is more recent, the connection holds fast. Carol Adams in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990), relates the consumption of meat directly to sexuality. In her feminist approach, Adams is more specific and links meat consumption to the male and his sexual power and sexual dominance over women.<sup>51</sup> As Pozdnyshv, Tolstoy and Adams assert that reducing meat intake can control the male libido, excesses of meat, and other rich foods, thus directly relate to Pozdnyshv’s excesses of sexual desire.

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<sup>49</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 24, 303; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 134, 214.

<sup>50</sup> LeBlanc, ‘Unpalatable Pleasures,’ pp. 20 – 21.

<sup>51</sup> See Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*.

What Pozdnyshev implies is that he, like all of his class, is indeed “fed” intentionally to the point of sexual arousal so that he then visits a brothel or marries to satisfy his carnal cravings for sex, which will produce offspring for the state. Like the brothels that incite sensuality, the plush restaurants of urban centres and the luxurious dining rooms where the upper classes devour lavish feasts are also places of pleasure. Here culinary pleasure “induces” sexual pleasure. It is but a social ritual—yet another example that supports the Foucauldian theory of a culturally implanted means to incite a sexual end.

As well as gastronomic incitement to sex, everywhere Pozdnyshev looks in society he sees external stimuli that he believes to be purposely implanted to arouse him sexually. Pozdnyshev claims that in his society and throughout the West, art is one of the most powerful inciters of eroticism. He claims that all contemporary European art is essentially pornographic and responsible for widespread immorality among the privileged classes that have access to it.

Appropriately for *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Pozdnyshev takes the example of music to demonstrate his point. Pozdnyshev refers to music as “самая утонченная похоть чувств” [the most refined lust of the senses] that is “страшное средство в руках кого попало” [a terrible instrument in the hands of any chance user!]<sup>52</sup> The “instrumental” nature of music makes Pozdnyshev’s analogy most telling. Pozdnyshev claims that art, particularly music, has the power that can provoke the senses into an inflamed desire for sexual expression. He also acknowledges the hypnotic powers of music that can be

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<sup>52</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 64, 62; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 190, 187.

used as a tool and comments on the regulation of music by governments: “В Китае музыка государственное дело” [In China, music is a state affair].<sup>53</sup>

Although Pozdnyshev does not make a specific claim to the intentional use of pornographic art in Russia as a tool to provoke sexual desire, the implication is that this is in fact the case. Unwittingly, in a society, according to Foucault, subject to the implementation of all means possible to stimulate desire for sex, Pozdnyshev implicitly makes a parallel with Foucault’s theory, although he seems to miss the point of his own words. If China uses music as part of its programme of state control, it is within reach for European governments to use music as part of their control methods too. The vast millions of roubles of state funds that support so-called “pornographic” European art in Russia is evidence that the governments of those countries consider such art desirable, or at least acceptable, otherwise they would not support it financially.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, following Foucault’s train of thought, it appears suspiciously intentional that the state supports pornographic art. That is, governments invest huge sums of money in art that titillates “the most refined lust” of the “senses” to induce pleasure and increase the desire for sex. Music and other arts are another means of keeping a population in a perpetual state of desire.

To make this point more explicit, Pozdnyshev elaborates on the pornographic nature of music to emphasise just how powerful a tool he believes it to be in stimulating sensuality. Adding weight to the motif of a society beset with inflaming sensuality,

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<sup>53</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 61; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 186 – 187.

<sup>54</sup> In *What is Art?* Tolstoy comments on what he considers the misuse of vast sums of state funds to support the arts, which he, like Pozdnyshev, considers a deplorable display of pornography. See Tolstoy, *What is Art?* pp. 73 – 80.

Pozdnyshev depicts Beethoven's *Kreutzer Sonata* as an example of the arousing nature of music. He goes further even to implicate music as an accomplice to the sex crime of adultery he believes his wife to commit. When Pozdnyshev's wife plays the *Kreutzer Sonata* with a guest violinist, Trukhachevski, Pozdnyshev senses something erotic in their playing. This serves both as a metaphor for the sexual act, and as a prelude to adultery, which Pozdnyshev believes the couple will inevitably commit.<sup>55</sup>

That a musical piece affords the novella its title emphasises the significance of music to the story and the importance Pozdnyshev places on the role of music: “Например, хоть бы эту Крейцерову сонату, первое престо. Разве можно играть в гостиной среди декольтированных дам это престо?” [Take that *Kreutzer Sonata* for instance, how can that first presto be played in a drawing-room among ladies in low-necked dresses?] The eroticism of the first presto of the musical piece serves explicitly as a metaphor for sexual intercourse—an adulterous affair between his wife nervously fingering the piano keys in dialogue with the repetitive up and down strokes of the man's bow across his so symbolically femininely shaped violin, as he carefully fingers the strings on the slender neck of his instrument. Pozdnyshev says:

...помню, как он принес скрипку, отпер ящик, снял вышитую ему дамой покрывку, достал и стал строить. Помню, как жена села с притворно-равнодушным видом, под которым я видел, что она скрывала большую робость.... Помню потом, как они взглянули друг на друга.... У него сделалось серьезное, строгое, симпатичное лицо, и, прислушиваясь к своим звукам, он осторожными пальцами дернул по струнам и ответил роялю. И началось...

I remember how he brought in his violin, unlocked the case, took off the cover a lady had embroidered for him, drew out the violin, and began tuning it. I remember how my wife sat down at the piano with pretended unconcern, under which I saw that she was trying to conceal great timidity.... Then I remember how they glanced at one another.... He took the first chords. His

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<sup>55</sup> Tolstoy commented upon hearing *Kreutzer Sonata* played in his home: “It produced on me the impression of an erotic work,” cited by Emerson, ‘*What is Art?* and the Anxiety of Music,’ p. 442.



face grew serious, stern, and sympathetic, and listening to the sounds he produced, he touched the strings with careful fingers. The piano answered him. And then *it began*...<sup>56</sup>

The sexual metaphor of the musical performance is powerful.

Pozdnyshev continues to explain that music not only arouses sensuality, but is also devised in such a way that it permits intimacy and makes sexual contact possible. Commenting on social conventions in general that give “самая большая и опасная близость между мужчиной и женщиной” [man and woman the greatest and most dangerous proximity], Pozdnyshev singles out music as the most influential pretext for initiating and conducting casual sexual relations:

Люди занимаются вдвоем самым благородным искусством, музыкой; для этого нужна известная близость, и близость эта не имеет ничего предосудительного.... А между тем все знают, что именно посредством этих самых занятий, в особенности музыкой, и происходит большая доля прелюбодеяний в нашем обществе.

A couple are occupied in the noblest of arts, music; this demands a certain nearness, and there is nothing reprehensible in that.... Yet everyone knows that it is by means of those very pursuits, especially of music, that the greater part of adulteries in our society occur.<sup>57</sup>

This is clearly the case in Pozdnyshev’s eyes when Trukhachevski, plump and well-fed, meets Pozdnyshev’s wife, also plump and well-fed, and the couple *play* together.<sup>58</sup>

Reiterating the food motif with the duo both being “well-fed,” combined with the arousing spell of music and the proximity it affords members of the opposite sex,

<sup>56</sup> Толстой, «Крейцера соната», pp. 60 – 61; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 185. My italics highlight the indeterminate use *началось* [it began] which conveys an ambiguity as to whether it is the music that begins or whether, in fact, this refers to the beginning of the adulterous affair between the couple for which the music is a prelude to and metaphor of.

<sup>57</sup> Толстой, «Крейцера соната», pp. 56 – 57; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 180.

<sup>58</sup> Prior to this incident, Pozdnyshev’s wife learnt how not to bear children. Subsequently she gains energy, puts on a little weight, and much of her former beauty is revived. Pozdnyshev describes her as “раскормленный” [fattened]. As for Trukhachevski, he is “сытый и гладкий” [fat and well nourished]. Notice also Trukhachevski’s symbolic eating habits indicative of a Tolstoyan erotomaniac primed by gluttony: “помню, как он хрустел хрящом в котлетке и обхватывал жадно красным губами стакан с вином” [I remember how he crunched the gristle of a cutlet and how greedily his red lips clung to the glass of wine]. Толстой, «Крейцера соната», pp. 47, 64; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 166, 190.

Pozdnyshev sees the result as the excitement of carnal lust eliciting copulation, whether that be in legitimate relations or otherwise. Pozdnyshev confirms this notion and his perception of the inevitability of the couple's affair in his recollections of Trukhachevski when he first met his wife. Emphasising the carnal nature of sexual relations devoid of emotion or spirituality that Pozdnyshev already attests to, he recalls: "С первой минуты, как он встретился глазами с женой, я видел, что зверь, сидящий в них обоих, помимо всех условий положения и света, спросил: «Можно?» и ответил: «о, да, очень»" [From the first moment his eyes met my wife's I saw that the beast in each of them, regardless of all conditions of their position in society, asked 'May I?' and answered, 'Oh, yes, certainly'].<sup>59</sup>

Following the duo's recital of the *Kreutzer Sonata* there are some other pieces of music, which Pozdnyshev describes: "сыграли какую-то страстную вещицу... какую-то до похабности чувственную пьесу" [they played some dreadful little pieces that were impassioned to the point of obscenity],<sup>60</sup> all this, as Pozdnyshev says, in the presence of ladies with low-cut dresses. Pozdnyshev looks at these women and makes a specific point of women's attire as a final example of intentional sexual stimulation from external sources. In the vehemence with which Pozdnyshev deplores the way women dress, he does not even stop short of actually incriminating women's fashion of the day as deliberately designed to seduce men into acts of immorality, lewdness and sexual criminality:

Как только мужчина подошел к женщине, так и подпал под ее дурман и ошалел. И прежде мне всегда бывало неловко, жутко, когда я видал разряженную даму в бальном платье, но теперь мне прямо страшно, я прямо вижу нечто опасное для людей и

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<sup>59</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», р. 54; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, р. 177.

<sup>60</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», р. 64; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, р. 190.

противозаконное, и хочется крикнуть полицейского, звать защиту против опасности, потребовать того, чтобы убрали, устранили опасный предмет.... Отчего азартная игра запрещена, а женщины в проституточных, вызывающих чувственность нарядах не запрещены? Они опаснее в тысячу раз!

As soon as a man approaches a woman he succumbs to her stupefying influence and becomes intoxicated and crazy. Formerly I used to feel uncomfortable and uneasy when I saw a lady dressed up for a ball, but now I am simply frightened and plainly see her as something dangerous and illicit. I want to call a policeman and ask for protection from the peril, and demand that the dangerous object be removed and put away.... Why is gambling forbidden while women in costumes which evoke sensuality are not forbidden? They are a thousand times more dangerous!<sup>61</sup>

It is thus, by the power merely of the fit of a dress that accentuates a woman's figure, combined with the closed "safety valve" and excesses of food already mentioned, that is the basis for Pozdnyshv's marriage: "Да, так вот меня эти джерси и локоны и нашлапки поймали..., а будь моя жена одета в нескладный капот и сиди она дома,...я бы не влюбился, и ничего бы этого не было" [Well, so these jerseys and curls and bustles caught me!... Had my wife been sitting at home in a shapeless dressing-gown...I should not have fallen in love and none of this would have happened].<sup>62</sup>

At this point Pozdnyshv's tale begins to sound more and more like that of a paranoiac neurotic greatly troubled by his sexuality,<sup>63</sup> rather than an objective view of reality. Nonetheless, all of his examples above clearly have profound significance in light of Foucault's theory. Pozdnyshv is the epitome of what the state desires: a passive entity non-resistant through docility to the manipulation and control of his sexuality—a sexuality that has him in constant lust for women in order that he will

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<sup>61</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p.26; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 137.

<sup>62</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 23 – 24; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 133 – 134.

<sup>63</sup> For a psychological evaluation of Pozdnyshv's disposition, see Isenberg, 'Tolstoy's Fallen Man,' pp. 96 – 99.

indulge in procreative sex and participate actively in promoting rapid population growth for the greater good of the country.

The culmination of intervention in Pozdnyshev's upbringing has produced a model citizen. Incognito by day as an upstanding "предводителем" [marshal of the gentry], by night this man is "ужасная свинья" [a dreadful pig]:<sup>64</sup>

Какие были первые признаки моей любви? А те, что я предавался животным излишествам, не только не стыдись их, но почему-то гордись возможности этих физических излишеств....

What were the first symptoms of my love? Ah, that I gave way to animal excesses, not only without shame, but being proud of the possibility of these physical excesses....<sup>65</sup>

Not surprisingly, within the first month of marriage his wife is pregnant and there are five children soon after. His politically constructed sexuality ensures that his is a desirably fruitful marriage.

Sex according to Foucault and by power of Pozdnyshev's example is not simply a matter of an instinctual biological mechanism that randomly and blindly, but successfully, maintains a species. For rising capitalist Western nations of which Foucault speaks, and clearly from the observations of this thesis, in Russia too, human sexuality and the desire for sex is the rational basis of life and the foundation of social function. Pozdnyshev makes very clear this distinction between the natural order in the

<sup>64</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 16, 27; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 123, 138.

<sup>65</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 34; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 147.

It is no wonder that Pozdnyshev revels in his excesses. Alphonso Lingis defines the cultural significance of male sexual excesses: "The release of a surplus tension was for Freud the diagram of orgasm, the greatest pleasure our kind can know, and also the model of every pleasure. The release of the superabundant semen produced in the male body, spermatozoa in incalculable numbers...is the material substance of this pleasure; Bataille built on this superfluity his erotics and ethics of excess, of expenditure at a loss, of gratuitous discharge. For us, the excesses of semen in the male give him the inward sense of maleness, male power and male passion, as a gratuitous excess to be discharged in transgression and in glory." Lingis, *Foreign Bodies*, p. 150. See also Bataille, *Death and Sensuality*.

animal kingdom, and that of the civilised human animal that has fallen out of harmony with its place in nature:

Животные как будто знают, что потомство продолжает их род, и держатся известного закона в этом отношении. Только человек этого знать не знает и не хочет. И озабочен только тем, чтобы иметь как можно больше удовольствия. И это кто же? Царь природы, человек. Ведь вы заметьте, животные сходятся только тогда, когда могут производить потомство, а поганый царь природы – всегда, только бы приятно. И мало того, возводит это обезьянье занятие в перл создания, в любовь.

The animals seem to know that their progeny continue their race, and they keep to a certain law in this matter. Man alone neither knows it nor wishes to know it, but is concerned only to get all the pleasure he can. And who is doing that? The tsar of nature—man! Animals only come together when they are capable of producing progeny, but the filthy tsar of nature is at it any time if only it pleases him! And as if that were not sufficient, he exalts this apish occupation into the most precious pearl of creation, into love.<sup>66</sup>

Foucault confirms Pozdnyshv's words and contends:

We must make no mistake here: with the great series of binary oppositions (body/soul, flesh/spirit, instinct/reason, drives/consciousness) that seemed to refer sex to a pure mechanics devoid of reason, the West has managed not only, or not so much, to annex sex to a field of rationality,...but to bring us almost entirely—our bodies, our minds, our individuality, our history—under the sway of a logic of concupiscence and desire. Whenever it is a question of knowing who we are, it is this logic that henceforth serves as our master key.<sup>67</sup>

This logic of desire that serves as the key to understanding Pozdnyshv's life is unfortunately hidden from him. Relating his story to Foucault's theory of sexuality does, however, shed light on what Pozdnyshv is semi-consciously aware of, but is unable to fully articulate in his tale. The logic of desire, when desire is elevated and inflamed to the point of excess that is evident throughout Pozdnyshv's tale, is indeed out of synchronicity with the natural order. But it is not simply the lapse into immorality that Pozdnyshv sees.

*The Kreutzer Sonata* seen through Foucauldian eyes is an example of an intentional inflammation of sexual desire to make sex desirable so that a rising capitalist

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<sup>66</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 36; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 150.

<sup>67</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 78.

nation maximises its population resources. The harnessing and manipulation of nature to enhance the human animal's reproductive ability represents the Foucauldian "power" to control a population. The complex mechanics of social conditioning of which Foucault speaks were indeed firmly established by the late-nineteenth century, particularly in the case of sexuality. The representation of sexuality in *The Kreutzer Sonata* unveils examples that bear unfaltering testimony to the essence of Foucault's theory of the history of sexuality. As Tolstoy tells, and Foucault confirms: "spread out from one pole to the other of this technology of sex was a whole series of different tactics that combined in varying proportions the objective of disciplining the body and that of regulating populations."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 146.

**Chapter Two**  
*Economic Aspects of  
Sexuality*

The way in which Pozdnyshev fathers progeny to the Motherland is an acute case of the Foucauldian controlled optimisation of procreation to benefit the state. Through the manipulation and control of the body and mind, sexual activity increases and bedroom antics that lead to rapid population growth are encouraged. However, Foucault contends that the body is capable of more than simply reproducing itself *ad infinitum*. As already mentioned, at the boundary of the biological role of sexuality aimed at population growth is an economic role of sexuality that operates concurrently in capitalist production.<sup>1</sup> In *The Kreutzer Sonata*, sexuality and the body comprise a commercial body that contributes directly to economic stability and growth. Foucault confirms that sexuality and the human body are involved in an immediate economic process that directly stimulates economic development.

In *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Tolstoy constructs a world and engineers a protagonist who, a century ago, was living and espousing with absolute clarity and certainty that which Foucault later articulates in *The History of Sexuality*. Again, *The Kreutzer Sonata* provides a striking example of Foucault's claims; Pozdnyshev depicts a late-nineteenth-century society in which human sexuality exists as a malleable economic tool forged to serve and enrich the state financially. Foucault confirms that "[capitalism] would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 141.



In *The History of Sexuality*, there is no mistaking Foucault's claim that human sexuality is directly involved in the state economy of the nineteenth century when it is so clearly reflected by *The Kreutzer Sonata*. As well as the means by which birth-rates are increased to eventually give a nation the human-power it needs to be economically successful, Foucault explains that "there also appeared those systematic campaigns which, going beyond the traditional means—moral and religious exhortations, fiscal measures—tried to transform the sexual conduct of couples into a concerted economic and political behaviour."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the distal benefits of the procreative couple's reproduction, as their offspring mature and make their own contribution to the state, is coupled in the present by the immediate economic contribution of bachelors and maidens, husbands and wives.

Foucault does not elaborate to any great extent with a theoretical basis for his claims to an economically useful sexuality. He focuses more on the politics of sexuality described in the previous chapter. However, Alphonso Lingis in *Foreign Bodies* (1997) confirms Foucault's suggestion and articulates a theoretical model of a sexual economy of bodies that contributes directly to the greater economy, feeding and supporting capitalist construction. Building on Pozdnyshév's observations of relations between the sexes with a theoretical basis provided by Lingis, this chapter investigates the dynamics of a well-established and thriving sexual economy of a late-nineteenth-century Russian society. *The Kreutzer Sonata* paints a vivid picture of mating rites that have a decidedly economic, rather than romantic, spiritual or emotional basis.

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<sup>3</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 26.

John Kopper, in 'Tolstoy and the Narrative of Sex,' points out Tolstoy's perception of the economic nature of sexual relations of the late-nineteenth century: "What especially intrigued Tolstoy the writer about sex was that it was...a form of commerce, a transaction that involved the potentially promiscuous possession and rejection of an ever-replaceable object of desire.... Furthermore, sex is not only woven into the economic fabric but has its own financial dimension."<sup>4</sup> For Pozdnyshev, sexual relations, both casual and marital, have an unmistakable economic presence and undeniable economic motivation. Naturally, as men clearly dominate sexual relations in that society, women become the objects of men's economic, as well as sexual desire. As Barbara Heldt points out: "Pozdnyshev understands that women are commodities in a competitive market. Socioeconomic imagery dominates the narrative."<sup>5</sup>

In the previous chapter, I suggested that the proliferation of brothels throughout Russia and the West served to accommodate and foster male sexual desire as well as contribute to the economy. It is here that women are most readily seen as commodities who serve economic ends. Indeed, prostitution had a dual role to fulfil both sexual and economic desire. As Pozdnyshev claims, like most of the young men of his class, the sexual encounters of his youth and early adulthood are frequent and strictly professional. His sexual relations with women are therefore commercial. He employs the services of a woman when the "need" arises, essentially "possessing and rejecting" her as necessary. The whorehouses are but warehouses that hold an "ever-replaceable" stock of "objects of desire." Within, a body is taken and cash changes hands. It is

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<sup>4</sup> John Kopper, 'Tolstoy and the Narrative of Sex,' p. 172.

<sup>5</sup> Heldt, 'Tolstoy's Path toward Feminism,' p. 46.

strictly business; sex thus clearly does have its “own financial dimension,” which Kopper suggests.

The extent to which Pozdnyshev conducts his sex life on this business-like basis is evident in his telling account:

Помню, как я мучался раз, не успев заплатить женщине, которая, вероятно полюбив меня, отдалась мне. Я успокоился только тогда, послал ей деньги, показав этим, что я нравственно ничем не считаю себя связанным с нею.

I remember how I once worried because I had not had an opportunity to pay a woman who gave herself to me (having probably taken a fancy to me) and how I only became tranquil after having sent her some money—thereby intimating that I did not consider myself in any way morally bound to her.<sup>6</sup>

This shows that even when there is a hint of mutual attraction, or the want of a woman to initiate an affair without the expectation of financial remuneration, Pozdnyshev nonetheless treats her like every other woman. To Pozdnyshev, women exist as commodities for rent and he employs them only when the masculine need or desire arises. Intimacy beyond the sexual moment is clearly not desirable. He reduces a woman to an object of desire that affords a man pleasure at his command.

In his casual sexual relations with women, Pozdnyshev has no qualms about frequenting brothels. He uses women to release sexual tension through his “safety valve” as well as using them for his entertainment. Pozdnyshev’s attitudes suggest that this is the accepted behaviour for bachelors and a typical attitude toward women for men of his class. While men are encouraged to visit brothels for “health’s sake,” or even if only for entertainment, this frequent activity directly supports what is evidently a very large sector of the economy. In this respect, sex contributes to the greater state wealth. Men exploit women for both their sexual and economic usefulness.

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<sup>6</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 17; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 124.

However, after many years visiting brothels, Pozdnyshev is realises that the houses of pleasure hold a terrible secret. Pozdnyshev believes that they are but a microcosm of the greater social milieu; “жизнь наших высших классов как она есть, со всем ее бесстыдством, ведь это один сплошной дом терпимости” [life of our upper classes as it is, in all it’s shamelessness—why, it is one complete and utter brothel].<sup>7</sup>

Looking at the basis of Pozdnyshev’s marriage and life thereafter shows that, despite the most “elevated and pure family life” he imagines, his marriage, apparently like most, bears little difference to his pre-marital relationships with women. Because of such frequent casual sexual encounters with prostitutes, Pozdnyshev constructs a picture of women as disposable sexual commodities from whom he is morally detached. So strong is this image and he accustomed to it that, subconsciously or otherwise, it is a view he applies to all women, not just those women of ill-repute whom he exploits. Pozdnyshev’s marriage marks the entry into a permanent, rather than casual, contract with a woman that binds him to certain terms and conditions including financial. He takes a woman as sexual property into his house where he unwittingly proves that she is essentially a whore to him.

Pozdnyshev claims that his marriage is a typical picture of family life. As he suggests, typical life for the men and woman of his class is akin to “дом терпимости” [a brothel]. Evidence shows that this happens to be the case more so than Pozdnyshev is willing to admit. His house indeed becomes a symbolic brothel in which he holds a woman as a prostitute.

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<sup>7</sup> Толстой, «Крейцера соната», р. 23; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 132.

Entering a marriage in which a man treats a woman as a commodity naturally leads to discord. Pozdnyshev finds and marries a woman he believes to be “*верх нравственного совершенства*” [the height of moral perfection].<sup>8</sup> Because he and his wife only have physical relations, with little or no communion outside the bedroom, animosity and mutual contempt soon develop. The woman Pozdnyshev considers his *beau ideal* quickly becomes a “*мерзкая сука*” [an abominable bitch].<sup>9</sup> Evidence suggests that this occurs because Pozdnyshev views his wife in the same way as any other woman with whom he has been intimate. With two or so decades of experience with prostitutes, he is incapable of creating any relationship with a woman other than based on what he knows so well.

Pozdnyshev’s marriage does turn out to be little more than a financial transaction to acquire a woman as if she were a long-term prostitute. By taking a wife as if a prostitute, it follows that Pozdnyshev will have engaged in some form of monetary exchange to acquire that woman. It is probably no coincidence, then, that she “*была одна из двух дочерей когда-то очень богатого, но разорившегося пензенского помещика*” [was one of two daughters of a once-wealthy Pénza landowner who had been ruined].<sup>10</sup> Because she is poor, her marriage to Pozdnyshev affords her financial gain. He evidently buys her.

Pozdnyshev is a wealthy man and in the position to make such purchases. Whether paying by the hour or for the term of a marriage, this is the basis of his

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<sup>8</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 21; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 130.

<sup>9</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 70; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 199.

<sup>10</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 20; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 129.

relations with women. Pozdnyshev refutes this point and prides himself on what he sees as his noble intentions: “Я женился не на деньгах... я был богат, она бедна” [I was not marrying for money.... I was rich, she was poor].<sup>11</sup> However, that he is rich and she poor is precisely the implication that Pozdnyshev fails to acknowledge. A woman’s inferior financial position exposes her to exploitation. This is the very nature of Pozdnyshev’s marriage.

Pozdnyshev denies any such motive, but further evidence of the transactional basis of his marriage comes from the purchased item via its owner. Pozdnyshev retells an episode when his wife confronts him with cold accusations:

Что-то такое из-за денег, которых я никогда не жалел и уж никак не мог жалеть для жены. Помню только, что она так как-то повернула дело, что какое-то мое замечание оказалось выражением моего желания властвовать над ней через деньги, на которых я утверждал будто бы свое исключительное право, что-то невозможное, глупое, подлое, несвойственное ни мне ни ей. Я раздражился, стал упрекать ее в неделикатности, она меня, — и пошло опять.

It had something to do with money, which I never grudged and could certainly not have grudged to my wife. I only remember that she gave the matter such a twist that some remark of mine appeared to be an extension of a desire to dominate over her by means of money, to which I was supposed to assert an exclusive right—it was something impossibly stupid, mean and not natural either to me or to her. I became exasperated, and upbraided her with lack of consideration for me. She accused me of the same thing, and it all began again.<sup>12</sup>

Remembering that Pozdnyshev’s tale is his retelling of events as they appear to him, or as he would have them appear to the listener, he is at liberty to distort or misrepresent fact somewhat. There is the possibility that his wife’s words about financial control hold more truth than Pozdnyshev cares to acknowledge or reveal. Indeed, her accusations appear quite founded and there is little doubt that Pozdnyshev considers his wife to be his acquired property. Pozdnyshev betrays his initial claims to propriety and

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<sup>11</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 27; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 138.

<sup>12</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 32 – 33; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 145.

proves himself guilty: “я признавал за собой несомненное, полное право над ее телом, как будто это было мое тело” [I considered myself to have a complete right to her body as if it were my own].<sup>13</sup>

Although Pozdnyshv tries to maintain at least a degree of decency concerning a marriage that goes so wrong, further admissions by him point more to the unethical nature of his marriage as a business transaction. Already admitting to having perceived rights to his wife’s body as if a material possession, Pozdnyshv confirms that the masculine acquisition of those female bodies is handled as any other business formality:

... большинство смотрит на поездку в церковь только как на особенное условие обладания известной женщиной, — подумайте, какое ужасное значение получают при этом все эти подробности. Выходит, что дело то всё только в этом. Выходит что-то в роде продажи. Развратнику продают невинную девушку и обставляют эту продажу известными формальностями.... Так все женятся, так и я женился.

... the majority regard the going to church as only a special condition for obtaining possession of a certain woman—think what a dreadful significance all these details acquire. They show that the whole business is only that; they show that it is a kind of sale. An innocent girl is sold to a profligate, and the sale is accompanied by certain formalities.... That is how everybody marries and that is how I married.<sup>14</sup>

Like the bodies of the serfs that were traded as commodities only a few decades before *The Kreutzer Sonata*,<sup>15</sup> Pozdnyshv makes the analogy that women too are mere slaves to wealthy men. He views women’s bodies as commodities for service and enjoyment:

Всё равно как рабство.... Рабство женщины ведь только в том, что люди желают и считают очень хорошим пользоваться ею как орудием наслаждения. Ну, и вот освобождают женщину, дают ей всякие права, равные мужчине, но продолжают смотреть на нее как на орудие наслаждения.... И вот она всё такая же приниженная, развращенная раба, и мужчина всё такой же развращенный рабовладелец.

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<sup>13</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», р. 68; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 196.

<sup>14</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», р. 28; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 139.

<sup>15</sup> The abolition of slavery in Russia was officially enacted in 1861.

It is just as it is with slavery:... The enslavement of woman lies simply in the fact that people desire, and think it good, to avail themselves of her as a tool of enjoyment. Well, and they liberate women, give her all sorts of rights equal to man, but continue to regard her as an instrument of enjoyment.... And there she is, still the same humiliated and depraved slave, and the man still the depraved slave-owner.<sup>16</sup>

Pozdnyshev thus acknowledges the unbecoming nature of males that oppresses women by commodifying their bodies and enslaving them in sexual service to men. However, he sees two sides to that coin and has no reservations in exposing what he sees on the flip side. Pozdnyshev believes that women too are actively involved in the dynamics of the sexual economy.

By his own admission, Pozdnyshev is a handsome man, but, moreover, he is an attractive financial prospect to a woman. This is particularly the case if a woman is poor and her life dominated by the typical demands for luxury and pleasure that he could support. That Pozdnyshev's wife is poor suggests there is a financial motivation for that woman's entry into the marriage. To participate in upper class life there are strict demands for financial security and social standing. The daughter of an impoverished father accustomed to a particular lifestyle, but, of course, deprived by men of any means to make her own money is necessarily dependant on the financially dominant male to maintain her place in society. By men placing women in this financially helpless position, in which they imagine they can dominate them, men make marriage for financial gain not only advantageous to those women, but in some cases necessary.

In this economic dynamic, men apparently become the victims of their own contriving that exploits women; women in return exploit men's financial position.

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<sup>16</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 37; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 151 – 152.



Unless a woman is possessed of her father's fortunes, she is open to exploitation. By denying women rights to employment and participating in commerce, men force some women to give themselves up for sale as "slaves" to the financially dominant male. However, in her subordinate financial role, Pozdnyshev suggests that there is a definite interplay between the oppressed and her oppressors. Pozdnyshev claims that women in his society use their sensuality to promote themselves as commodities to prospective buyers; he claims that women actively play on sexuality to lure financially suitable husbands. Although Pozdnyshev makes it clear that men are the underlying cause of this problem, he does not fail to implicate women as accomplices to creating the "СПЛОШНОЙ ДОМ ТЕРПИМОСТИ" [complete and utter brothel] that he thinks society is.

The interplay between both the oppressed and their male oppressors reflects a two-way exchange of goods and services, which essentially constitutes the basis of a market economy. What Pozdnyshev observes and the reader can deduce from his words are, in fact, the fundamental elements of a well established, very real sexual economy of a capitalist nation.

In recent anthropological studies, Alphonso Lingis articulates in theory more fully what Tolstoy's protagonist is grasping at. Lingis confirms that capitalist cultures "code" sensuality to construct a "libidinal economy" in which individuals participate in their sexual relations, the dynamics of which have those sexually active bodies directly contributing to a greater economic body.<sup>17</sup>

Drawing on the psychoanalyses of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, incorporating recent theoretical proposals of Deleuze and Guattari, Lingis proposes a

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<sup>17</sup> This analysis is based on Lingis' chapter 'Hard Currency,' *Foreign Bodies*, pp. 107 – 130.

“libidinal economy,” which feeds the greater economy, that is based essentially on the tradable “exchange-value” of bodies—much like slavery as Pozdnyshv asserts.

Lingis explains that before capitalism the exchange-value of bodies was defined wholly in sexual and biological terms without the financial component that Pozdnyshv comes to witness. Pleasure-seeking men valued a woman’s body ultimately for its sensuality and sexual gratification it delivers. For women, sensual pleasure was of secondary importance, sometimes not even a consideration at all. Lingis explains: “In the contract his erect penis will have value not as an instrument for the excitation of anonymous erotogenic surfaces.” Rather, the “exchange-value” of a man for the pleasure she gives him is the delivery of a necessary biological component that satisfies a woman’s maternal instincts and desires to bear children. “The phallus itself is a value;...it is a good that figures in human commerce..., [but it] is an inner economy in the man.” Women prize the male body for its inner ability to produce and expel spermatozoa, which only by implication necessitates the stimulation of sex organs. By doing so, according to Lingis, a woman can find true love in the infantile love between mother and child (or more specifically, between mother and son based on the familiar Oedipus scenario according to the influential psychological interpretation, which Lingis points out). Some women were evidently, then, not interested in the befouled, so-called “love” of a patriarchal husband, but only in want of his bodily fluids.

However, the actual exchanges of these goods and services between men and women were not, in fact, as mutually beneficial as they appear. Not surprisingly, the dominant male asserts his authority and seeks ultimate control of the sexual economy, as with all other administrative matters of national importance. Understanding that women are totally dependent on the functions of a man’s body to complete a biological

process, men essentially hold their sperm to ransom; the price for the release of that fluid is high. Lingis contends: "Each enters the contract with an eye to his or her own interests; he offers his penis as a check drawn on a phallic mortgage and demands an absolute of gratification; she sees in his penis the means to acquire the unconditional love of an infant.... The phallus is the fetishist commodity of a capitalist libidinal economy." In reality, as will become clear in Chapter Three of this thesis, the sexual demands placed on women were infinitely disproportionate in favour of men to any benefits she may acquire from him.

Lingis suggests that with the advent of capitalism and already established systems of patriarchy, it did not take long for the "capitalist libidinal economy" to extend into and form an integral part of the capitalist monetary economy. Observing the dynamics of the libidinal economy, men deprived women of employment rights and excluded them from participating in commerce with the aim to add money to his reservoir of ransomed goods.<sup>18</sup> Thus, as is clearly evident in *The Kreutzer Sonata* from Pozdnyshev's observations outlined above, the financially dominant males coerce women into providing sexual favours in return for much need money, whether in the short-term or as a wife. Again, "he offers his penis as a check," but now it is drawn on a cash, rather than phallic, "mortgage." Out of necessary compliance, a woman, Lingis contends, "makes herself legal tender, her body live currency, on which the inert

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<sup>18</sup> In capitalist nations, the denial of women's rights to employment was aimed significantly at confining a woman to the home where she would be enslaved in domestic chores. Besides bearing his offspring, a woman was to maintain and pamper the 'working man,' meet his every domestic need, and to organise a good family life to bring up future generations of upright capitalist constructors. However, this is directed at the middle and working classes. See, for example, Beasley, *Sexual Economyths*, which focuses significantly on the reduction of women to domestic work. For Russia's upper classes with their footmen, governesses, cooks, wet nurses, tutors and so on, it is not relevant here.

currency of coins and banknotes are drawn.”<sup>19</sup> This is evidently the fundamental basis of late-nineteenth-century Russian upper class life.

Pozdnyshev is obviously aware of the social importance of sexuality, but only semi-aware of the complexities of the “libidinal economy” and how it feeds the state economy. Building on Lingis theoretical basis, Tolstoy’s tale brings the economic usefulness of sexuality into the spotlight, illuminating through his protagonist’s observations the multiplicity of effects it has in shaping a capitalist nation and the lives of those who inhabit it.

By establishing that his society is essentially a “сплошной дом терпимость” [a complete and utter brothel], Pozdnyshev supports his analogy with his observations of daily life. He unveils the basis of a late-nineteenth-century sexual economy. By supposedly advertising their bodies that are “legal tender” for cash from wealthy men of the upper classes as either client or husband, Pozdnyshev makes the parallel between upper class life and brothels by comparing women of his class to prostitutes:

Вы говорите, что женщины в нашем обществе живут иными интересами, чем женщины в домах терпимости, а я говорю, что нет, и докажу. Если люди различны по целям жизни, по внутреннему содержанию жизни, то это различие непременно отразится и во внешности, и внешность будет различная. Но посмотрите на тех, на несчастных, и на самых высших светских барынь: те же наряды, те же фасоны, те же духи, то же оголение рук, плеч, груди и обтягивание выставленного зада, та же страсть к камушкам, к дорогим, блестящим вещам, те же увеселения, танцы и музыка, пенье. Как те заманивают всеми средствами, так и эти. Никакой разницы.

You say that women of our society have other interests in life than prostitutes have, but I say no, and I will prove it. If people differ in the aims of their lives, by the inner content of their lives, this difference will necessarily be reflected in externals and their externals will be different. But...the same costumes, the same fashions, the same perfumes, the same exposure of the arms, shoulders, and breasts, the same tight skirts over prominent bustles, the same passion for little stones, for costly, glittering objects, the same amusements, dances, music, and singing. As the former employ all means to allure, so do these others. There is no difference.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Lingis, ‘Hard Currency,’ pp. 124 – 130.

<sup>20</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 23; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 132 – 133, 213.

The business of exchanging cash for sexual favours at brothels was undoubtedly a big industry throughout Russia and the West. Also, when Pozdnyshev's so-called "prostitution" between members of his own class is sanctioned by law in marriage, gifting handsome cash dowries and transferring estate titles was commonplace. Therefore, while men enslave women by intentionally reducing them to sexual commodities, women in turn play out the commercial role that they are reduced to with equal self-interest and vigour. Pozdnyshev confirms that women are involved in and are quite capable of using sexuality to their economic advantage.

Pozdnyshev continues to explain how men and women conduct the "business" of marriage in society. He considers the whole of upper class social life to be a kind of "bazaar." At the parties, balls, the ballet and opera, at every social venue of society, Pozdnyshev imagines that bodies are advertised, scrutinised, sampled and bought or sold.

...девы сидят, а мужчины, как на базар, ходят и выбирают. А девки ждут и думают, но не смеют сказать: «батюшка, меня! Нет, меня. Не ее, а меня: у меня, смотри, какие плечи и другое». — А мы, мужчины, похаживаем, поглядываем и очень довольны. «Знаю, мол, я не попадусь». Похаживают, посматривают, очень довольны, что это для них всё устроено. Глядь, не поберегся, — хлоп, тут и есть!... Здесь женщина или раба на базаре или привада в капкан.

...maidens sit round and the men walk about, as at a bazaar, choosing. And the wenches wait and think, but don't dare say: 'Me, please!' 'No, me!' 'Not her, but me!' 'Look what shoulders and other things I have!' And we stroll around and look, and are very pleased. 'Yes, I know! I know I won't be caught!' They stroll about and look, and are very pleased that everything is arranged like that for them. And then in an unguarded moment—snap! He is caught.... Here the woman is a slave in a bazaar or the bait in a trap.<sup>21</sup>

In light of the social conditions of the day, while Pozdnyshev marries for physical attraction and sexual satisfaction, his financial position is likely to be a

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<sup>21</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 24 – 25; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 134 – 135.

significant factor in what attracts his wife to him. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that marriage to Pozdnyshv is arranged by his wife's mother, as was done in those days, along economic lines beneficial to both her and her daughter: "По правде сказать, без ложной скрытности, меня ловили и поймали. Мамаша — папаши не было — устраивала всякие ловушки, и одна — именно катание на лодках — удалась" [To tell the truth without false shame, I was trapped and caught. Her mamma—her papa was dead—arranged all sorts of traps and one of them succeeded].<sup>22</sup> Pozdnyshv clearly feels he is induced to make that purchase, to take the "bait in the trap" and buy that particular "slave in the bazaar": "В роде как капан. Я не смеюсь. Ведь теперь браки так и устраиваются, как капканы" [Just like a trap. I am not joking. You see nowadays marriages are arranged that way—like traps].<sup>23</sup> His marriage is a clear example of the "business" of relations between the sexes.

Pozdnyshv's bitter resentment toward what he sees as women's meddling and matchmaking may appear unfounded and taken as an attempt to lay blame for the unfortunate outcome of his life on such women. From behind the scenes, however, as a woman of the time who moved in those upper class circles, Russian poet Karolina Pavlova,<sup>24</sup> one of Tolstoy's contemporaries, confirms what Pozdnyshv suspects.

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<sup>22</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 301; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 213.

<sup>23</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 24; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 134.

<sup>24</sup> It is noteworthy that the life of Karolina Pavlova shows how women were generally excluded from what were the masculine domains of economics. As a professional artist, she was frowned upon for being a woman of her own financial means. In her words, a professional career for a woman was looked upon as "the most pitiable, abnormal thing, as a disastrous and dangerous illness." Pavlova moved in the highest intellectual circles alongside such notable figures as Pushkin and Lermontov. But the scorn from her contemporaries for holding a professional writing career forced her to flee Russia for Dresden. There she lived in virtual exile as an outcast from the upper class world, and died penniless, forgotten and her artistic talent wasted, all because a woman attempted to participate in a man's world. Heldt, Introduction to Pavlova, *A Double Life*, pp. i, x – xi, xix.

From a woman's point of view, Pavlova exposes how the women of her class really do operate. In *A Double Life*, she describes in astounding detail the complexities of arranging marriages and the extent to which mothers do actually go to find a suitable financial match for their daughters. Behind all their posturing and social manoeuvring, there lies but a single motivation for those mothers. Pavlova attests that the underlying goal in life for a woman with an unmarried daughter is to secure a handsome dowry from a suitably affluent man. The daughter's emotional life and the personal nature of the husband are negligible details. Securing the cash is paramount in that high society and the union of men and women is often founded wholly on monetary terms.

Relations between the sexes including marriages are clearly based on the "concerted economic behaviour" of couples to which Foucault attests. As Lingis then contests, individuals participate in various ways to gain what is advantageous to them, be it the purchase of a sex "slave" or the acquisition of wealth. However, this economic interplay between the sexes has implications for both men and women that deprive them both of dignity and human decency. Women are intentionally subordinated to subservient roles where their only option might well be to act like prostitutes to gain or maintain social standing. Men are then twice despicable: once for their subordination of women, that deprives them of all decency; twice for the advantage he takes of her in that position. Indeed, women are "humiliated slaves" and men very "depraved slave owners." However, as is evident from historical observations of most cultures, the concerns of a growing economy take precedence over the individual.

To gain national economic advantage from the "concerted economic behaviour" within the "libidinal economy" of couples, the benefits have to extend beyond simply serving the self-interests of individuals in upper class circles described above. In the

strained economy of the late-nineteenth century, and lagging behind its Western counterparts, capitalist Russia avidly strove toward increased industrial production and productivity, particularly from the 1880s. In this respect, sexuality plays a vital, if not essential role. Pozdnyshv attributes the institution of marriage and the demands of women to generating enormous wealth in the commercial sector.

Leading up to a marriage, Pozdnyshv claims that the spin-off from the sexual “slave” trade in which he acquires his wife generates ninety per cent of production and employment in Russia. As “bait in a trap” a woman must be attractive to the opposite sex. Women thus dress alluringly, adorn themselves with exquisite jewellery, and make use of available commodities to create a general air of refined sensuality. Such commodities are expensive, in high demand and are constantly being replaced to keep up with the ever-changing modes of upper class life. Pozdnyshv explains:

Пройдите в каждом большом городе по магазинам. Миллионы тут, не оценишь положенных туда трудов людей, а посмотрите, в 0,9 этих магазинов есть ли хоть что-нибудь для мужского употребления? Вся роскошь жизни требуется и поддерживается женщинами. Считите все фабрики. Огромная доля их работают бесполезные украшения, экипаже, мебели, игрушки на женщин. Миллионы людей, поколения рабов гибнут в этом каторжном труде на фабриках только для прихоти женщин. Женщины, как царицы, в плену рабства и тяжелого труда держат 0,9 рода человеческого.

Go round the shops in any big town. There are goods worth millions and you cannot estimate the human labour expended on them, and look whether in nine-tenths of these shops there is anything for the use of men. All the luxuries of life are demanded and maintained by women. Count all the factories. An enormous proportion of them produces useless ornaments, carriages, furniture and trinkets, for women. Millions of people, generations of slaves, perish at hard labour factories merely to satisfy woman's caprice. Women, like queens, keep nine-tenths of mankind in bondage to heavy labour.<sup>25</sup>

Although Pozdnyshv does not acknowledge that women demand these commodities more through the necessity to conform to the role men place her in, rather

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<sup>25</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 26; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 136 – 137.



than out of “caprice,” he makes his views sufficiently clear in respect to a woman’s place in the market economy. As long as she is subordinated she will continually demand the commodities necessary for that position, thus keeping ninety per cent of production alive and ninety percent of the labour population with food on its table.

Based on Pozdnyshv’s analogy, in an already strained economy, the economic usefulness of sexuality is the economic kingpin of the country that keeps the wheels of production turning. As Foucault suggest, capitalism surely “would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production.” Removing a woman’s body from it would have devastating effects. Without the exploitation of women, the economy would surely collapse as it tried to stand on only the ten percent of production and consumption that would remain. Although, Pozdnyshv’s “ninety per cent” figure is grossly exaggerated, he does point to clear associations between a woman’s body, sexuality and the state economy.<sup>26</sup>

As well as marrying for personal financial gain, Pozdnyshv describes other economic benefits associated with marital rites and the establishment of a suitably fertile family life. Again, economic contributions are made to the greater economy through the consumption of commodities. Lingis contends that this is the most significant factor in perpetuating the mechanics of capitalism:

...the family remains the original mechanism with which what we recognise as a civilized body acquires value.... The worth of the family is measured by the goods and commodities that are

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<sup>26</sup> Note also the commercial use of a woman’s body and sexuality in other sectors of the economy besides production during the nineteenth century, the lucrative arts, for example. Susan Leigh Foster speaks of the ballet as an example: “...the ballet, even as it danced out an ethereal world of idealized enchantment, also proffered lovely ladies, scantily clad, engaged in a blatant metaphor for sensual and sexual actions. Capitalist marketing strategies initiated in the early nineteenth century supported and enhanced the objectified dancing body and the commodified female dancer. They pitted one ballerina against another in intensive, objectifying advertising campaigns and opened up backstage areas where wealthy patrons might enjoy the company of dancers before, during and after the performance.” Susan Leigh Foster, ‘The Ballerina’s Phallic Pointe,’ p. 6.

invested in it.... The worth of the family is measured by the quantity of labor time invested in those goods and commodities....<sup>27</sup>

Initially, when men and women of the upper classes wed, they spark a myriad of commercial activities that is advantageous to the greater economic body. Pozdnyshv recalls with distaste that there was:

...этот безобразный обычай конфет, грубого обжорства сладким и все эти мерзкие приготовления к свадьбе: толки о квартире, спальне, постелях, капотах, халатах, белье, туалетах.

...that ridiculous custom of giving sweets, gross gormandising on sweets, and all those abominable preparations for the wedding; remarks about the house, the bedroom, beds, wraps, dressing-gowns, underclothing, costumes.<sup>28</sup>

The suitably vogue weddings were undoubtedly extremely costly. The preparations Pozdnyshv comments on are but a selection. In the single event of one marriage, thousands of roubles spread across the economy enriching lawyers, dressmakers, caterers, entertainers, jewellers et cetera, supporting the very basis of a market economy and the foundations of capitalism.

Following the once-only contribution made when Pozdnyshv marries, his wife is pregnant within a month and five children soon appear. These by-products of a sexual economy also contribute significantly. There are the usual requirements of food and clothing, but for the upper classes there is a plethora of children's needs, all of which again come at great expense. There are the doctors, the wet nurse, the governess, other domestic servants, the décor for the nursery and suitably expensive tutors and schooling. A single family is responsible for contributing countless thousands of roubles over the two or so decades of its child raising days. Coupled with the parents'

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<sup>27</sup> Lingis, 'Hard Currency,' p. 130.

<sup>28</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 27; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 39.

own demands for the luxuries of their haughty lifestyles, the large family unit is not only an ideal model for its reproductive success, but one that in every way directly supports the state economy.

From the day Pozdnyshev first stepped into that brothel at the age of fifteen to the day he killed his commodified object of desire, and still now as he is supporting the 'love' children of that marriage, his entire existence has evolved out of pleasure seeking, sex and money. By power of example, Tolstoy offers living proof that by subordinating a woman into a helpless financial position she is left open to exploitation in the sexual market economy described by Lingis. Men invest huge sums of money in sexual pleasure to suit the demands of upper class life. While women are traded among the financially dominant males of society like "slaves," she has her own economic agenda. Women are left to compete and struggle for monetary gain, to earn back the ability to participate in the economy that men deprive from them.

As Tolstoy has is protagonist witness and expose to the reader, the economic spin-off from sexual relations is enormous. Whether at a brothel or by buying a woman into his home, male libido forges a direct pipeline injecting hard currency into the economy of a social body. By satisfying masculine sexual desire, women, out of necessity, induce that flow. Through their own demands, women disperse that currency over a multitude of industries and the working people. Relations between the sexes that Tolstoy's describes does indeed constitute what Foucault suggests is a "sexuality [that] is linked to the economy through numerous and subtle relays, the main one of which, however, is the body—the body that produces and consumes."<sup>29</sup> Confirmed by Lingis,

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<sup>29</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, pp. 106 – 107.

such sexually generated economic power directly supplies the mechanics of capitalist construction and holds the wheels of production in perpetual motion.

## **Chapter Three**

### *Women as the Animal Other*

Thus far, the analysis of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, and similarly in *The History of Sexuality*, focuses mainly on males and the consequences for them when they are controlled essentially as “political animals.”<sup>1</sup> Although women are implicated in the political and economic aspects of sexuality described in the previous chapters, their role is subordinate as agents to the sexuality of the dominant male. As political power directs its forces mainly at male sexuality, Foucault therefore almost exclusively addresses the processes and implications for males, which is so vividly portrayed through the protagonist’s life in *The Kreutzer Sonata*. Pozdnyshev views himself and proves himself to live like a “случный жеребец” [breeding stallion]. This reduction of a human being to the state of a lower animal is the result of political power that is directed at bodies and minds to promote the physical body and maximise its biological reproductive functions.

However, that is not to say that women escaped a sexuality that was subject to and controlled by external forces. Women were very much victims of a politically prescribed sexuality, which is evident from their subordination by men in sexual relations to comply with a politically and economically useful sexuality outlined in the previous chapters. Women too were targeted by a political process that controlled their bodies and minds, only less directly, but arguably more emphatically, than males. Like men, women are also reduced to the status of politically compliant reproductive animals.

Taking the life of Pozdnyshev’s wife as a case study, *The Kreutzer Sonata* completes the Foucauldian picture by making explicit the consequences for women who

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<sup>1</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 143.

are trapped in a politically directed process of sexual manipulation and control. As is evident from the life of Pozdnyshev, men who are politically bound to the role of an animal, nonetheless, have the benefit of patriarchal systems that allow them to mask the reality of their base existence. I will demonstrate that women, however, because of their subordination that male sexuality affords them, have no such defence mechanisms. Men come to view women entirely in their subordinate role as reproductive animals. *The Kreutzer Sonata* is disturbing testimony to the prevailing masculine view and treatment of women as if they were lower animals.

As Foucault makes clear, sexuality of the late-nineteenth century was reduced wholly to its biological capacity for the maximisation of procreation.<sup>7</sup> In light of his affirmation of the great binary oppositions that divide the physical from the spiritual; the body from the mind; the animal from the human, negative and positive respectively, reduction of sexuality to the physical necessarily equates sexual relations and procreation to the negative realm of the animal. Although a man is reduced to the status of a “breeding stallion,” his self-righteous projections do not acknowledge his animal status, nor the negativity associated with that position. It is only in retrospect that Pozdnyshev sees the baseness of his life. Male projections of women, however, do see her as an animal and men very much charge her negatively as the diametric opposite to the positive image of a man. That is, a male who places such a high value on a woman’s physical body and its biological capabilities comes to view her wholly in those terms; she is essentially an animal to him.

Based on this gender division in which women are perceived as inferior animals, men are implanted with a sexuality and ideology that necessarily subordinates the female of the species. Power to manipulate a woman’s sexuality is exercised indirectly

through the dominant male. He necessarily controls female sexuality and the image of a woman's body to comply with his politically correct sexuality. Foucault confirms: "women were generally subjected to extremely strict constraints, and yet this ethics was not addressed to women.... It was an ethics for men: an ethics thought, written and taught by men and addressed to men."<sup>2</sup> Men are thus politically responsible for complying with their prescribed male sexuality as well as deploying a prescribed sexuality onto their female political partners.

*The Kreutzer Sonata* exposes the grave consequences for women that extend beyond simply an ideological view of a woman as an animal. Such a conception leads directly to the treatment of women as animals. By reducing a woman to the status of an animal, masculine dominion in patriarchal culture that ran rife throughout many centuries of history subordinates her to an inferior level. A woman is seen and treated akin to other domesticated creatures traditionally held in captivity and considered subservient to men.

Accordingly, the division between human and animal that was defined and maintained in early Christian culture underwent boundaries shifts in the first few centuries of the Middle Ages. The adjustment comprised a newly formulated division between man, specifically the male human animal, and all other animals—the female human animal and lower animals alike. This defines the cultural background for *The Kreutzer Sonata* that existed well into recent history. Tolstoy confirms that women and

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<sup>2</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 2, *The Use of Pleasure*, p. 22.

It is important to note that according to this analogy, as Elizabeth Grosz points out: "[Foucault's] openness about women's exclusion is not or need not be, in itself, a political problem for feminists, especially those who take seriously his critique of the politics of representation." Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 158.



animals alike were the oppressed members of a divided male-constructed and male-dominated world. *The Kreutzer Sonata* exposes how and why women became reduced to an inferior, wholly animal status.

Foucault explains that by reducing sexuality to the biological there developed a “bio-power” that existed as the driving force of a “bio-politic” that was aimed ultimately at mechanisms of population control that is described in Chapter One. Further inquiry into this biologically orientated sexuality of the late-nineteenth century reveals that the implications for women are further reaching and more severe than those contributing to Pozdnyshév’s troubled existence.

In the political process that defines, deploys and controls sexuality there emerges a distinct and different biological role for a male and a female. Foucault explains that there was a focus “on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, birth.” The “supervision” of these mechanics of population control “was effected through an entire series of interventions and *regulatory controls: a bio-politics of the population.*” Foucault continues: “This bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism;...the investment of the body, its valorization and the distributive management of its forces were at the time indispensable.”<sup>3</sup>

“Bio-power” is directed at individuals’ bodies and their sexuality, as is already clear from the life of Pozdnyshév. As explained, there arises a politically imposed biological responsibility for a male to participate in as frequent productive sexual

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<sup>3</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, pp. 139–141.

activity as possible. As a political human animal, as with all animals, the necessity for a member of the opposite sex to complete biological reproduction implicates women in that political process. Because of the physiology of a woman, she is seen as the necessary receptor of male sexual expression. Men perceive a woman's body to have a biological responsibility to be open to and accepting of the politically inflamed masculine desire to copulate. She is ascribed the subordinate role; women become the passive political agents of a dominant male sexuality.

The perception of the subservient and sacrificial nature of a woman's sexuality that arises from the prescription of her biological responsibility in that society confirms the masculine view of an inferior female species that existed for centuries. Moreover, as political power gains momentum in the Victorian age, the bio-politics which Foucault describes not only validate male dominion, but, in fact, add force to the systems of patriarchy and the further reduction of a woman's status in a man's eye. Typically, for reasons that are the focus of this chapter, a woman is seen as an animal that exists in service to man. Accordingly, there develops a body politic for women that makes her the object of male sexual desires and pleasures and the subject of constant sexual abuse that leads to near-constant pregnancies. These forces combined marks her political usefulness as a reproductive animal.

In the case of Pozdnyshev's wife, a woman is pregnant within one month of marriage and spends the remainder of her life carrying and raising five children. Eventually she is physically exhausted and unable to bear more offspring; but her contribution has been made through the fulfilment of her biological responsibility. However, she is not rewarded for her sacrifice and her political compliance. Rather, unable to contribute further progeny, a husband murders the woman who he sees as

nothing other than an animal, and no longer a useful one at that. Only moments before her death, Pozdnyshev confirms: “Знаю ее только как животное” [I know her only as an animal].<sup>4</sup>

The male conception of a woman as an animal is not new to Pozdnyshev, nor was it newly introduced by the politics that Foucault describes. Like the imagined superiority of men mentioned above, it was already firmly entrenched in Western patriarchal culture. It was only validated and enforced by capitalist governments whose political systems necessarily relied on a body politic that designated and valued its female subjects as procreative animals. This confirms that a woman is valued for the functions of her physical body—in that cultural context, *physical* being the *animal*, where *animal* is the diametric opposite of the positive man. *The Kreutzer Sonata* is evidence of the political necessity of this condition and the consequences for women who are bound by their biological role to a subordinate position to men.

In *The Beast within*, Joyce Salisbury outlines the evolution of an ideology that reduces animals to an inferior status to men. She describes the consequences for animals at the hands of their male human dominators. By example, Tolstoy’s short story, ‘Kholstomer: The Story of a Horse,’ with its horse-narrator who describes life at the hands of human owners, attests to the reality of male dominion outlined by Salisbury. Although Salisbury’s work focuses on the Middle Ages, Kholstomer, the horse, confirms that it holds the same relevance in his late-nineteenth-century world.

Salisbury then makes the connection between animals and women as belonging to a common inferior group in the patriarchal mind. With Salisbury’s observations

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<sup>4</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», р. 64; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, р. 190.

forming a theoretical basis, the inter-textual parallels that emerge from ‘Kholstomer’ and *The Kreutzer Sonata* correspond directly to the parallels in the male perception and treatment of animals and women alike. *The Kreutzer Sonata* is an example of a late-nineteenth century patriarchal world that reduces women to the status of lower animals to serve ideological as well as practical political ends.

Salisbury traces the origin of a male ideology that places animals and women below men back to the early Christian era. Sexuality of the classical age described by Foucault was quite liberal and fraught with open transgressions through fluid boundaries between the sexes, and even species. So too was the position men occupied in relation to women and other animals on an ideological level. Earth was cohabited more or less harmoniously by men, women and other animals. However, as Salisbury explains:

During the early centuries of Christian expansion, Christian thinkers began to define what it meant to be a Christian within a pagan world. In the course of this identity formation, they repudiated many classical beliefs, including attitudes toward sexuality, entertainment, bathing, and other social and cultural practices. In this process, they also rejected a classical view that saw humans and animals as closely related, with plenty of opportunity for crossing the borders between the species.

An attempt was made to draw a clear line between the animal and human worlds, and “early Christians established a view of the world that posited a chasm of difference between humans and animals.”<sup>5</sup>

However, these early thinkers undoubtedly had difficulty in defining a human animal as separate from the animal kingdom to which it belongs. Salisbury notes that there was, then, a tendency to define a human being by what it *is not*, for focussing on

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<sup>5</sup> Salisbury, *The Beast within*, pp. 4, 128.

what a human being *is* would inevitably conclude that it *is* an animal. This inherent complication led to a definition of humanity as simply and definitively “*not animal*.”

There obviously opened the possibility for ambiguities. Any so-called “animal” feature of a human being immediately throws into question that being’s status as human. Accordingly, Salisbury contends:

As people began to define humanity by behaviour, the possibility was opened for redefining people who had previously been accepted as human. Early Christian thinkers had categorically stated that all people were human. By the late Middle Ages, however, some groups of people seemed to be less human than others. During the early Middle Ages, the poor and women may have been considered lesser humans, but by the late Middle Ages, they were considered closer to animals.<sup>6</sup>

The balance of a world in which all animals, including human animals, were more or less equal was thrown off kilter by Christianity. There developed equality splits between and even within species; in the classic words of George Orwell, there were indeed some animals that were “more equal than others.”<sup>7</sup> Not only were all lower animals subordinated by human beings, but the human animals themselves divided along gender lines to create a dominant human male and a subordinate female human animal.<sup>8</sup>

The inequality arising from men’s placement of women alongside other animals is based significantly on the male perception of feminine “behaviour,” which Salisbury suggests. Males perceived that feminine activities place women closer to the physical world—the negative element of existence that comprises the carnal world—to which

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<sup>6</sup> Salisbury, *The Beast within*, p. 153.

<sup>7</sup> Orwell, *Animal Farm*, p. 149.

<sup>8</sup> Of course, the divisions that exists even today are not only gender based, but apply to race, religion, physical appearance, financial and educational status et cetera.

men did not belong. This concept developed in the Middle Ages and is patently obvious in *The Kreutzer Sonata*.

Salisbury begins an explanation of female subordination by noting: "In the 'scientific' bestiaries, it is possible to see continued hints at the archetypal elements of femininity that were traditionally linked to animals.... This association increased from the twelfth century on as literary reference linked women to animals." Salisbury contends: "church thinkers defined women as more earthy, more sensual than men. With this view, it did not take much for women to slip to the bestial level."<sup>9</sup>

From the Middle Ages well into the nineteenth century, the division of humanity along gender lines bears direct correlation to the early Christian thinkers' division of the world into the spiritual and the physical. Men stood in a spiritual realm, while women belonged in the physical world where they apparently mingled with the other lowly creatures that roamed Earth. In her earlier publication, *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins*, Salisbury confirms the division of male and female: "The division of humanity into men and women seemed for the early Fathers to parallel the division of the world into the spiritual and the physical. Men represented the spiritual part of the world, while women represented the carnal."<sup>10</sup>

Based on the prevalent ideology of binary oppositions, Elizabeth Grosz elaborates specifically on why women were viewed as "flesh" and considered "carnal" in opposition to a man's superior spirituality: "Most relevant here is the correlation and

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<sup>9</sup> Salisbury, *The Beast within*, pp. 156 – 157.

<sup>10</sup> Salisbury, *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins*, p. 21.

association of the mind/body opposition with the opposition between male and female, where man and mind, woman and body, become representationally aligned.”<sup>11</sup>

Such a conception arises, according to Salisbury, from the “behaviour” of women and the functions of their body that make them *not* male, and therefore implicitly *not* human. In a world that values a woman for her role as a procreative animal, it is not surprising that the link that subordinates “carnal” woman in the male mind is made through the biological reproductive capacity of what he considers an animal function of her animal body. Grosz makes this specific connection:

Patriarchal oppression, in other words, justifies itself, at least in part, by connecting women much more closely than men to the body and, through this identification, restricting women’s social and economic roles to (pseudo) biological terms. Relying on essentialism, naturalism and biologism, misogynist thought confines women to the biological requirements of reproduction on the assumption that because of particular biological, physiological, and endocrinological transformations, women are somehow *more* biological, *more* corporeal, and *more* natural than men.<sup>12</sup>

Child birth and raising offspring was viewed as being a “biological” role of the woman’s “corporeal” body that was a “natural” function, where *natural*, like *physical*, conveys negative connotations. This places women unbecomingly close to the physical world and detaches them from the superior spiritual world that males reserve exclusively for themselves. Grosz observes: “Such a correlation is not contingent or accidental but is central to the ways in which philosophy has historically developed and still sees itself even today.”<sup>13</sup> And no less so than in late-nineteenth- and turn-of-the-century Russian philosophy that is particularly relevant to *The Kreutzer Sonata*.

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<sup>11</sup> Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 4.

In the context of the great binary oppositions of the day, in ‘Historectomies,’ Eric Naiman summarises the philosophical placement of women in Russian intellectual thought according to her role as a biological mother: “Our philosophers did not escape the prevailing mentality of their age and intellectual tradition, which equated women with ‘flesh.’ Indeed, this equation was so ‘obvious’ that it often had no need of affirmation and emerged in simple cadenced parallels.” Naiman refers to this “flesh” as “that oppressed member of the body/soul dichotomy.”

Naiman points to the function of the woman’s negative body and her sexuality that ties her closer to nature and results in her becoming the “oppressed”: “Moreover, the other negative term...—nature (*priroda*, etymologically related to *rody*, the process of birth)—was inevitably compared to a woman.”<sup>14</sup> Foucault explains in definitive terms what this means for a woman in the nineteenth century: “‘sex’ was defined... as that which by itself constitutes woman’s body, ordering it wholly in terms of the functions of reproduction.”<sup>15</sup>

Equating a woman to “flesh” and seeing her as “close to nature” for her capacity to bear progeny results directly in her becoming viewed as a subspecies to men. In the opening scene of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, the conservative merchant who takes part in the conversation on the train makes the connection between a woman’s procreative role and her status as an animal. In referring to childbirth, the merchant clearly draws a line between males and females by defining masculine superiority by Salisbury’s notion of what he *is not*. “Мужчина — дело особое.... Мужчины в доме ничего не прибует,

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<sup>14</sup> Naiman, ‘Historectomies,’ pp. 261 – 262, 273.

<sup>15</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 153.



а женщина-жено — утлый сосуд” [Men are a different matter.... A man does not multiply in the house; while a woman—a wife—is a leaky vessel].<sup>16</sup>

Without even mentioning animals, the response from the modern woman to whom this is addressed implicitly indicates that contemporary thought very much linked women’s child bearing to the notion of her being an animal. In an attempt to rehabilitate this designation to a lower form of life, the modern woman, perhaps with a certain confidence that the old-fashioned views of the merchant have passed, immediately contests: “Да, но, я думаю, вы согласитесь, что женщина — человек, и имеет чувства, как и мужчина” [Yes, but I think you will agree that a woman is a human being and has feelings as a man has].<sup>17</sup> There is no direct response to the woman’s inquiry, only to hear the merchant a few breaths later speaking of how a husband must control his wife. He boldly concludes: “Не верь лошади в поле, а жене в доме” [Don’t trust a horse in the field, or the wife in the house],<sup>18</sup> which clearly links women to animals in his mind.

The merchant is a member of Russia’s most conservative class and an advocate of *Domostroy*, an outdated code of marital rites based on arranged marriages and the wife’s subservience through fear of God and the patriarchal husband. His “два желтые

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<sup>16</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 294, 11; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 210, 116.

For the ideological significance of a “vessel” in relation to femininity and the patriarchal mind, see Salisbury, *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins*, p. 50. Elizabeth Grosz also makes the following observation: “[In the West,] the representation of female sexuality [is] as an uncontrollable flow, as seepage associated with the unclean, coupled with the idea of female sexuality as a vessel, a container, a home empty or lacking in itself but fillable from the outside.” Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 206.

<sup>17</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 11; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 116.

<sup>18</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 12; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 117.

зуба” [two yellow teeth]<sup>19</sup> apparently symbolise the decay of such barbaric traditional values. The modern woman’s initial boldness and confidence suggests that, indeed, a new age of equality and women’s rights is at least foreseeable in that society. However, despite the woman’s optimism (or as suggested previously, naïveté), as a member of both that woman’s class and generation, the male protagonist of *The Kreutzer Sonata* shows that the patriarchal male view of a woman as an animal is still firmly entrenched in the male mind. Accordingly, Pozdnyshev will prove that the patriarchal essence of *Domostroy* exists, only now in a different guise.

Pozdnyshev, who asserts that he is a representative of ninety-nine per cent of the males of his class, articulates in precise terms his masculine view of a woman that sees her only as a lower animal. Having born five of his children, Pozdnyshev categorically states of his wife: “Нет, это не человек!” [No, she’s not a human being!]<sup>20</sup> After ten years of marriage living intimately by night and in close proximity by day to this woman, Pozdnyshev questions himself of her: “Она? Да кто она? Она тайна, как была, так и есть. Я не знаю ее” [Her? But who is she? She was and still is a mystery. I don’t know her]. As already stated, Pozdnyshev concludes: “Знаю ее только как животное” [I know her only as an animal].<sup>21</sup> At every level, the retrospective look at his married life confirms Pozdnyshev’s admission that he knew and viewed a woman, and women in general, as an animal.

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<sup>19</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 8; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 113.

<sup>20</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 70; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 199.

<sup>21</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 64; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 190.

Pozdnyshv's view of his wife as an animal not only runs concurrent to the parallel made by the merchant between a woman and a "лошадь" [horse], but it also reflects the more general masculine view of women that prevailed in Russian society. It is also a reoccurring theme in Tolstoy's art. As a prelude to dealing explicitly with the theme of women seen as animals in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, hints of this male conception of women, particularly when related to her procreative role, appear a decade earlier in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*.<sup>22</sup>

Dragan Kujundžić observes that one of the main male characters of *Anna Karenina*, Levin, "perceives animals in anthropomorphic terms, and women in animal terms when referring to feminine sexuality." Making the link to a woman's reproductive function, Kujundžić points out:

The only femininity [Levin] can actually deal with, for him the essence of the feminine, is that of the reproductive glands and the ovaries.... Levin's marital phantasm is that of a wife who is a pregnant or fertile cow, a brood hen or a bleating mother.... When he marries Kitty she is referred to in the church as 'a lamb decked out for the slaughter'.... [Also] Kitty is equated by the narrative association and contiguity with Levin's faithful dog.<sup>23</sup>

After Pozdnyshv has stated that a woman "is not a human being," the use of the terms *horse*, *cow*, *hen*, *lamb*, and *dog* by the merchant and Levin mark a key element of the masculine perception that clearly seeks to identify her as a lower animal.

In commenting on the Middle Age texts that provide Salisbury with her clues to support the concept of men considering and subordinating women to the status of lower animals, she points out: "Often the references were in the form of similes comparing

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<sup>22</sup> There are many recurring themes in *Anna Karenina* and *The Kreutzer Sonata* including and extending beyond the views of women and sexuality. For the suggestion that *The Kreutzer Sonata* is an adaptation of *Anna Karenina*, see Алданов, *Загадка Толстого*, pp. 39 – 56.

<sup>23</sup> Kujundžić, 'Pardoning Women in *Anna Karenina*,' pp. 74 – 76.

women's behaviour to that of animals."<sup>24</sup> The same is true of Tolstoy's nineteenth-century texts.

A striking feature of *The Kreutzer Sonata* is that in a story about love, marriage and family life in the most refined setting, there is an overwhelming presence of apparently incongruous references to animals.<sup>25</sup> In the approximately seventy pages of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, the word *животное* [domesticated or tame animal] and its derivatives appears about thirty-five times, *зверь* [wild animal or beast] and *свинья* [pig or swine] appear at least ten times each, with references to about fifteen other miscellaneous animals. The protagonist employs many of the 'animal' words in *The Kreutzer Sonata* expressly as similes to compare a woman and her behaviour with and to the animals each word denotes.

As with the merchant who likens a woman and feminine sexuality to a "horse" and also with Levin who uses the simile "cow" to describe a pregnant human woman, Pozdnyshev makes a connection between a woman's animal nature according to her sexuality and role as mother through the use of similes in his speech. The attention he pays to this theme and his constant use of animal similes indicates the preoccupation he has with the female body and its reproductive capacities that form his view of a woman as an animal.

Pozdnyshev begins his comparison of female sexuality with reference to animals in general terms, before his similes turn to specific species. Pozdnyshev suggests that

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<sup>24</sup> Salisbury, *The Beast within*, p. 157.

<sup>25</sup> Henrietta Mondry pointed out this theme during a 1997 Russian Department seminar given by Gordon Spence at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand.

the women of his class are educated simply to attract men “like bait in a trap,” which is explained in the previous chapter. He believes that this is unquestionably the focus of a young woman’s existence and now sees that is essentially animal in nature: “Вся жизнь их проходит в приготовлениях к кокетству и кокетстве” [Their whole life is passed in preparations for coquetry and coquetting].<sup>26</sup> As with animals, Pozdnyshev observes that a woman’s external bodily stimuli attract and lure a mate,

От этого эти джерси мерзкие, эти нашлепки на зады, эти голые плечи, руки, почти груди. Женщины, особенно прошедшие мужскую школу, очень хорошо знают, что разговоры о высоких предметах — разговорами, а что нужно мужчине тело и всё то, что выставляет его в самом заманчивом свете; и это самое и делается.

That is why there are those detestable jerseys, bustles, and naked shoulders, arms, almost breasts. Women, especially if they have passed the man’s school, know very well that all the talk about elevated subjects is just talk, and what a man wants is her body, but presents everything in the most deceptive but alluring light; and she acts accordingly.<sup>27</sup>

Women’s costumes and their small talk at the balls, operas and gay soirées of society, as suggested in the previous chapter, are but instruments in the most externally sophisticated yet inherently base mating rites of upper class women according to Pozdnyshev. Women not only pose to stimulate a man’s desire for sex according to the theory in Chapter One of this thesis, nor merely to lure a husband for financial gain as suggested in Chapter Two. Women’s costumes and the exposure of selected erotogenic parts of that body coupled with her seductive and alluring behaviour are considered to be directly related to a sexuality that is essentially animal:

...для всех их привлечение к себе как можно больше мужчин есть высший идеал как их девичьей, так и замужней жизни. И от этого у них нет чувства сильнее этого женского не скажу тщеславия, но животной потребности всякой самки привлекать к себе как можно больше самцов....

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<sup>26</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», р. 313; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 217.

<sup>27</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», р. 22; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 132.

...for them all to attract to themselves as many men as possible is the highest ideal both of their girlhood and of their married life. And from this arises a feeling stronger than that one which I will not call their feminine vanity, but the animal need of every female animal to attract to herself as many males as possible....<sup>28</sup>

Behind all refined conduct in his society, Pozdnyshev again speaks of what he sees as women's essentially animal nature:

Она знает, что наш брат всё врет о высоких чувствах — ему нужно только тело. Кокетка знает это сознательно, но всякая невинная девушка знает это бессознательно, как знают животные.

She knows that we are continually lying about high sentiments, but really want her body. A coquette knows that consciously, and every innocent girl knows it unconsciously, just as animals do.<sup>29</sup>

Once a woman "traps" and secures a mate to father her progeny, Pozdnyshev now links a woman further to the carnal world through her reproductive functions. He is under the impression that his wife is not fulfilling her maternal responsibilities properly. In an effort to find where she is at fault, he begins in a comparison of his wife's activities with those of other animals. This kind of juxtaposition is immediately telling.

First, Pozdnyshev associates female maternal activity with animal behaviour, thereby making the connection between his wife and lower animals as the same or a similar species: "влечение к детям, животная потребность кормить, лелеять, защищать их — была, как она и есть у большинства женщин" [the attachment to her children, the animal need of feeding, caressing and protecting them, was their as with most women].<sup>30</sup> At least Pozdnyshev's use of the term *женщины* [women], rather than

<sup>28</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 313 - 314; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 218.

<sup>29</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 22; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 132.

<sup>30</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 41 - 42; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 58.

*самки* or *матки* [females (of lower animal species)], suggests that although women have some animal features, the possibility of them having some human features exists. This could place them above lower animals in a man's mind. However, Pozdnyshv makes no mistake that, in his view, women of his class have surrendered every last trace of humanity as they give way entirely to an animal identity:

Одним словом, животное материнское чувство — чувственность. Мысли же о том таинственном значении появления нового человеческого существа, которое заменит нас, нет никакой. Нет того, что при крещении говорят и делают над ребенком. Ведь никто не верит в это, а между тем ведь это было не что иное, как напоминание о человеческом значении младенца. Это бросили, не верят, а ничем не заменили.... Осталось то, что есть у животного.

In a word, the animal maternal instinct is sensual. There is in it no thought at all of the mysterious meaning of the arrival of a new human being who will replace us. There is nothing of what is said and done in baptism. You know, nobody believes in baptism, and yet that was really a reminder of the human importance of the baby. People have given that up, but they have not replaced it in any way.... The animal part has remained.<sup>31</sup>

In an extended passage omitted from the official version of the story that includes almost twenty references to animals, Pozdnyshv continues his comparison of women and animals at length. Pozdnyshv has already concluded that his wife, a woman, is “не человек” [not a human being] and that women of his class are essentially “животные” [animals]. He goes further to suggest that women are not only deprived of all humanity, but that in some respects the women in his society are actually worse than the lower animals to which he equates them.

In reference to the way in which women treat their offspring, Pozdnyshv states that they “не любят по-человечески” [do not love like human beings]. In fact, he believes “любят даже не по-собачьи” [they do not even love in dog-fashion]. It is most telling that Pozdnyshv takes lower animal behaviour as his point of reference

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<sup>31</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 318; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 222.

from which to compare human female behaviour. Further more, it is the animal model of behaviour that Pozdnyshev presents as the ideal to which human women should elevate themselves. This confirms a masculine view that women have slipped even below the bestial status that has been assigned to them. Pozdnyshev continues: “Ведь вы заметьте: курица, гусыня, волчица — всегда будут для женщины недостижимыми образцами животной любви” [Just notice: a hen, goose, she-wolf, are always unattainable models of animal love for our women].<sup>32</sup>

Although Pozdnyshev does not find an exact match of female human behaviour to any particular animal in the above analysis, the repetitive juxtaposition of women and animals contributes significantly to the construction of an image of a woman seen as an animal. The above passage runs for over one page where Pozdnyshev, like Levin, compares women with various animals: “курица” [hen], “корова” [cow], and a “собака” [dog]. Pozdnyshev adds to this assortment: “зверь” [wild animal or beast], “гусыня” [goose], “волчица” [she-wolf]. This reflects not only a comparative analysis of behavioural patterns, but it is also clearly an obsessive attempt to fix a definition of femininity to that of a lower animal. In doing so, a woman can be categorised as inextricably bound to that other group in the male mind.

The preoccupation with considering a woman in terms of her physiological function as a reproductive animal goes a long way in creating Pozdnyshev’s ill-conceived misogynist view of women he held before he murdered his wife. As with the ninety-nine per cent of males that Pozdnyshev represents, the typical picture of women in late-nineteenth century patriarchal minds is that of an animal.

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<sup>32</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 318; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 223.



This image of a woman is also manifest and evidently universally entrenched in the foremost Russian philosophical minds of the day. Naiman explains that in the contemporary philosophical thought that links women through her sexuality to her “natural-procreative” role already discussed, she is ultimately then reduced to a bestial status. In commenting specifically on Nikolai Berdyaev (1874 – 1948), Nikolai Fyodorov (1828 – 1903) and Vladimir Solovyov (1853 – 1900), Naiman points out that the views they present stem not from a specifically Russian or Eastern point of view, but represent Western European thought more broadly, for which Pozdnyshv is clearly a prime advocate:

Essentially, our three philosophers all accepted the prevailing tendency in Western Europe to view female sexuality as all-encompassing, to equate sexuality with femininity per se because sexuality supposedly had a far greater impact on a woman’s life than it did on a man’s. Berdyaev and Fyodorov, however, were more emphatic on this point. The former declared, ‘woman is the cosmic, global carrier of the sexual element, of all that is elemental [i.e., natural and bestial] in sex. The natural-procreative element of sex is the female element.’<sup>33</sup>

By equating femininity solely to maternity, which is essentially viewed as an animal activity, late-nineteenth- and turn-of-the-century Russian philosophical thought reiterates the notion that, in a society that holds women in constant pregnancy and child birth for political reasons, she is typically seen in that role only as an animal mother. She could not therefore escape being considered an animal. This is only too evident in Pozdnyshv’s account above. Having established the link between the feminine and the animal, remembering that animal in that context is bestial and base, Pozdnyshv and his

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<sup>33</sup> Naiman, ‘Historectomies,’ p. 262.

For a Fyodorovian reading of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, see Mondry, ‘One or Two “Resurrections”?’ For a commentary on Solovyov and *The Kreutzer Sonata*, see Møller, *Postlude to “The Kreutzer Sonata,”* pp. 281 – 296.

society's philosophical minds hold a grave view of women summarised in a few conclusive words from Fyodorov and Solovyov:

For Fyodorov, mothers were 'base, sensual, and intolerant; their entire world is limited to the nursery.' Solovyov is willing to admit that maternal love is based on sacrifice, but he cannot forgive its role in condemning man to live among the beasts: 'To a mother her child may be dearer than all else, but this is precisely because it is her child, just as with other animals; in other words, here the purported acknowledgement of an other's unconditional significance is in reality founded upon an external, physiological connection.'<sup>34</sup>

These words from the most influential philosophers of the day could have easily been lifted directly from *The Kreutzer Sonata*. They clearly mimic and concisely summarise the rhetoric of the male protagonist. Pozdnyshv unreservedly considers a woman to be natural, bestial, sensual, intolerant, "just as with other animals," based on her sexuality and her role in human reproduction for which she is ultimately valued.

Moving such a firmly established ideological image of a woman as an animal into the practical reality of everyday life translates directly into the very real subordination, domination and treatment of women as if they are animals. As Salisbury contends:

Since men were by nature closer to the spiritual realm...[and] as the spirit was ideally supposed to govern the flesh, spiritual (or rational, as the sources sometimes say) man was to govern carnal woman.... Men's strength and rationality provided their justification—indeed, their obligation—to rule. These two qualities endowed men with power and conversely, then, power was the mark of a man.<sup>35</sup>

The "power" that men assume in their minds is that which they externally express in reality as "the mark of a man." This is the emphatic, yet precariously self validated basis for a masculine culture that kept and treated its female population like any other of his domestic animals.

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<sup>34</sup> Naiman, 'Historectomies,' p. 263.

<sup>35</sup> Salisbury, *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins*, p. 21.

As already mentioned, Salisbury describes the process by which men defined humanity as distinctly *not* animal. By the fourth century, as a woman became viewed as one of those other creatures, she too was viewed as belonging to that animal other world irrevocably detached from men. Clearly, by the late-nineteenth century, there still exists a dominant patriarchal mind that conceives a man as being diametrically opposed to all other forms of life, including the female human animal. It could not appear otherwise, for men had already granted unto themselves (or supposedly been granted by divine providence) the position of a divine spirit that was created in the image of God.

The masculine subordination of women as inferior animals develops along such pseudo-religious lines based on a man's reading of the Bible. According to the biblical texts, God gave humanity explicit authority to command nature. Salisbury supplies the evidence: "God said to Adam *and Eve*: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'"<sup>36</sup> However, as the cultural split between men and women developed, it is evident that men took God's words granting human dominion to be specifically directed at Adam. Women therefore became one of those other "living things" whom a man was to "subdue" and "have dominion over."

In his defence of a man's "rights," and more explicitly, a responsibility to "control" a woman, the patriarchal merchant in the opening scene of the story relies on the masculine conception of a superior Adam: "Как была она, Ева, женщина, из ребра мужнина сотворена, так и останется до скончания века" [As she, Eve, a woman,

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<sup>36</sup> Salisbury, *The Beast within*, p. 3 (my italics).

was made from the rib of man, so it will remain to the end of time].<sup>37</sup> It is no surprise, then, that he equates a woman to a “лошадь” [horse], as already pointed out. A woman to him is clearly on the same level as lower animals that Adam, and therefore he as a man, apparently has exclusive rights and the God-given responsibility to dominate.

In Pozdnyshev’s comparison of women with animals discussed thus far, he fails to find one particular animal species which he can actually compare a woman to as the merchant does. Eventually, however, recalling the latter days of his marriage, Pozdnyshev does find an ‘animal’ match for his wife: “лошадь” [a horse], no less.<sup>38</sup> After being freed from the burden of bearing children, Pozdnyshev notices distinct changes in his wife’s appearance and condition:

...она физически раздобрела и похорошела, как последняя красота лета. Она чувствовала это и занималась собой. В ней сделалась какая-то вызывающая красота, беспокоящая людей. Она была во всей силе тридцатилетней нерожавшей, раскормленной и раздраженной женщины. Вид ее наводил беспокойство. Когда она проходила между мужчинами, она притягивала к себе их взгляды. Она была как застоявшаяся, раскормленная запряженная лошадь, с которой сняли узду.

...she became physically more stout and handsome, like the late beauty of summers end. She felt this and paid attention to her appearance. She developed a provocative kind of beauty that made people restless. She was in full vigour of a well-fed and excited woman of thirty who is not bearing children. Her appearance disturbed people. When she passed men, she attracted their notice. She was like a fresh, well-fed, harnessed horse now released from her bridle.<sup>39</sup>

It is perhaps not by coincidence of the old merchant’s comparison of women to horses that Pozdnyshev too compares a woman to a horse. The leitmotif of the

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<sup>37</sup> Salisbury, *The Beast within*, p. 116.

<sup>38</sup> Throughout the story, Pozdnyshev not once refers to his wife by her name. She is always referred to as “она” [she] or “моя жена” [my wife]. In the entire story leading up to her murder, she is only definitively identified as “сука” [bitch], which carries the same figurative meaning as in English, several times as “как животное” [like an animal] and now specifically “как лошадь.” The significance of not giving a woman her human name is discussed further in Chapter Four of this thesis.

<sup>39</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 47; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p.166.

masculine view of women is indeed as much 'woman seen as animal' as it is more specifically 'woman seen as a horse.' Comparing *The Kreutzer Sonata* and 'Kholstomer' identifies the striking parallels between the male perception and treatment of woman and horses as if they were one and the same "животное" [animal].

'Kholstomer,' like *The Kreutzer Sonata*, is set in the upper class world of nineteenth-century Russia. It begins by depicting the typical relationship between human beings and domesticated animals. This symbolically defines the typical relationship between men and women that is represented in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, according to the deduction that women are viewed as animals by men. In 'Kholstomer,' one of those animals, a horse, is indeed seen as a lower form of life that suffers from masculine dominion. He is treated unjustly and often brutally at the hands of his male keepers. In *The Kreutzer Sonata*, another animal, a female human being, is also considered a lower form of life and similarly suffers at the hands of a male dominator.

The essential element that makes human/animal, male/female associations detrimental extends from the perception of male superiority to the concept that men also have rights to take those inferior beings as material possessions. In doing so, men enforce their superiority and the ideological rift between the two worlds broadens. This again is related to misinterpreted biblical rights of dominion over lower beings that apparently exist in service to men. Salisbury notes:

This assessment echoes Christian writers who articulated a theoretical position of unbreachable difference between humans and animals over which they had been given dominion. As humans perceived animals as property, they confidently placed themselves in a position not only superior to, but distinctly separate and different from, their animals.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Salisbury, *The Beast within*, p. 37.

Fundamentally, the ownership relationship between animals and human beings need not necessarily be bad. In fact, it can arguably be, and should ideally be, a mutually beneficial arrangement. An animal that is domesticated may fare better in captivity for it is fed and protected from the elements and predators. In exchange, it will provide human beings with labour and may eventually become human food. Both parties benefit from such an arrangement. A woman too, the protagonist's wife in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, is taken and kept as property. As the daughter of a ruined landowner, she and her family are saved from poverty and provided with more than their daily financial needs. In exchange, she provides sexual services to a man. As suggested in the previous chapter, it is a straightforward business transaction in which both customer and vendor might benefit.

However, in reality, the perceived superiority of men that accompanies his perceived rights to ownership make the ownership relationship between animals and women and their dominant male owners not so simplistic, nor idealistic. Charles Darwin accurately expresses the nineteenth-century thought-of-the-day on this subject:<sup>41</sup> "Animals whom we have made our slaves, we do not consider our equals."<sup>42</sup> Darwin's use of *whom*, rather than *which* or *that*, carries the implicit message that the basis for ownership and enslavement of animals is unfounded, for referring to animals with *whom* suggests that they are categorically on the same level as human beings.

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<sup>41</sup> Referring to Darwin's work is particularly relevant to *The Kreutzer Sonata*; with reference to *Origin of Species*, Pozdnyshov points out that it was very much a topic-of-the-day in educated circles in Russia. Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 25; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 135. Donna Orwin also notes that "Darwin" was a household name in Tolstoy's home, particularly in the 1870s and 1880s when *The Kreutzer Sonata* was written. Orwin, *Tolstoy's Art and Thought*, p. 242.

<sup>42</sup> Rachels, *The Moral Implications of Darwinism*, p. 132, citing Darwin, *Metaphysics, Materialism, and the Evolution of the Mind*, p. 187.

Despite Darwin's optimistic rhetoric, his statement makes the simple point that there were no idealistic ownership relationships, for the process of ownership immediately subordinates the being that is enslaved.

It is consistently evident that relations between lower animals, women and men based on a concept of ownership in the Christian era have never been the harmonious cohabitation of humans and animals of an earlier pagan world. Domesticated animals are not free and are held in service to men, and emphatically not vice versa. Salisbury makes the explicit point that the "life of animals is preserved not for themselves, but for man."<sup>43</sup> Since women are linked to animals in the male mind, they suffer the same fate when they are taken and considered a man's property.

In 'Kholstomer', the men keep horses, which they prize as commodities and value for their service to them. As pedigrees, the horses serve the aesthetic senses, provide a man with status and pride according to the human value placed on particular characteristics of an animal, and serve as sporting pleasure at shows and races. Even Kholstomer who is a detestable genetic abomination in terms of pedigree is nonetheless kept to serve his owners in other ways. Kholstomer's physical capabilities are exploited as he is pushed to carry his owners through town and country in a carriage, through snow and ice on a sleigh, and laboriously haul a plough over acre after acre of land.

Likewise, by Pozdnyshv's own admission, the female human animal who he takes as sexual property lives only in service to him. His wife is physically abused in servicing a man's demanding sexual obsession and bearing his progeny. Pozdnyshv categorically states:

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<sup>43</sup> Salisbury, *The Beast within*, pp. 16 – 17.

По существующему в нашем обществе взгляду – призвание женщины, главное, в том, чтобы давать наслаждение мужчине, и такое и дается ей воспитание. Смолodu она обучается только тому, чем она может увеличить свою привлекательность. И всякая девушка приучается думать только об этом. Как крепостные были воспитываемы так, чтобы уметь угождать господам, и это не могло быть иначе, так и все они, наши женщины... и это не может быть иначе.

According to the view existing in our society a woman's vocation is to afford a man pleasure, and the education given her corresponds with this view. From childhood she learns only how to be more attractive. Girls are all taught to think entirely of that. As serfs were brought up to satisfy their masters, and it could not be otherwise, so too are all our women...and this too cannot be otherwise.<sup>44</sup>

Having established an ideological relationship of master and slave between human beings and owned animals, and men and his owned women, men employ physical means to maintain that ownership relationship. As owner-masters, men considered it their right and responsibility to manipulate and control their animal subjects. "By turning animals into property, then, humans transformed the animals from wild co-inhabitants of the world to subordinates, essentially shaping the animals as if they were clay." Salisbury continues to explain exactly what this relationship entails: "human dominion was expressed in a complex of related ideas that included ownership, mastery and control" and that this "dominion over animals was expressed physically in this ownership relationship."<sup>45</sup>

'Kholstomer' is a story that pays significant attention to the concept and principles of masculine rights of dominion based on the ownership relationship.<sup>46</sup> By becoming a horse, Tolstoy presents the practical outcome of human dominion from the

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<sup>44</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 312 - 313; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 216.

<sup>45</sup> Salisbury, *The Beast within*, p. 16.

<sup>46</sup> Karen Ryan-Hayes points out: "A principal satirical target in 'Kholstomer' is the institution of property and ownership..., an attack on the injustice of property ownership (including serfdom). Ryan-Hays, 'The Parodical Implications of the Beast Narrator,' pp. 231, 235.



victim's point of view through the hypothetical psychology an animal. Kholstomer is witness to the "dominion over animals" that is based on ownership and is expressed "physically."

Но для меня совершенно было темно тогда, что такое значили слова: *своего, его* жеребенка, из которых я видел, что люди предполагали какую-то связь между мною и конюшим...и люди вообразили себе обо мне, что я принадлежал не Богу и себе, как это свойственно всему живому, а что я принадлежал конюшему.... Тогда же я никак не мог понять, что такое значило то, что *меня* называли собственностью человека. Слова: моя лошадь, относимые ко мне, живой лошади, казались мне так же страны, как слова: моя земля, мой воздух, моя вода. Но слова эти имели на меня огромное влияние.

I was quite in the dark what they meant by the words '*his colt,*' from which I perceived that people considered that there was some connection between me and the stud groom...and people considered that I did not belong to God and myself, as is natural to all living creatures, but that I belonged to the stud groom.... At the time, I could not at all understand what they meant by speaking of *me* as being a man's property. The words '*my horse*' applied to me, a live horse, seemed to me as strange as to say '*my land,*' '*my air,*' or '*my water.*' But those words had an enormous effect on me.

Kholstomer concludes by defining what he discovers to be the "enormous effect" of the ownership relationship. As he says when he speaks of owners' treatment of the owned: "и всё отношение их к этим людям состоит в том, что они делают им зло" [the whole relationship of the owners to the owned is that they do them harm].<sup>47</sup>

In Kholstomer's evaluation of ownership, he also makes the connection between animals and women who are similarly placed in a man's repertoire of objects that can be owned: "Есть люди, которые женщин называют своими женщинами или женами" [There are men who call women '*their women*' or '*their wives*'].<sup>48</sup> Pozdnyshev could not more explicitly validate this notion of ownership of women. Besides calling his wife "моя жена" [my wife] throughout the story, Pozdnyshev drops a more telling hint at how he perceives the basis of his relationship with that woman. As already pointed

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<sup>47</sup> Толстой, «Холстомер», pp. 19 – 20; Tolstoy, 'Kholstomer,' pp. 414 – 416.

<sup>48</sup> Толстой, «Холстомер», p. 20; Tolstoy, 'Kholstomer,' p. 415.

out in Chapter Two, Pozdnyshev states: “я признавал за собой несомненное, полное право над ее телом, как будто это было мое тело” [I considered myself to have a complete right to her body as if it were my own].<sup>49</sup>

From this concept of ownership of women there develops perceived masculine rights to control and dominate women as if they really were a man’s property. As Kholstomer suggests, this leads directly to the harm of the owned object. As with a horse, the ideas of “mastery and control” related to animal ownership apply equally to the women who are taken into a man’s possession. The old merchant again indicates the prevailing patriarchal view in masculine culture: “Всякий муж жену укоротить может, на то ему власть” [Every husband can keep his wife in order. He has a right to do it].<sup>50</sup> Pozdnyshev’s perceived rights to dominate women correspond precisely with those of the old merchant. Despite his self-righteousness, he unwittingly reveals that he lives closer to the model of *Domostroy* than he wants the listener to believe: “Чувствовал я, главное, то, что я – мужчина, который по моим понятиям должен был властвовать” [What I chiefly felt was that I was a man, and that a man, as I understood it, ought to be the master].<sup>51</sup>

As owned objects, a horse in ‘Kholstomer’ and a woman in *The Kreutzer Sonata* are subject to the same “harm” that arises when the “ownership relationship is expressed physically.” The fundamental relationship between a man and woman thus correlates on both the ideological level and in practical terms to the relationship between men and

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<sup>49</sup> Толстой, «Крейцера соната», p. 68; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 196.

<sup>50</sup> Толстой, «Крейцера соната», p. 294; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 210.

<sup>51</sup> Толстой, «Крейцера соната», p. 321; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 226.

their animals. The striking parallels between the treatment of animals and women in the two texts provide hard evidence for the theoretical conjecturing thus far. Men not only consider women to be animals, but they also treat them as such.

Salisbury defines the foremost method of “mastery and control” of animals, and therefore women, as man’s use of fear. This serves to have animals respond according to human demands as well as to express male superiority on a purely ideological level. Salisbury traces the origin of the master’s codes of instilling fear in his animal subjects back to the eleventh century:

[The] law stated that since man had dominion over animals, it was forbidden for animals to have any advantage over humans. Therefore, people were to be feared by animals, not to fear them. Such a law might raise interesting questions of how one would enforce feelings of fear on the part of the animals, but clearly it should be understood as a statement of ideal relationship between owner and owned.<sup>52</sup>

This “ideal relationship” based on fear is evident even before the reader has turned the first page of ‘Kholstomer.’ The opening passage provides a vivid example of exactly how human owners traditionally attempt to instil fear in their animals. This involves the threat and infliction of physical pain. The animals are first seen caged in stalls, depicting them as owned and contained. The basis of that ownership relationship is immediately set: Nester, the horses’ keeper, enters with “кну́т у него захлестнут через плечо” [a whip slung over his shoulders]. He scolds a mare that does not act according to his wishes: “— Куда? — крикнул он, замахиваясь на кобылку” [‘Where are you going?’ he shouted, threateningly raising his hand at the mare].<sup>53</sup> The stern voice of Nester and his “threatening” stance indicates the intention to control the

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<sup>52</sup> Salisbury, *The Beast within*, p. 16.

<sup>53</sup> Толстой, «Холстомер», p. 3; Tolstoy, ‘Kholstomer,’ p. 391.

animals according to his demands and by the use of physical power. The “whip slung over his shoulder” is evidence of how he might exercise such power. The raising of the hand, therefore, is the threat of the painful lashes that are possible from the whip.

Speaking of a woman, the merchant elaborates on the fundamental elements that constitute a *Domostroyan* marriage. This relationship between man and woman, not by coincidence, is based on “fear” of the dominant partner. A woman is clearly seen at the same level as a horse in the man’s eye. He specifically refers to men’s use of fear as the method by which a male should “keep his wife in order.” This confirms the established concept of a marriage based on a wife’s fear of God and the patriarchal husband advocated by monk Silvester four centuries ago.<sup>54</sup>

— А в женщине первое дело страх должен быть....  
 — Какой же страх? — сказала дама.  
 — А такой: да боится своего му-у-ужа! Вот какой страх.  
 — Ну, уж это, батюшка, время прошло, — даже с некоторой злобой сказала дама.  
 — Нет, сударыня, этому времени пройти нельзя.... Да-с, загодя укорачивать надо женский пол, а то всё пропадет.

‘The first thing that should be required of a woman is fear!...’  
 ‘Fear of what?’ asked the lady.  
 ‘Why this fear: let her fear her husband! That fear!’  
 ‘Oh, the time for that, sir, has passed,’ said the lady with a certain viciousness.  
 ‘No, madam, that time cannot pass.... Yes, the female sex must be curbed in time or else all is lost.’<sup>55</sup>

The wife in *The Kreutzer Sonata* is subject to the same threat of physical pain as the horses are in ‘Kholstomer.’ A woman too lives with a man who threatens her with violence. This is precisely the form of “fear of the husband” of which the old merchant speaks; it is the same fear that patriarchal men impose on their domestic animals.

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<sup>54</sup> *Domostroy* literally means ‘house builder’ and refers to a sixteenth century manual by monk Silvester scripted on religion and household management.

<sup>55</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 10 – 12; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 115 – 117.

As Pozdnyshev's wife takes to her *musical* liaison with the guest violinist,<sup>56</sup> Pozdnyshev senses that she is developing a mind of her own. He believes she is acting according to her own free will that she discovers with her recent liberation from the burden of childbirth. Referring to his comparison of her to a “лошадь” [horse], it is significant that he feels that his wife has been “released from her bridle.” In contrast to Pozdnyshev's imagined ownership and rights to his wife's body, now he is horrified to discover: “чувствовал, что владеть я этим телом не могу, что оно не мое, и что она может распоряжаться им как хочет, а хочет распорядиться им не так, как я хочу” [I felt I could not control that body, that it was not mine and she could dispose of it as she pleased, and that she wanted to dispose of it not as I wished her to].<sup>57</sup> This is a clear violation of a man's perceived rights of dominion over women.

Not surprisingly, it is with fear through the threat of physical abuse that Pozdnyshev attempts to regain the control of his wife that is slipping away from him when her metaphoric “узда” [bridle], which represents masculine control, is removed. Pozdnyshev's acknowledgement of his lack of control of his wife, which he considers his right and duty, corresponds with feelings of outrage and increased hostility towards her.

Мне в первый раз захотелось физически выразить эту злобу. Я вскочил и двинулся к ней; но в ту же минуту, как я вскочил, я помню, что я сознал свою злобу и спросил себя, хорошо ли отдаться этому чувству, и тотчас же ответил себе, что это хорошо, что это испугает ее, и тотчас же, вместо того чтобы противиться этой злобе, я еще стал разжигать ее в себе и радоваться тому, что она больше и больше разгорается во мне.

— Убирайся, или я тебя убью! — закричал я.

Я сознательно усиливал интонации злости своего голоса, говоря это. Тогда я повернул ее и сильно толкнул.

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<sup>56</sup> Remembering the adulterous connotations associated with the musical performance.

<sup>57</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 68; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 196.

For the first time, I wished to give physical expression to my rage. I jumped up and went towards her; but as I jumped up I remember becoming conscious of my rage and asking myself: 'Is it right to give way to this feeling?' and at once I answered that it was right, that it would frighten her, and instead of restraining my fury I immediately began inflaming it still further, and was glad it burnt yet more fiercely within me.

'Be off, or I'll kill you!' I shouted.

I consciously intensified the anger in my voice as I said this. Then I turned around and gave her a violent push.<sup>58</sup>

The key to this passage is that Pozdnyshev "consciously" makes an effort to become frightful. This is clear evidence of a man acting not out of a fit of emotive jealousy, nor from genuine uncontrollable rage. Pozdnyshev is a man who is "consciously" calculating the effect of his actions in a process of instilling fear in a woman. Pozdnyshev is even "conscious" of and "delighted" with his physical appearance and the likely perception the woman will have of him, and to what degree this will aid in the fear-instillation process:

И должно быть, я был страшен, потому что она так заробела, что даже не имела силы уйти.... Я чувствовал, что я вполне бешеный и должен быть страшен, и радовался этому.

And I suppose I was terrible, for she was so frightened that she had not even the strength to go away.... I felt that I was quite mad and that I must look frightful, and this delighted me.<sup>59</sup>

Adding to his scary recollections, Pozdnyshev now employs physical actions to enhance his frightful appearance. The motive is the same: to produce fear in a woman. Such actions are accompanied by a similar "consciousness" and the same calculations, rather than being an impulsive outburst of anger:

Мне страшно хотелось бить, убить ее, но я знал, что этого нельзя, и потому, чтобы всё-таки дать ход своему бешенству, схватил со стола пресс-папье, еще раз прокричав: «уходи!», швырнул его оземь мимо нее. Я очень хорошо целил мимо. Тогда она пошла из комнаты, но остановилась в дверях. И тут же, пока еще она видела (я сделал это для того, чтобы она видела), я стал брать со стола вещи, подсвечники, чернильницу, и бросать оземь их, продолжая кричать: «Уйди! Убирайся! Я не отвечаю за себя!»

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<sup>58</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 58 – 59, 331; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 182 – 183, 230.

<sup>59</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 59, 73; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 183, 202.

I felt a terrible desire to beat her, to kill her, but knew that this would not do, and so to give vent to my fury I seized a paper-weight from my table, again shouting 'Go!' and hurled it to the floor near her. I aimed it very exactly past her. Then she left the room, but stopped at the doorway, and immediately, while she still saw it (I did it so she might see), I began snatching things from the table—candlesticks and ink-stand—and hurling them on the floor still shouting 'Go! Get out! I don't answer for myself!'<sup>60</sup>

The kind of arrogance reflected in the words “я не отвечаю за себя” [I don't answer for myself] indicate the nature of imaginary masculine superiority. Without even the need of justification, a man treats a woman as if she were a lower animal. Like the horses in 'Kholstomer,' a wife is in constant fear of being exposed to masculine control and domination that could be expressed physically at any time. Although Pozdnyshv underplays the psychological impact for a woman living in constant fear of her husband, the pivotal fact remains that attempts to hold a woman in such a position clearly exist. This mirrors the scenario for the horses in 'Kholstomer.'

When a man mistreats a woman or a horse, there is clear evidence that the consequences for the female human are far graver than for her equine counterpart. Using the same fear instillation process for a horse on a woman, the wife in *The Kreutzer Sonata* is not only considered a “horse,” but she is reduced still further down the biological scale in the man's mind. To Pozdnyshv, the insidious treatment of his wife results ultimately in his vision of her as a quivering little rodent, metaphorically caught in his trap.<sup>61</sup>

В лице ее были страх и ненависть ко мне, к врагу, как у крысы, когда поднимают мышеловку, в которую она попала. Я по крайней мере ничего не видел в ней, кроме этого страха и ненависти ко мне.

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<sup>60</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 59; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 183.

<sup>61</sup> In contrast to Pozdnyshv's claims outlined in Chapter Two that he was caught in her “trap.”

Her face showed fear and hatred of me, the enemy, as a rat's does when one lifts the trap in which it has been caught. At any rate I saw nothing in her expression but this fear and hatred of me.<sup>62</sup>

That this is the image Pozdnyshev has of his wife only moments before her death shows that he has successfully executed the fear-instillation process, which has been suitably maintained right up to the end of the marriage.

Linked to the motivation for the threat of physical abuse to maintain control through fear, is the crossing of the line from that psychological control mechanism to the actual infliction of physical abuse. Often, such abuse is not related to controlling the actions of an animal or a woman. It is evidently used more to assert masculine authority and maintain the ideological boundary that supposedly separates master from servant, human from animal, man from woman. This is, therefore, the unprovoked, undeserving and decidedly unseemly expression of male power, for it serves no practical ends.

The pathos of the victims of male domination becomes painfully explicit in an unfortunate incident between Kholstomer and his master. Kholstomer threatens to cross the boundary that separates him from his human master by supposedly expressing pleasure toward a man and forming an undesirable closeness to him. The human reaction is cruel and has an obvious motivation:

Сняв уздечку с пегого мерина, Нестер почесал его под шеей, в ответ на что мерин, в знак благодарности и удовольствия, закрыл глаза. — Любит, старый пес! — проговорил Нестер. Мерин же нисколько не любил этого чесанья и только из деликатности притворялся, что оно ему приятно, он помотал головой в знак согласия. Но вдруг, совершенно неожиданно и без всякой причины, Нестер, предполагая, может быть, что слишком большая фамильярность может дать ложные о своем значении мысли пегому мерину, Нестер без всякого приготовления оттолкнул от себя голову мерина и, замахнувшись уздой, очень больно ударил пряжкой узды мерина по сухой ноге и, ничего не говоря, пошел на бугорок к пню, около которого он сживал обыкновенно.

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<sup>62</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 73; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 203.



When he had taken the bridle off the motley gelding, Nester scratched him under the neck, in response to which the gelding expressed his gratitude and satisfaction by closing his eyes. 'He likes it, the old dog!' muttered Nester. The gelding however did not really care for the scratching at all, and pretended that it was agreeable merely out of courtesy. He nodded his head in agreement to Nester's words; but suddenly Nester quite unexpectedly and without any reason, perhaps imagining that too much familiarity might give the gelding a wrong idea of importance, pushed the gelding's head away from himself without any warning and, swinging the bridle, struck him painfully with the buckle on his lean leg, and then without saying a word went up the hillock and generally seated himself.<sup>63</sup>

What is moving about this scene is that Kholstomer is quite indifferent to the man's expression of emotion. Out of courtesy, perhaps even sympathy, he responds. Having forgotten himself momentarily and succumbed to his natural feelings of affection towards an animal, the master comes to his misconstrued senses and immediately restores the order of his falsely constructed world. With the painful strike of the swinging bridle, Nester obliterates the "familiarity" of the horse that threatens to bridge the ideological chasm between men and that animal other world.

Similarly in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, the wife is subject to physical abuse that serves to assert the authority of the patriarchal husband, rather than any practical ends. Although the wife may be slightly provocative in her acquaintance with the guest musician, Trukhachevski, there is no evidence in the text to suggest that she commits adultery or even contemplates the act. In objective terms, she is more or less innocent. However, Pozdnyshev holds her guilty for having crossed the line of acceptability that holds her in obedience to her husband. In order to regain his masculine grip and exercise his perceived masculine responsibilities of control, a woman is callously beaten like the animal in 'Kholstomer.'

While Pozdnyshev denies inflicting physical abuse upon his wife, besides the murder, his wife's words in the following passage suggest the more likely reality that

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<sup>63</sup> Толстой, «Холстомер», р. 6; Tolstoy, 'Kholstomer,' pp. 394 – 395.

she is subject to frequent wife bashings. That he is capable of eventually murdering her in such brutal fashion suffices as evidence anyway. Nonetheless, the wife's words relayed by Pozdnyshev in his confession add testimony:

Она прикидывается, что сделал ей больно, и кричит: «дети, ваш отец бьет меня!» Я кричу: «не лги!» — «Ведь это уж не в первый раз!» кричит она, или что-нибудь подобное. Дети бросаются к ней. Она успокаивает их. Я говорю: «не притворяйся!» Она говорит: «для тебя всё притворство; ты убьешь человека и будешь говорить, что он притворяется. Теперь я поняла тебя. Ты этого-то и хочешь!» — «О, хоть бы ты издохла!» кричу я.

She pretends that I have hurt her and screams: 'Children, your father is striking me!' I shout: 'Don't lie!' 'But it is not the first time!' she screams, or something like that. The children rush to her. She calms them down. I say, 'Don't sham!' She says, 'Everything is sham in your eyes, you would kill any one and say they were shamming. Now I have understood you. That's just what you want!' 'Oh, I wish you were dead as a dog!' I shout.<sup>64</sup>

The threat and actual infliction of physical pain on a horse and a woman is clearly the senseless and totally unjustified abuse of other living creatures based on maintaining a misconstrued ideological stance. No less callous and unjust is another form of abuse that is aimed to maximise the productivity of animals and women to better serve their male owners. Men are not satisfied with merely owning animals and women. As assets, men also take steps to maximise their service to him and get as much pleasure from them as possible. As is seen in 'Kholstomer' and *The Kreutzer Sonata*, this is typically achieved by pushing animals and women to their physical limits.

In the case of Kholstomer, a horse suffers intentional abuse in order that he first obeys, then performs according to the wishes of his male owner. Kholstomer is twice unlucky, for he is not only subordinated because he is an animal, but he is born into thoroughbred breeding stock with an undesirable gene combination that leaves him

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<sup>64</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 50; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 171.

motley. As such, he is not valued as one of the other stately animals. The groomsman declares: “И в какого черта он уродился, точно мужик, ... в заводе нельзя оставить, срам” [And what devil does he take after—he’s just like a peasant!... He can’t be left in the stud—he’d shame us].<sup>65</sup> However, Kholstomer does remain on the stud farm, but not to be treated as a blue blood. Rather than being pampered, he is indeed considered and treated like a “peasant.”<sup>66</sup> He becomes a workhorse that is abused and held in hard physical service to men.

Initially, Kholstomer is more or less content in his service. Since his pedigree gives him great stature and strength, he is capable of meeting everyday human demands. Kholstomer passes from master to master over the years and, although cruel and unnecessary, he takes the whipping and blows he receives as part of daily life at human hands. However, in a moment of stupidity, one master takes an animal’s apparent infallibility for granted and carelessly pushes Kholstomer beyond the limits of any horse:

Свистнул кнут и резнул меня, и я поскакал, ударяя ногой в железо передка.... Я довез его, но дрожал всю ночь и не мог ничего есть. На утро мне дали воды. Я выпил и на век перестал быть той лошастью, какою я был. Я болел, меня мучали и калечили.

The whip whistled through the air and cut me, and I galloped, striking my hoof against the iron front of the sledge.... I got him there, but trembled all night long and could not eat anything. In the morning they gave me water. I drank it and after that was never again the horse I had been. I was ill, and they tormented me and maimed me.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Толстой, «Холстомер», p. 14; Tolstoy, ‘Kholstomer,’ p. 407.

<sup>66</sup> ‘Kholstomer’ is set in the time approximately coinciding with the official abolition of serfdom in 1861. As a recollection of past events, the story depicts life in the preceding two decades when peasants were owned like animals and kept in circumstances only marginally better than those of animals. This is revealed in ‘Kholstomer’ through the treatment of a peasant worker, presumably a serf, who suffers at the hands of his master. For an account of an horrific beating he receives, see Толстой, «Холстомер», p. 19; Tolstoy, ‘Kholstomer,’ pp. 413 – 414.

<sup>67</sup> Толстой, «Холстомер», p. 26; Tolstoy, ‘Kholstomer,’ p. 424.

From that moment when Kholstomer is maimed, his physical condition declines rapidly. No longer the great powerful worker, in human terms he is no longer useful. He is discarded by his master and falls into the hands of a series of increasingly dubious owners who mistreat him even more. Eventually he is neglected to the point that he is severely crippled, malnourished and even diseased.

To human eyes, he has become so insignificant that he is not even seen by the veterinary. Rather, the knacker is called. The man quietly leads the horse behind a barn. Kholstomer's life is prematurely taken in the saddest, most thoughtless act. No longer able to speak for himself in the first-person that comprises the majority of the text, Kholstomer gives his tale over to a third-person narrator who completes it on his behalf:

«Лечить, верно, хотят, — подумал он — Пускай!» И точно, он почувствовал, что что-то сделали с его горлом. Ему стало больно, он вздрогнул, болтнул ногой, но удержался и стал ждать, что будет дальше. Дальше сделалось то, что что-то жидкое полилось большой струей ему на шею и грудь. Он вздохнул во все бока.... Он закрыл глаза и стал склонять голову — никто не держал ее. Потом стала склоняться шея, потом ноги задрожали, зашаталось всё тело. Он не столько испугался, сколько удивился. Всё так ново стало. Он удивился, рванулся вперед, вверх. Но вместо этого ноги, сдвинувшись с места, заплелись, он стал валяться на бок и, желая переступить, завалился вперед и на левый бок.

'Want to doctor me probably—well, let them!' he thought. And in fact, he felt that something had been done to his throat. It hurt, and he shuddered and gave a kick with one foot, but restrained himself and waited for what would follow. Then he felt something liquid streaming down his neck and chest. He heaved a profound sigh.... He closed his eyes and began to droop his head. No one was holding it. Then his legs quivered and his whole body swayed. He was not so much frightened as surprised. Everything was new to him. He was surprised and started forward and upward, but instead of this, in moving from the spot his legs got entangled, he began to move sideways, and trying to take a step fell forward and down on his left side.<sup>68</sup>

The blood "streaming" from Kholstomer's neck brings to mind the tragic picture of a woman, bruised and battered in the murder scene of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, as "из-

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<sup>68</sup> Толстой, «Холстомер», p. 36; Tolstoy, 'Kholstomer,' pp. 437 – 438.

под ее корсета хлынула кровь” [the blood rushed from under her corset].<sup>69</sup> In both cases, a man thoughtlessly and unjustly takes the life of another living being. While the human killing is considered murder, it is fundamentally no different from the killing of Kholstomer. To a man, both creatures are considered to be mere “animals,”—disposable, as is any one of his other commodities.

Indeed, the events in Kholstomer’s life associated with neglect, abuse and premature death at the hands of his male owner mirror certain fundamental elements of the relationship between a man and his wife in *The Kreutzer Sonata*. Such parallels expose the prevailing masculine philosophical outlook that there exists a common other world inhabited by lower animals and female human animals as one and the same species.

However, from the example of *The Kreutzer Sonata* it becomes evident that the consequences for women who are subordinated and categorised as animals by men are actually greater than for other animals such as Kholstomer. Although Pozdnyshev’s wife is kept in fear of her husband and she evidently does suffer some degree of physical abuse, the demands for external propriety seem to be sufficient in that society to prevent a too open display of abuse of a woman. Behind closed doors, however, when the male/female relationship is moved into “the parent’s bedroom” there appears to be no limits to masculine domination in sexual relations.

As suggested, males are the targets of political power aimed at their sexuality. They then become the agents for imposing a prescribed sexuality onto their female partners. Men thus assume a dominant active role in which they are responsible for

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<sup>69</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 74; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 204.

fertilisation. Women are viewed anatomically and functionally as the passive receptors of male sexuality—as “vessels” as the old merchant proposes. As Daniel Boyarin says, the world is “divided into the screwers—all male—and the screwed,”<sup>70</sup> active and passive, and viewed as superior and inferior respectively in the male mind.

This conception of a woman’s inferiority based on anatomy and her physiological role in sexual intercourse has its roots deeply entrenched in long standing religious and cultural beliefs. Boyarin explains that in the classical age, in both male homosexual and heterosexual intercourse the inferior status belonged to the penetrated regardless of gender. Therefore, in exclusively heterosexual relations, for anatomical reasons obvious, a woman cannot escape the inferior status allocated to her as the “screwed.”<sup>71</sup>

Salisbury picks up on this cultural phenomenon and explains what it means for a woman in a later Western Christian culture:

Her sexuality was seen as open and receptive, thus giving a metaphorical logic to a sexual role for women of passivity and submission.... While being open meant that women were lustful and receptive, it also labelled them as passive recipients of men’s power.... This sexual paradigm would have been familiar to men in the Roman Empire who had grown up considering men’s role as active sexually. The Church may have forbidden men to be the active partners in homosexual relationships, but it was giving them license to remain the dominant partner in the heterosexual relationship that remained to them.<sup>72</sup>

Thus, penetrating a woman is the confirmation and active expression of male dominance. It follows that the more a woman is penetrated the more often a male confirms in his mind his superiority and her inferiority. Therefore, a society that,

<sup>70</sup> Boyarin, ‘Are There Any Jews in the “History of Sexuality”?’ p. 333.

<sup>71</sup> Boyarin, ‘Are There Any Jews in the “History of Sexuality”?’ pp. 340 – 355.

<sup>72</sup> Salisbury, *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins*, p. 24.

according to Foucault, successfully encourages more and more frequent sexual activity, inherently, but not necessarily intentionally, promotes an increasing confirmation of masculine domination. For every time a body is penetrated, the cultural superiority of the penetrator is confirmed, and the penetrated's subservient position is enforced. As the frequency of sexual intercourse increases, male domination compounds as the oppression of women worsens. Paradoxically, sex that brings such physical nearness and even symbolic oneness through the connection at the sexual moment is responsible for creating the most irreconcilable ideological abyss between the men and women.

It is clear that the subordination of women by men is directly related to sexuality. Salisbury confirms that "male sexuality [is] linked to power and an active expression of desire."<sup>73</sup> Masculine "power" and the related "active expression of desire" that is exercised by Pozdnyshv indicates an absolute dominance of a woman who is subordinated to the level of an animal through the sexual act.

In viewing a woman as an animal, Salisbury provides an example of how this historically led to the mistreatment and abuse of women in sexual relations. Commenting on "the comparisons between women and animals in similes," she explains that these likenesses were made "in order to explain how one should treat women." Repeating the equine motif, Salisbury takes from history the notion that: "Women were like horses, so they should be forced into sexual intercourse."<sup>74</sup>

As is common practice in breeding procedures today, the male and female thoroughbred horses in Kholstomer are matched according to desirable traits that will

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<sup>73</sup> Salisbury, *The Beast within*, p. 80.

<sup>74</sup> Salisbury, *The Beast within*, p. 157.

theoretically produce favourable offspring. The female is restrained and “forced into sexual intercourse.” Kholstomer remembers his mother:

Один раз пришел конюший, велел надеть на нее недоуздок — и ее повели из денника.... И я только слышал всё удалявшееся ржание матери. И в ржании этом я уже не слышал призыва, а слышал другое выражение. На ее голос далеко отозвался могущественный голос, как я после узнал, Доброго первого, который с двумя конюхами по сторонам шел на свидание с моею матерью.

One day the stud groom came and had a halter put on her and she was led out of the stall.... I could only hear the receding sound of my mother's neighing; and that neighing did not sound like a call to me, but another expression. Her voice was answered from afar by a powerful voice—that of Dobry I, as I learned later, who was being led by two grooms, one on each side, to meet my mother.<sup>75</sup>

A female horse is not at liberty to chose its mate, nor the time or frequency of its sexual encounters when it is controlled at the hands of men.

However, despite the human arrogance that denies an animal its rights to freedom, Kholstomer's mother apparently has no qualms about her arranged mating. In fact, there is no indication in the story that even suggests such an arrangement should be perceived as negative. The modern woman in *The Kreutzer Sonata* makes the same suggestion. Speaking of arranged marriages that are similar to and symbolised by the forced mating of the female horse in 'Kholstomer,' she contests: “Ведь это только животных можно спаривать, как хозяин хочет, а люди имеют свои склонности, привязанности” [It's only animals, you know, that can be paired off as their master likes; but human beings have their own inclinations and attachments].<sup>76</sup>

That the female horse in 'Kholstomer' does not complain as to her disposition of being mated, rather than choosing a mate as a human being would prefer, suggests that humans beings do have emotional “inclinations” apart from those of lower animals.

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<sup>75</sup> Толстой, «Холстомер», pp. 15 – 16; Tolstoy, 'Kholstomer,' pp. 408 – 409.

<sup>76</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 10; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 115.



This marks a clear elemental difference between the animal and human worlds that the modern woman points out. However, when a woman is viewed as an animal, and specifically a horse, and treated accordingly, she is denied her exclusively human “inclinations.” Unlike Kholstomer’s mother, a human woman suffers from her deprivation as men force her into sexual relations, which unnaturally subordinates her to the status of a lower animal through her lack of freedom to chose.

Although the arranged marriages based on *Domostroy* are outmoded, as already suggested in the previous chapter, a woman’s fate is no more in her hands than it was before. Still, but in a different guise, marriages are essentially determined by a third party and are contractual in nature. As with the horses in Kholstomer, they are based on the right background and gene combinations to ensure the duplication of suitably blue-blooded citizens that are politically and economic useful according to Foucault’s theory. Thus, like animals, Pozdnyshv the “breeding stallion” is paired off with a woman, another “horse” in his words, to fulfil their bio-political role in the capitalist nation.

In *The Kreutzer Sonata*, the deprivation of a woman’s rights is one of the most powerful examples of the abuse of women. When her right to chose extends beyond initiating a relationship to having no freedom of choice within that relationship, the deprivation turns from solely emotional to include physical sexual abuse. Although denying rights of freedom of choice in arranged marriages targets both males and females, when such an arrangement is moved into the bedroom, there arises another, this time gender specific violation. This is the denial of a woman’s right to initiate or decline sexual intercourse. From Pozdnyshv’s mouth comes the following:

Не в том отсутствие прав женщины, что она не может вотировать или быть судьей,...а в том, чтобы в половом общении быть равной мужчине, иметь право пользоваться мужчиной и воздерживаться от него по своему желанию, по своему желанию избирать мужчину, а не быть избираемой.

Woman's lack of rights arises not from the fact that she must not vote or be judge...but from the fact that she is not man's equal in sexual intercourse and has not the right to use a man or abstain from him as she likes—is not allowed to choose a man at her pleasure instead of being chosen by him.<sup>77</sup>

Denying a woman the right to choose is a clear deprivation of her “inclinations” that also extends to the abuse of her physical body. While withholding a woman's choice to abstain from sex may be politically correct, for she will be open to the possibility of reproducing more often, it is portrayed in *The Kreutzer Sonata* as a blatant abuse of a woman's emotional and physical being. This arises from the dominant role that males play in sexual relations. Pozdnyshev admits, as intercourse is the “expression of desire,” a woman becomes the victim of male “power” that dominates in the bedroom: “я предавался животным излишествам...не думая при том нисколько не только о ее духовной жизни, но даже и об ее физической жизни” [I gave way to animal excesses...without in the least considering her spiritual or even her physical life]. Pozdnyshev continues to explain that such sexual relations are essentially bestial and that he “Вот такой-то свиньей я и жил” [lived like a swine of that sort].<sup>78</sup>

While Pozdnyshev considers himself a “breeding stallion” in the arrangement of his marriage, he transgresses species lines within the bestial to become a “свинья” [swine] in his sexual relationship with his wife, which he refers to as their “свиная связь” [swinish liaison].<sup>79</sup> Comparing himself to a “swine” and considering his relations with a woman “swinish” has powerful metaphoric value; it exemplifies the

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<sup>77</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 25; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 136.

<sup>78</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 34, 36; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 147, 150.

<sup>79</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 34; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 147.

consequences for women who are the victims of male desire when she is denied rights to abstain from sexual intercourse. Salisbury points out: "There is no greater calamity connected with captivity [of marriage] than to be the victim of another's lust."<sup>80</sup> As an extreme example of masculine dominance and force in sexual intercourse, Salisbury quotes a Middle Ages' text. This describes the sexual characteristics of a wild male "swine," which Pozdnyshv compares himself to, and the "calamity" this causes for the female victim:

Unceasingly he roams in pursuit of the female and is greatly excited by the frenzy of desire...and there is much more rage about his mating than modesty. If the female abides his advances, she quenches all his rage and lulls to rest his passion. But if she refuses intercourse and flees, straightway stirred by the hot and fiery goad of desire he either overcomes her and mates her by force or he attacks her with his jaws and lays her dead in the dust.<sup>81</sup>

From textual evidence, this is a reasonably accurate description of Pozdnyshv's self-confessed sexual antics. After all, Pozdnyshv does eventually murder his wife in an act that is essentially sexual. In addition, his motive for "laying a woman dead in the dust" can be interpreted in more ways than one as a "refusal of intercourse."<sup>82</sup>

As frequent and forceful sexual encounters lead to frequent pregnancies according to political expectations, a woman's suffering continues after the act itself when she is faced with too frequent pregnancies, the pains of childbirth and the

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<sup>80</sup> Salisbury, *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins*, p. 13.

<sup>81</sup> Salisbury, *The Beast within*, p. 80.

<sup>82</sup> It is routinely pointed out that the murder is to be interpreted as a sexual act. Holding his wife guilty for her so-called "adultery," as the wife "flees" off with Trukhachevski, she is obviously refusing Pozdnyshv rights to her body in his mind. Also, as Pozdnyshv and his wife employ contraceptive methods as discussed below, there is another refusal of intercourse. Although Pozdnyshv does not lose access to his wife's body and they still engage in intercourse, it is not the prescribed "conventional" intercourse that leads to childbirth. Therefore, the refusal of the only validated form of intercourse is in effect the refusal of intercourse *per se* in such a regimented society with its taboos on any non-"conventional" sexual acts.

demands for raising large families. In addition, she remains the victim of male lust throughout the entire process. Pozdnyshev admits:

женщина, наперекор своей природе, должна быть одновременно и беременной, и кормилицей, и любовницей, должна быть тем, до чего не спускается ни одно животное. И сил не может хватить.

a woman, against her nature, must be a husband's mistress even while she is pregnant and nursing; she must be what not even an animal descends to, and for which her strength is insufficient.<sup>83</sup>

Pozdnyshev's "swinish liaison" continues along these lines for the fulfilment of his pleasure alone and without a thought for reducing his wife, a woman, to a state that he admits "not even an animal descends to."

While Pozdnyshev acknowledges the abuse of women, he does not elaborate to any great extent on exactly how this shapes the personal lives of women, nor is his wife given the opportunity to express a woman's point of view. The following testimony from Dolly in *Anna Karenina*, is a likely account equally fitting of Pozdnyshev's wife in *The Kreutzer Sonata*:

'Altogether,' she thought, looking back at the whole of her life during those fifteen years of wedlock, 'pregnancy, sickness, dullness of mind, indifference to everything, and above all disfigurement. Even Kitty—young, pretty Kitty—how much plainer she has become! And I when I am pregnant become hideous, I know. Travail, suffering, monstrous suffering, and that final moment. . . then nursing, sleepless nights, and that awful pain! . . . That is all I can hope for. And for this, so much suffering and trouble—my whole life ruined!'<sup>84</sup>

Guilty of subjecting a woman to the hardships of life similar to Dolly's, Pozdnyshev admits to the seriousness of a male sexuality that essentially abuses women to the point of near-death: "я всё рассказываю вам, как я убил жену" [I am telling you *how* I killed my wife]; Pozdnyshev explains that because of the nature of male

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<sup>83</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 35; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 148.

<sup>84</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, Vol. 2, pp. 196 – 197.

sexuality, constant sexual abuse even during pregnancies and nursing had in essence killed his wife by draining her of all her physical power and depriving her of any life of her own. He states: “Дурачье! думают, что я убил её тогда, ножом, 5 октября. Я не тогда убил её, а гораздо раньше. Так точно, как они теперь убивают, все, все...” [Fools! They thought I killed her with a knife on 5 October. It was not then that I killed her, but much earlier. Just as they are all killing now, all, all...].<sup>85</sup>

Again, Pozdnyshev’s ideas correspond with a contemporary philosophical view of human nature. Fyodorov reiterates Pozdnyshev’s notion that holding women in constant child raising is essentially murderous:

...it is evident that the birth of children is also a mother’s death... Man is born immature; during feeding and upbringing he devours his parent’s strength, feeding so to speak, on their body and blood;...so that by the time parents have finished bringing up their children, their strengths have been absolutely depleted and they enter a state of decrepitude approaching death.<sup>86</sup>

Pozdnyshev feels great remorse for his essentially murderous treatment of a woman through a self-serving abuse of her body. That Pozdnyshev’s domineering sexual obsession represents the typical characteristics of male sexuality in his society, his acknowledgement of this Fyodorovian point is indeed a great tribute to him. However, it is only in retrospect after murdering his wife that he realises how he had in fact been “killing” her since the first night of their honeymoon. For the decade with his wife before the final act of murder, he lived oblivious to the feelings, wants, needs and the physical condition of a woman—repeating Pozdnyshev’s words: “не думая при том нисколько не только о ее духовной жизни, но даже и об ее физической жизни” [without in the least considering her spiritual or even her physical life].

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<sup>85</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», р. 34; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 147 – 148.

<sup>86</sup> Naiman, ‘Historectomies,’ p. 257.

Pozdnyshev's wife spends eight years in near-constant childbirth and nursing. Evidence of her near-death experience comes as doctors clinically diagnosed her as unfit to bear more children. Procreation is no longer desirable for health reasons. This presents a problem in a world where every aspect of life focuses on the desirability of sex and procreation. The obvious question strikes Pozdnyshev immediately. He realises that “дело не сходится” [matters don't tally]. Pozdnyshev wonders just what is supposed to become a man's overdeveloped desire for sex that has him living under the spell of an uncontrollable sexual obsession that has been politically implanted to optimise procreation:

Мужчине нужно и необходимо, так решили они, удовлетворять свою похоть.... Мужчина хочет наслаждаться и знать не хочет закона природы — детей, но дети являются и становятся препятствием для постоянного наслаждения, и желающему только наслаждаться мужчине приходится выдумывать средство обходить это препятствие.

They have decided that it is essential for a man to satisfy his desires.... Man desires the law of nature—children, but the coming of children presents an obstacle to continuous enjoyment, and men who only desire continuous enjoyment have to devise means to evade that obstacle.<sup>87</sup>

In order that a man can maintain his necessitated outlet for sexual expression, he employs birth control methods so that procreation ceases but his pleasure continues.

Birth control is a satisfactory method for men to continue expressing their desire without fear of making a woman pregnant. However, the methods employed in those days were directed specifically at women and were often detrimental to her mental and physical wellbeing. At the mercy of male owners, Kholstomer, an animal, and the wife in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, a woman, both suffer from masculine abuse and manipulation of their reproductive systems when they are no longer valued for procreation. The parallels that emerge in the treatment of a horse and a woman will again expose how

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<sup>87</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 35–36, 311; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 149, 218.

women are viewed and treated like animals. Moreover, as suggested, the consequences of masculine domination are in some cases worse for a woman than for a horse.

In human terms, it is undesirable for Kholstomer's unworthy genes to be passed on. Being born into a stud farm as breeding stock, the consequences for a breeding animal that is not valued for procreation are severe and have permanent and devastating effects on the animal. Kholstomer threatens to contaminate the prized gene pool of the pedigree stock when he courts a young filly. He is immediately doctored at male hands to prevent his motley hide appearing in future generations. Kholstomer's body is mutilated and his sexuality manipulated to serve the aesthetic pleasures of males.

The pleasure men obtain from their animals by controlling them according to his desires comes at the price of the life of those animals. In the case of Kholstomer, the price he pays for being devalued in human eyes by the undesirability of his reproductive capacity is high. The simple surgical procedure of castration employed to inhibit the flow of those genes has devastating effects on the personal and physical life of a horse. The previous day, Kholstomer was a frisky adolescent bounding with the joys of life. The following day, Kholstomer the gelding explains: “навекі перестал ржать, я стал тем, что я теперь. Весь свет изменился в моих глазах. Ничто мне не стало мило, я углубился в себя и стал размышлять” [I ceased neighing forever. I became what I am now. The whole world changed in my eyes. Nothing mattered anymore. I became self absorbed and began to brood]. One evening while being exercised, the full extent of his situation becomes clear to him and the reader. Kholstomer not only suffers at the hands of humans, but because of human interference with nature he appears to his fellow kind as distinctly dissimilar, which results in anguish and torment:

[Кобылы] приближались, и я различал по одной — все мне знакомые, красивые, величавые, здоровые и сытые фигуры. Кое-кто из них тоже оглянулся на меня.... Я забылся и невольно по старой памяти заржал и побежал рысью; но ржание мое отозвалось

грустно, смешно и нелепо. В табуне не засмеялись, — но я заметил, как многие из них приличия отвернулись от меня. Им видимо и гадко, и жалко, и совестно, и главное — смешно было на меня. Им смешно было на мою тонкую — невыразительную шею, большую голову (я похудел в это время), — на мои длинные, неуклюжие ноги и на глупый аллор рысцей, который я, по старой привычке, предпринял вокруг конюха. Никто не отозвался на мое ржание, все отвернулись от меня. Я вдруг всё понял, понял, насколько я навсегда стал далек от всех их....

[The mares] approached, and I could distinguish one after another all the familiar, beautiful, stately, healthy, sleek figures. Some of them also turned to look at me.... I forgot myself and from old habit involuntarily neighed and began to trot, but my neighing sounded sad, ridiculous and meaningless. No one in the drove made sport of me, but I noticed that out of decorum many of them turned away from me. They evidently felt it repugnant, pitiable, indelicate, and above all ridiculous, to look at my thin expressionless neck, my large head (I had grown lean in the mean time), my long awkward legs, and the silly awkward gait with which by force of habit I trotted round the groom. No one answered my neighing—they all looked away. Suddenly I understood it all, understood how far I was forever removed from them....<sup>88</sup>

When a woman is no longer valued for procreation, she suffers a similar fate to that of a horse who has been devalued in a man's mind. As with Kholstomer, methods of birth control are employed to manipulate and utilise a body according to masculine desires. Unlike a male horse though, women are still required for their sexual function so that a man can continue to receive sexual pleasure. Thus, her ability to perform sexually is retained, but her ability to conceive is in most cases removed.

In those days, birth control methods did not simply rely on oral medication, a latex sheath; or, at worst, painless minor surgery. The techniques had direct detrimental effects on the lives of women. Besides abortion, which Pozdnyshv mentions in passing, he focuses on three specific methods that prevent childbirth. Evidently, these are the three most common forms of birth control available to him in late-nineteenth-century Russia.

Один — по рецепту мерзавцев — сделать жену уродом, тем, что всегда составляло и должно составлять несчастье женщины — бесплодной; тогда он может спокойно и постоянно наслаждаться; другой — многоженство, не честное, как магометанское, а подлое, наше европейское, исполненное лжи и обмана; третий обход — даже не обход, а

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<sup>88</sup> Толстой, «Холстомер», pp. 17 – 18; Tolstoy, 'Kholstomer,' pp. 411 – 412.



простое, грубое, прямое нарушение закон природы, которое совершают все мужья в народе и большинство мужей в так называемых честных семьях. Так жил и я.

One is, by receipt the rascals give, to cripple the woman by making her barren—which has always been, and must be, a misfortune for a woman—then man can quietly and constantly enjoy himself; the second way is polygamy, not honourable polygamy as among the Mohammedans but our base European polygamy, replete with falsehood and hypocrisy; and there is the third evasion—which is not even an evasion, but a simple, course, direct infringement of the laws of nature, and which is committed by all the husbands among the peasants and by most husbands in our so-called honourable families. I too lived in that way.<sup>89</sup>

In the first example, like a horse, a woman is surgically adulterated. Although the male castration experienced by Kholstomer is a simple procedure that is still today carried out on animals without anaesthesia,<sup>90</sup> contraceptive surgery for women was far more complex and still in the experimental stages. A woman would often suffer at the inexperienced hands of callous male doctors. Surgical anaesthetic was also only just being developed in the late-nineteenth century and antiseptics were often inadequate for combating internal infections. The risk of death during surgery was relatively high, and post-surgical death due to infection or complications was not uncommon.<sup>91</sup> There are no consequences for a man when this form of contraception is employed, except for the great monetary cost of these still very exclusive operations and that he might need to abstain from sex with his wife until she recovers.

The second method of birth control, while sparing a woman her physical being, is a violation of her emotional state and a clear breach of the moral and religious laws of marriage. The frequency with which Pozdnyshev claims adultery takes place in his

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<sup>89</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 311; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 218 – 219.

<sup>90</sup> Plous, 'Psychological Mechanisms in the Human Use of Animals,' p. 27.

<sup>91</sup> For an historical look at contraceptive practices, see Moskowitz and Jennings (eds.), *Coerced Contraception*. The reference to late-nineteenth-century surgical options as outlined above is from Kathleen Powderly's chapter: 'Contraceptive Policy and Ethics,' pp. 23 – 33.

society suggests that the male need for sexual pleasure overrides any moral commitments or concerns for a woman's emotional condition. Again, a woman suffers while a man continues his pleasures.

The third and evidently the most widespread form of birth control, which Pozdnyshv indicates he and his wife employ, is perhaps the least detrimental. The wife in *The Kreutzer Sonata* is not subjected to the painful and risky surgical option, nor are marital vows broken. Rather, the doctors “научили” [taught] Pozdnyshv's wife how to avoid pregnancy while still engaging in sexual intercourse. From all accounts she is in favour of this means and apparently more willing than even her husband to pursue sexual relations according to this method: “Мне это было отвратительно. Я боролся против этого, но она с легкомысленным упорством настояла на своем, и я покорился” [To me it was disgusting. I struggled against it, but she with frivolous obstinacy insisted on having her own way, and I submitted].<sup>92</sup>

However, despite its convenience and effectiveness as a birth control method, in that political and cultural milieu, practising sodomy has profound implications for the sodomite. Perhaps surprisingly, this does not so much implicate homosexual males as it does the heterosexual couple.<sup>93</sup> Pozdnyshv's initial reluctance to participate in the act indicated in the passage above is telling of the general taboo of a supposedly forbidden, yet widespread practice.

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<sup>92</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 46; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 165.

<sup>93</sup> Alphonso Lingis points out: “there were homosexuals—the species was named in 1870—who rarely or never perform an act of sodomy.” Lingis, *Foreign Bodies*, p. 66. In light of the Foucauldian “frauds against procreation,” this conception of homosexuality that was popularised by Sigmund Freud suggests that homosexuality was condemned more for its non-compliance with a “conventional” reproductive sexuality than for its participants engaging in so-called “abnormal” acts, for sodomy was not believed to be widely practised in homosexual relations anyway.

In the religious sense, Salisbury comments on the attitudes to so-called “unnatural sexual acts” that arise from the inherent desire for sex in men even when their partner is unable to bear any more children.

It was this abandonment to lust that led people into other misuses of God’s gift of sexuality. For example, lust could drive people into using birth control methods.... Lust could also stir people to other unnatural acts.... Augustine warned that there are some kinds of intercourse which are ‘contrary to nature,’ ‘damnable,’ and ‘abominable.’ His only clarification of this type of intercourse was ‘when the husband wishes to use the member of his wife which has not been given for this purpose.’<sup>94</sup>

Pozdnyshv confirms that he indeed considers sex with his wife using birth control methods as “a direct infringement of the laws of nature,” and later admits:

Последнее оправдание свиной жизни — дети — было отнято, и жизнь стала еще гаже.... От безнравственной жизни нам было больно, а чтобы заглушить эту боль, мы и делали различного рода ненормальные поступки....

The last excuse for our swinish life—children—was then taken away, and life became viler than ever.... We suffered from our immoral life, and to smother our suffering we committed various abnormal acts.<sup>95</sup>

Pozdnyshv is not only faced with the cultural stigma of his newly imposed “abnormal” sexuality that is “contrary to nature,” but he also has to bear the political ramifications of a non-“conventional” sexuality that does not direct its power at procreation. While Pozdnyshv is supposedly in violation of the laws of nature, he is more emphatically in direct violation of the political necessity to reproduce. Therefore, like masturbation, sodomy too was tabooed as a “fraud against procreation”—one of those “doubtless acts ‘contrary to nature’ [that was] stamped as especially abominable,” according to Foucault.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Salisbury, *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins*, pp. 48 – 49.

<sup>95</sup> Толстой, «Крейцеровна соната», pp. 46, 323; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 165, 228.

<sup>96</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 38.

As a result of his politically inflamed desire for sex, but because a woman no longer serves her political role as the procreative female, the only means by which Pozdnyshev can express his desire for sex within his marriage is to commit a sin and a political “fraud.” Pozdnyshev is well aware of his society’s perception of sexual relations that do not have reproduction as their ultimate aim as criminal. He attributes the enmity between him and his wife to this criminal activity: “эта ненависть была не что иное, как ненависть взаимная сообщников преступления — и за подстрекательство и за участие в преступлении” [That hatred was nothing but the mutual hatred of accomplices in a crime—both for the incitement to the crime and for the part taken in it].<sup>97</sup>

Pozdnyshev’s politically incorrect sexual relations with his wife lead him to detest her more and more strongly as he sees her as responsible for undermining his self-righteous delusions of morality and grandeur. Coinciding with this time when a woman is no longer valued as a procreative mother Pozdnyshev’s “active expression of desire” becomes increasingly domineering and violent.

In *Kholstomer*, when an animal is no longer valued for procreation, it is mistreated and abused like a lower form of life and exists only in hard physical service to men. When *Kholstomer* falters in his ability to serve men according to their wishes, he is quietly led behind a barn and disposed of. Similarly, in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, when a woman is no longer seen in her role as the bearer of a man’s progeny, she too is abused and kept only for her physical service to a man. Like *Kholstomer*, when she falters in that service she is disposed of. The sexual service that she offers is no longer

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<sup>97</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 84; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 147.

desirable. It is a “crime” against nature and the state—a hideous perversion of human decency according to Pozdnyshév. In a final murderous cum sexual display of masculine dominion and power, Pozdnyshév rids himself of what he perceives as the cause of his immorality; worthless and detestable in a man’s eye, a woman too is penetrated by the blade of a man’s knife and left to die.<sup>98</sup> This is the ultimate expression of the absolute dominion of male human beings who assume not only rights to the ownership and control of all other living beings, but also assume rights to determine another’s entire existence.

The parallel between a horse and a woman suffering the same fateful deaths based on their reproductive capacity and desirability has been observed elsewhere in Tolstoy’s fiction. This time the victims are Fru-Fru, Vronsky’s horse in *Anna Karenina*, and Anna herself. Dragan Kujundžić explains: “Fru-Fru and Anna die similar deaths, with their spines broken.... Fru-Fru is a racing, not a breeding horse,... Anna continues to sin, and uses contraception, inevitably destined for death.”<sup>99</sup> The elemental likeness to Kholstomer and the nameless wife in *The Kreutzer Sonata* could not be closer.

As a racing horse, rather than breeding stock, Fru-Fru is kept in physical service to his master. Like Kholstomer, an animal is eventually pushed beyond its limits, it falters, is maimed, and its life prematurely ended by a man. Anna and the wife in *The Kreutzer Sonata* employ contraceptive measures. Both are put to death for their

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<sup>98</sup> Referring back to Boyarin’s confirmation that penetrating symbolises domination and superiority over the penetrated in sexual intercourse, the penetration of woman’s body (with the phallic blade of Pozdnyshév’s dagger) is very much symbolic of masculine domination.

<sup>99</sup> Kujundžić, ‘Pardoning Women in *Anna Karenina*,’ p. 76.

political crimes. Anna's suicide is therefore not so much *suicide*, and the murder of a wife is not so much *murder*, as both deaths are the biological destiny for politically non-compliant women whose biological usefulness has expired.

Daniel Rancour-Laferriere agrees; he begins by explaining that when Anna commits adultery she is performing a politically suitable act, for her husband is unlikely to father any more children: "As it turns out, going over to Vronsky does pay off reproductively, for Anna gives birth to a daughter." However, "she may have done the right thing from a sociobiological perspective, but there is something very wrong at the psychological level." Rancour-Laferriere continues to explain that Anna is unfit to be a mother because she is psychologically disturbed and neglects her maternal responsibilities. Besides, as already mentioned, she later uses contraceptives that leave her biologically incapable of reproducing anyway. Suicide, then, is "an appropriate consequence.... Anna is not just psychologically disturbed (depressed, narcissistic, masochistic, etc.) toward the end of her life; she is also a reproductive wreck."

Rancour-Laferriere suggests: "From a sociological perspective, an individual who can no longer either reproduce or render altruism to others...is *as good as dead anyway*."<sup>100</sup> And Kujundžić confirms: "Anna is both the phantasm or ghost of a mother, already dead, or twice dead, a constantly absent, guilty, and finally dead mother (she abandons her son, neglects her daughter, and commits suicide)."<sup>101</sup>

In *The Kreutzer Sonata*, the slaying of a non-procreative female human being who is seen, treated and valued only as a reproductive animal is not a murder *per se* in a

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<sup>100</sup> Rancour-Laferriere, 'Anna's Adultery,' pp. 37, 44 (my italics).

<sup>101</sup> Kujundžić, 'Pardoning Women in *Anna Karenina*,' p. 76.

Foucauldian world. Nor is the male protagonist strictly a murderer.<sup>102</sup> The finale depicts a woman who meets her biological destiny through political circumstances that are beyond the control of the individual. The death of a woman who is “as good as dead anyway” is the logical, most artistically fitting end for *The Kreutzer Sonata*.

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<sup>102</sup> Remembering that society does not hold Pozdnyshev guilty nor even accountable for his actions. He is acquitted by the courts and set free despite even confessing to killing his wife and trying in vain to prove himself guilty to the judge.

## **Chapter Four**

### *Pozdnyshev's Conversion: A Feminist Perspective*



The previous chapters of this thesis expose the prevalent political structuring of sexuality and the outcome for individuals when this is transposed onto their everyday lives in late-nineteenth-century upper class Russia. From childhood, male sexuality is targeted, conditioned and utilised to serve political aims. As was pointed out by feminist criticism, this enforces patriarchy and men live blindly in their abuse of women to fulfil the political objective for population and economic growth. Indeed, the consequences for women are far graver than for men, as is disturbingly exposed in the previous chapter.

However, Tolstoy and his protagonist, despite their participation in a male-dominated world, do not subscribe to, nor do they advocate the systems that produce a capitalist culture. On the contrary, *The Kreutzer Sonata* is as much a model of a Foucauldian world as it is a polemic against those processes and structures. In composing *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Tolstoy orchestrates his protagonist to resonate the typical voice of ninety-nine per cent of males living in a late-nineteenth-century patriarchal world. But when Pozdnyshev murders his wife, he gains an altered perspective on life that allows him to see through the politics that create such men. Tolstoy condemns the nature of masculinity and denounces the domination and abuse of women; he also avidly denounces all social institutions responsible for this situation.

Bypassing political posturing and structuring of his world, Tolstoy attempts to rehabilitate the image of a woman and now acknowledges and has his protagonist confess to the injustices of the subordination of women and masculine domination. Tolstoy thus rejects and deconstructs a patriarchal world calling into question the existence of those men who create and inhabit it.

Like Tolstoy, Foucault suggests the invalidity of the politics that have dominated the last few centuries. He describes at length the mechanics of social conditioning that enforce the firmly established, yet unjustifiable political intervention in sexuality and the patriarchy of centuries past that supports those systems. In his concluding words of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault too calls into question the very basis of those politics: “modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question.”<sup>1</sup>

In retrospect, Pozdnyshv recognises the misunderstandings that his world is built on and the complete invalidity of its social and political structure, which, as Foucault suggests, puts man’s existence “in question.” Pozdnyshv bitterly resents what social conditioning has done to him and feels great remorse for killing his wife, which he sees as an inevitable outcome of the sexual politics that people of his class conform to. He thus becomes a lonely man on the train when he tells his tale, estranged from society and possessed of a previously unrealised knowledge that he believes is still hidden from others. In his detachment, Pozdnyshv is removed from the omniscient sexuality that dominates his world, and therefore detached from mainstream society. From the outside looking back into the society he so actively participated in, Tolstoy leads his protagonist through a process of reflection and self-re-evaluation.

In the previous chapter, I showed how Pozdnyshv defines patriarchal culture and the typical masculine view of women. In this chapter, I will show how the protagonist disputes all that constitutes the foundations of a masculine dominated and

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<sup>1</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 143. The use of *man* here again suggests that it is specifically males who are being referred to. From the previous chapter, it is clear that women were the targeted victims of male domination and not responsible for creating the politics that Tolstoy and Foucault are questioning.

sexually orientated society. Pozdnyshev becomes a changed man who agonises over the nature of his former life in which he exploits, abuses and murders an innocent woman whom he considered an animal. The protagonist's role has reversed; I will demonstrate that Pozdnyshev becomes one of the one per cent who do not subscribe to or live by the Foucauldian sexual prescription. It is through this conversion that Pozdnyshev reconciles his past and his relations with women.

The retrospective account of Pozdnyshev's life is thus a dual narration. He relates both to his life as a typical man of his class and the altered perspective of life that he is shocked into seeing when he murders his wife; the former being in total opposition to the latter. Hence, there is an important distinction to be made between the way in which Pozdnyshev blindly lived according to political structuring of society outlined in the previous chapters, which he describes as “ужас того, что есть” [the horror of what is], and a different view of life, which he now considers “что должно быть” [what ought to be].<sup>2</sup>

By juxtaposing the conflicting elements of a dual narration, Tolstoy's protagonist rejects all social institutions that seek to control and manipulate a population and refutes the basis for gender divisions that set men against women. Pozdnyshev seeks to bridge the “пучина” [abyss]<sup>3</sup> between the sexes in an effort aimed ultimately at resolving the male/female dichotomy. He thus attempts to reject and resolve one of the most momentous binary oppositions that dominated the late-nineteenth-century European world.

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<sup>2</sup> Толстой, «Крейцера соната», p. 17; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 124.

<sup>3</sup> Толстой, «Крейцера соната», p. 17; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 124.

Unfortunately for Pozdnyshv, and for his wife, realising an alternative world comes too late. In an instant before his sharp dagger penetrates deep into the flesh of a woman's body, a momentary suspicion as to the appropriateness of his actions surfaces:

В ту минуту, как я делал это, я знал, что я делаю нечто ужасное, такое, какого я никогда не делал и которое будет иметь ужасные последствия. Но сознание это мелькнуло как молния, и за сознанием тотчас же следовал поступок... Помню на мгновение, только на мгновение, предварявшее поступок, страшное сознание того, что я убиваю и убил женщину, незащищенную женщину, мою жену. Ужас этого сознание я помню и потом заключаю и даже вспоминаю смутно, что, воткнув кинжал, я тотчас же вытащил его, желая поправить сделанное и остановить.

At the moment I did it I knew I was doing an awful thing such as I had never done before, which would have terrible consequences. But that consciousness passed like a flash of lightning and the deed immediately followed the consciousness... I remember that for an instant, only an instant, before the action I had a terrible consciousness that I was killing, had killed, a defenceless woman, my wife! I remember the horror of that consciousness and conclude from that, and even dimly remember, that having plunged the dagger in I pulled it out immediately, trying to remedy what had been done and stop it.<sup>4</sup>

Following his wife's murder, Pozdnyshv retires to his study where he lays to rest. Numbled by the ordeal, he slips into a dreamy state of semi-delirium, semi-consciousness. He tosses to and fro pangs of horror and contrasting moments of blissful reassurance that all which happened was merely the spiteful musing of a dreamworld mind gone awry:

Я спал, верно, часа два. Помню, я видел во сне, что мы дружны с ней, поссорились, но миримся, и что немножко что-то мешает, но мы дружны. Меня разбудил стук в дверь. «Это полиция, — подумал я, просыпаясь. — Ведь я убил, кажется. А может быть, это она, и ничего не было».

I must have slept for a couple of hours. I remember dreaming that she and I were friendly together, that we had quarrelled but were making it up, there was something *rather* in the way, but we were friends. I was awakened by someone knocking at the door. 'It's the police!' I thought, waking up. 'I have committed murder, I think. But perhaps it is *she*, and nothing has happened.'<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», р. 74; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 204.

<sup>5</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», р. 75; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 205.

Upon waking, Pozdnyshev sees that he, perhaps unwittingly, has crossed the line and drawn his masculine domination too close to physical reality. The ultimate penetration of his wife's body has put an end to the life of the "враг" [enemy].<sup>6</sup> Killing her pronounces the definitive word confirming masculine domination. This concludes the battle between the sexes he and his wife have fought for the past decade with Pozdnyshev apparently the victor. However, in Pozdnyshev's house—the war zone that has witnessed almost daily fighting—there is a latent, hidden view of reality about to be unveiled.

Emerging from the smoky haze of his study, where smouldering tobacco has befogged Pozdnyshev's consciousness for the best part of his life,<sup>7</sup> he moves to the bedroom where the air is purified and sterile from the doctor's antiseptic: "запах этой докторской гадости, — иодоформ, карболка — поразил меня" [the smell of the doctor's nastiness—iodoform and carbolic—took me aback].<sup>8</sup> Here, where the reality of a life of sexual and physical abuse of a woman has taken place there now lies a dying woman bruised and battered. As she slips from this world to another, so too does the protagonist's consciousness. When the "постоянный туман" [perpetual fog]<sup>9</sup> that obscures the vision clears, Pozdnyshev recalls:

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<sup>6</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 36; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 150.

<sup>7</sup> Quoting Pozdnyshev, Richard Gustafson comments on Pozdnyshev's use of nicotine and other intoxicants such as alcohol, strong tea and even work: "Pozdnyshev...lives in a state of chronic intoxication. He understands well the function of this stupefaction. 'Man's salvation as well as his punishment,' he believes, 'lies in the fact that when he lives incorrectly he can befog himself so as not to see the poverty of his position.'" Richard Gustafson, 'Intoxicated Consciousness,' *Leo Tolstoy. Resident and Stranger*, p. 352.

<sup>8</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 76; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 207.

<sup>9</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 45; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 163.

Только тогда, когда я увидал ее мертвое лицо, я понял всё, что я сделал. Я понял, что я, я убил ее, что от меня сделалось то, что она была живая, движущаяся, теплая, а теперь стала неподвижная, восковая, холодная, и что поправить этого никогда, нигде, ничем нельзя.

Only when I saw her dead face did I understand all that I had done. I realised that I, I, had killed her; that it was my doing that she, living, moving, warm, had now become motionless, waxen, and cold, and that this could never, anywhere, or by any means, be remedied.<sup>10</sup>

Even after the most horrific abuse of his wife, before seeing her dead body, Pozdnyshev still holds hopes of “making up.” This shows the extent to which a man can imagine that all his abuses of women, even butchering her body with a knife, can simply be remedied by the universal therapy of sensuality. But he is mistaken and indeed “taken aback.” The power of sensuality, which has so faithfully healed the wounds he has inflicted in the past, can no longer be applied. His wife is now an unresponsive corpse; “this could never, anywhere, or by any means, be remedied.” The realisation of fact versus his misconceptions of the past holds profound implications for Pozdnyshev. He is shocked headlong into the process of re-evaluating the past and rebuilding his life on an altered image of both himself and a woman that his final act of masculine domination prompts.

Following a woman’s death and the consciousness her dead body evokes in Pozdnyshev, there comes another momentous revelation for the protagonist. Now from within a prison cell, Pozdnyshev is less horror-struck by his heinous butchering of a woman than by the sad recognition that his entire life has been one colossal sham: “мы живем по уши в таком омуте лжи, что если нас не треснет по голове, как меня, мы не можем опомниться” [We live up to our ears in such depths of lies that unless we

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<sup>10</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», р. 77; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 209.

have our heads bumped, as I did, we cannot come to our senses].<sup>11</sup> In fact, having more than just his “head bumped,” Pozdnyshev’s agony of remorse comes when he himself is stabbed in the gut. Not by the sharp, hardened steel blade that symbolises masculinity,<sup>12</sup> he is struck by the blunt force of what he realises masculinity to actually symbolise in his society. He sees the “horror of what is”; he sees the “horror” of masculine domination and the subordination, exploitation and abuse of women that he lived by, which totally contradicts what really “ought to be.”

Pozdnyshev now recognises his former self-righteousness as a man once so typical of his class to be the result of the falsehood and hypocrisy that surrounds him. Now back in society after his acquittal by the courts, he is a man who no longer wallows in “such depths of lies.” He has unveiled an inescapable truth.<sup>13</sup> Pozdnyshev is left in his account of past events to grapple with the nature of his former life as a typical male, which led to his wife’s death:

Да-с, только перемучавшись, как я перемучался, только благодаря этому я понял, где корень всего, понял, что должно быть, и потому увидал весь ужас того, что есть.... Да, не скоро еще люди узнают то, что я знаю. Много ли железа и какие металлы в солнце и звездах — это скоро узнать можно; а вот то, что обличает наше свинство, — это трудно, ужасно трудно.

Yes, only after such torments as I have endured, only by their means, have I understood where the root of the matter lies—understood what ought to be, and therefore seen all the horror of what is.... Yes, it will be a long time before people learn what I know. How much iron and

<sup>11</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 302; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 213.

<sup>12</sup> The choice of murder weapon is significant as a phallic symbol that represents what Elizabeth Grosz calls the “genital domination” of male sexuality. Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 177. It also supports the fact that the murder is a symbolic sexual act: Pozdnyshev has a loaded revolver and an array of guns and knives from his collection mounted on the wall at his disposal. Ignoring the most obvious weapon, the loaded revolver that he already has at hand that would be clean and efficient, he ignores even the other guns. Pozdnyshev opts for a “кривой дамасский кинжал” [curved Damascus dagger]. He takes it down and draws back its protective sheath to reveal the curved glistening tip that is about to penetrate deep into a woman’s body; the phallic overtones are pointed. Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 71, 75; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 200, 206.

<sup>13</sup> Note that Pozdnyshev tries to intoxicate himself with strong tea and tobacco on the train as he tells his tale, however, to no avail; he is no longer able to delude himself as he did in the past.

quantities of other metals there is in the sun and stars is easy to find out, but anything that expresses our swinishness is difficult, terribly difficult!<sup>14</sup>

Pozdnyshv makes it clear that he understands the discrepancy between what *is* and what *ought to be* is not minor; one is in complete opposition to the other: “случился со мной этот эпизод, у меня открылись глаза, и я увидал всё совсем в другом свете. Всё навыворот, всё навыворот!” [since that episode, my eyes have been opened and I have seen everything in quite a different light. Everything reversed, everything reversed!]<sup>15</sup>

Pozdnyshv acknowledges this “reversal” in his former convictions only a few pages into his tale indicating that the remainder of his retrospective account is made in light of these contrasts. The greater part of the text that outlines the imposition of a politically empowered sexuality and the reduction of women to the status of animals in patriarchal culture is clearly “the horror of what is.” “What ought to be” is the “reverse.” *The Kreutzer Sonata* is therefore not the one-sided view of a misogynist protagonist that it is often taken for. Nor does it represent what feminist writer Andrea Dworkin exclaims to be “the author’s full-blooded misogyny.” It is the *reverse*—the reverse of *misogyny* being *feminism*.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 17, 40; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 125, 156.

<sup>15</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 17; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 124 – 125.

<sup>16</sup> Barbara Heldt affirms: “*The Kreutzer Sonata* is often dismissed as an extreme example of Tolstoy’s misogyny.” However, Heldt does not subscribe to this notion. Heldt, ‘Tolstoy’s Path toward Feminism,’ p. 44.

Andrea Dworkin, *Intercourse*, p. 7.

Although no authoritative Reference offers an antonym for *feminism*, David Holbrook points out the “absurdity” of suggesting that the opposite of *misogyny* is not *feminism*. Holbrook, *Tolstoy, Women, and Death*, p. 15.



*The Kreutzer Sonata* is a text that exposes the oppression of women at the hands of male dominators in defence of women. Indeed, Tolstoy makes the following explanatory entry in his diary:

Many of the ideas which I've been expressing recently don't belong to me, but to people who feel an affinity with me, and turn to me with their problems, quandaries, ideas and plans. Thus the basic idea, or better to say, feeling of *The Kreutzer Sonata* belongs to a certain woman, a Slav, who wrote me a letter, comical for its language but remarkable for its content, about the oppression of women through sexual demands. Later she came to see me and left a strong impression.<sup>17</sup>

So while *The Kreutzer Sonata* rightly receives different interpretations, for it is an intriguing multifaceted work dealing with any number of contemporaneous issues, as Tolstoy himself points out, the “basic idea”, indeed, “the feeling” of *The Kreutzer Sonata* is “about the oppression of women through sexual demands.” Its underlying theme is therefore concerned with women’s liberation.

In this respect, *The Kreutzer Sonata* is an example of a man brought up in the midst of such staunch patriarchy to acknowledge the injustices of gender division and expose men as the instigators of female oppression and abuse. Barbara Heldt contends: “Far from being misogynistic, [*The Kreutzer Sonata*] takes men’s hatred of women and lays bare its roots, finding them in a social and economic universe entirely of man’s making.” As Heldt suggests, *The Kreutzer Sonata* does represent “Tolstoy’s path toward feminism.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Leo Tolstoy, *Tolstoy's Diaries*, vol. 1: 1847 – 1894, p. 283. Note also that R. F. Christian (trans.) points out: “These ideas were to some extent expressed in Tolstoy’s unfinished story *Mother*.” *Ibid.*, p. 386.

<sup>18</sup> Heldt, ‘Tolstoy’s Path toward Feminism,’ p. 45 (my italics).

However, to label Tolstoy a “feminist” is perhaps stretching matters somewhat. He is clearly a man on a “path toward feminism,” but as Heldt also points out: “If we focus only on Tolstoy’s stated opinions of women in his diaries and letters, the examples of misogyny are too numerous to cite.” *Ibid.*, p. 47. It is thus in his art that Tolstoy attempts to reconcile his and other men’s troubled relations with women.

In this feminist approach, Tolstoy and his protagonist seek to repudiate a politically empowered sexuality that subordinates and exploits women and unreservedly refute all existing institutions of perceived masculine superiority and the domination of women. For males, this involves reassessing a politically imposed sexuality that “places his existence as a living being in question” and thence re-evaluate the typical masculine view and treatment of women.

Pozdnyshev’s twice uttered “навыворот” [reversed] suggests two acts at work in which he will effectively turn his former world first inside out then back to front.<sup>19</sup> Through his process of “reversal,” Pozdnyshev will present an opposing picture of society that he claims exposes the truth that lies behind the ill-conceived structuring of nineteenth-century upper class life. He sees that the abuse of women as sex objects, their exploitation for economic use and their subordination and treatment as inferior animals all result from unjust politics that do indeed “place man’s existence as a living being in question.”

As Pozdnyshev introduces himself through the narrator at the beginning of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, he puts forward a simple question that he attempts to answer throughout his entire tale. Here he introduces “истинный женский вопрос” [the true question of women’s rights].<sup>20</sup> By “истинный” [true], Tolstoy is making a distinction between the contemporaneous “женский вопрос” [the question of women’s rights], one

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<sup>19</sup> *Навыворот* has the general literal and figurative meanings of *reversed, inside out, wrong way around, back to front* et cetera.

<sup>20</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 300; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 212.

of the so-called “accursed questions,”<sup>21</sup> and an alternative view of what the question of women’s rights should truly be addressing.

From the 1860s, the question of women’s emancipation gains momentum in Russia addressing women’s rights to vote, participate in politics, enter universities and so forth. However, Pozdnyshv now realises that “женский вопрос” [the question of women’s rights] of the past and present, despite its outward progressive appearance, fails to address the most fundamental point regarding women’s “true” rights. He thus proposes his “истинный женский вопрос” [*true* question of women’s rights] to an inquiring narrator:

— ...это ужасно, ужасно, ужасно!  
 — Что ужасно? — спросил я.  
 — Та пучина заблуждения и разврата, в которой мы живем по отношению к истинному женскому вопросу.  
 — Т. е., что вы понимаете под истинным женским вопросом?  
 — Вопрос о том, что такое то особенное от мужчин организованное существо и как она сама и мужчина должны смотреть на нее.

‘...it’s ghastly, ghastly, ghastly!’  
 ‘What’s ghastly?’ I asked.  
 ‘That abyss of delusion and depravity in which we live in regard to the *real* question of women’s rights?’  
 ‘And that is? What do you understand to be the real question of women’s rights?’  
 ‘The question of what this organised creature that is distinct from man is, and how she herself and men also should regard her.’<sup>22</sup>

The above passage is quintessential to this thesis. That this “истинный женский вопрос” [*true* question of women’s rights] is placed at the beginning of the

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<sup>21</sup> Late-nineteenth-century Russian intellectual and social life is characterised by the “accursed questions” which plagued the intelligentsia in their attempts to make sense of traditional interpretations of the world and the political turmoil, economic decline, and general *fin de siècle* decadence and gloom. And not forgetting that *The Kreutzer Sonata* itself sparked a great sexual debate that introduced the “accursed” “половой вопрос” [sexual question] to Russia’s educated classes. For a thorough account of the reception of *The Kreutzer Sonata* and its relevancy to the contemporaneous debate on sexuality, see Møller, *Postlude to “The Kreutzer Sonata.”*

<sup>22</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 17, 299 – 300; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 124, 213 (my italics).

story from where Pozdnyshev's confession unfolds suggests its thematic importance. Throughout the story, Pozdnyshev presents the prevailing masculine view of how men typically "consider her," as outlined in the previous chapters. However, this typical view of women is what Pozdnyshev regards as the "abyss of delusion and depravity." Any so-called "rights" that women are supposedly given are farcical; as Pozdnyshev puts it:

И толкуют о свободе, о правах женщин. Это всё равно, что людоеды откармливали бы людей пленных на еду и вместе с тем уверяли бы, что они заботятся о их правах и свободе.

And they prate about the freedom and rights of women! It's as if cannibals fattened their captives to be eaten, and at the same time declared they were concerned about their prisoners' rights and freedom.<sup>23</sup>

To find the truth, Pozdnyshev is now left to ponder as to just who that "organised creature" is and how, therefore, "men should regard her."

In contrast to his former convictions as a typical male who held such fixed and grave views of women, the protagonist now presents an "организованное существо" [organised creature] of indeterminate identity. From the outset of the story, Tolstoy thus cleans the slate of patriarchal prejudice and hands his protagonist a *tabula rasa* onto which he will attempt to paint a new portrait of a woman now illuminated by a "different light." The remainder of the text, and arguably the central theme of *The Kreutzer Sonata* is then a bid to answer that Tolstoyan "истинный женский вопрос" [true question of women's rights]. Presenting this altered vision of a woman seen from a different view point endeavours to close the "abyss of delusion and depravity"

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<sup>23</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 35; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 149.

regarding women, which results from enforcing the Foucauldian political systems in combination with the patriarchal culture of centuries gone by.

Pozdnyshev's reassessment of the masculine understanding of women begins with the death of his wife. The murder is the pivotal moment in *The Kreutzer Sonata*. As explained below, it leads directly to Pozdnyshev's reversal in his perception of women and his rejection of Foucauldian politics that he implicates in forging that image. The murder at the end of the story represents the beginning of Pozdnyshev's new life in which "everything is reversed." Although the murder concludes Pozdnyshev's tale, it is not, however, the artistic climax of the novella.<sup>24</sup> Rather, killing a woman is the beginning of Pozdnyshev's reassessment of women, which is reflected throughout the entire story.

When a man kills a woman, he is murdering another human being. To Pozdnyshev, she is not only the same species, but this woman is also the same race, the same nationality, the same class. However, based solely on a difference in gender, to Pozdnyshev, she appears to be a mere animal whom he callously slays like the horse in 'Kholstomer.' By making the parallel between an animal and a woman in the male eye in Chapter Three, exploring the deaths of these two different "organised creatures" in the two stories exposes parallels of paramount importance. When an animal and a woman are killed, Tolstoy questions the way in which men traditionally perceive these other creatures.

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<sup>24</sup> It is, of course, Pozdnyshev's ultimate sexual climax though. Notice how Pozdnyshev first smokes a cigarette after the act then lies numbed in a delirious state of intoxicated exhaustion. Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 75; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 205.

Kholstomer is a horse; he stands taller than his human masters, towering above them in all his grandeur and innate beauty. However, because of his unfortunate disposition as an animal in a human world that holds unjust views of other creatures, he is seen as one of the most lowly and deplorable creatures. Those who hold this horse in contempt refer to him throughout the entire story as: “чертенок” [little devil], “этот коростовый” [that filthy scab], “мужик” [peasant], “пегий мерин” [skewbald gelding] and despite his pedigree, “коростовая дрянь” [scabby trash]. This horse is not identified in terms other than those derogatory. He is not once identified as *лошадь* [a horse].

At the moment of death, however, Tolstoy offers a different view that identifies this “organised creature”—this horse—as something now bare of malice that can be seen for what he truly is. As the knife held by a man penetrates the flesh of another living being, the prejudice toward that animal collapses alongside Kholstomer where it too is put to rest. No longer a despicable beast, Kholstomer’s correct generic identity is recognised with surprise:

Драч подождал, пока прекратились судороги, отогнал собак, подвинувшихся ближе, и потом, взяв за ногу и отворотив мерина на спину и велел Ваське держать за ногу, начал свежевать.

— Тоже лошадь была, — сказал Васька.

The knacker waited until the convulsions had ceased, drove away the dogs that had crept nearer, turned the gelding onto his back by the legs and told Vaska to hold them. He began skinning. ‘It is a horse after all,’ remarked Vaska.<sup>25</sup>

For those who hold all animals that are not male human beings in contempt as lowly beasts now to see Kholstomer as *a horse* requires a total reversal of centuries-old

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<sup>25</sup> Толстой, «Холстомер», p. 36; Tolstoy, ‘Kholstomer,’ p. 438.

cultural beliefs. As banal as identifying a horse as *a horse* might be to the modern reader, it is profoundly symbolic of a shift in male consciousness of a patriarchal world. An animal closely related to the human animal is now seen as such and identified by its correct generic name, which places it not too far removed from humanity on an ecological scale. Despite centuries' attempts to broaden the ideological gap between those two worlds by deeming other animals as mere beasts, Tolstoy objects. Boundaries thus begin to blur, opening the way for a reassessment of the ideology that has created such unbridgeable gulfs between worlds based on what Tolstoy implicitly proposes to be unfounded reasoning.

Now, in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, there is a striking parallel which evokes a similar rehabilitation of a similarly oppressed "organised creature" in the male mind. This time the cultural split along gender lines is targeted for reconstruction in a bid to close the "abyss of delusion and depravity" that gapes wide between the male and female human worlds. Again, this calls into question the ideological divisions founded on unstable grounds.

The protagonist's wife in *The Kreutzer Sonata* is a human being. However, because of her misconstrued inferior status as a female in a male-dominated society she is viewed as a mere animal by male eyes, as was pointed out in Chapter Three of this thesis. This woman is not once referred to by her given human name. Throughout the entire story, Pozdnyshev refers to her as "она" [she] and "моя жена" [my wife]. This suggests not only the intentional de-personification, but also de-humanisation of a woman. Indeed, to reiterate, Pozdnyshev has categorically stated that: "это не человек" [she is not a human being] and that he knows "только как животное" [only as an animal]. Accordingly, he refers to her as "как животное" [like an animal], "как

лошадь” [like a horse] and “мерзкая сука” [abominable bitch], recalling also Pozdnyshev’s failed attempts, which I outlined in the previous chapter, to fix the identity of various other animals to her character. But at the moment of death, there is a turnaround.

When Pozdnyshev kills a woman, there is a similar shift in consciousness to that evoked by the death of a horse in ‘Kholstomer’ that undermines the male conception of another being, this time a female human being. On her deathbed,<sup>26</sup> the most revelatory perception of a woman now penetrates deep into the male psyche: “Я взглянул... на ее с подтеками разбитое лицо и в первый раз забыл себя, свои права, свою гордость, в первый раз увидел в ней человека — сестру” [I looked... at her bruised disfigured face, and for the first time I forgot myself, my rights, my pride, and for the first time saw a *human being* in her—a sister].

Unfortunately for Pozdnyshev, this powerful realisation obliterates the basis of his entire existence in relations with women since his first sexual experience some decades before. He is a man who once despised women and abused his wife like an animal. He now sees her as “человек” [a human being]—a “сестра” [sister]—not the “враг” [enemy], but now even a “помощница” [helpmate].<sup>27</sup>

This reversal in the conception of his former life leads no longer to hatred of women. On the train as he reflects on a life of jaundiced bigotry, Pozdnyshev is now devastated by a profound sense of self-hate and hate for all that masculinity is

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<sup>26</sup> In fact, the doctors lay her on Pozdnyshev’s bed, not her own (separate beds were common for husband and wife in those days). It is in her husband’s bed—a man’s bed—where she, perhaps symbolically, dies.

<sup>27</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 77, 338, 36; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 208, 231, 150.



responsible for in the world that surrounds him. This “horror of what is” leaves him carrying a tremendous weight of irreconcilable guilt as flashbacks of the past and the vision of his poor wife’s dead body persistently haunt him. No longer the animal she was known as, he can only ever ponder as to who exactly that particular human being was, and what his childhood dreams of a “братский” [brotherly] relationship with that “сестра” [sister] might have been.

When a horse is seen as *a horse*, the altered perspective of that animal’s identity is marked by the point at which it is no longer judged in terms of its usefulness to men; it is the same for the female human animal in *The Kreutzer Sonata* who Pozdnyshev now recognises as a human being. In both cases, a living being is held in captivity by a man to serve his needs. Animals suffer at the hands of their human dominators, particularly when they falter in their designated role. It is the same for women who have been categorised as animals.

However, when an animal, female human or any other, becomes totally useless to a man, it is discarded and apparently no longer judged according to its political or economic usefulness or in terms of the pleasure it might afford a man. Having served their terms as both prisoner and “slave” to men, they are symbolically released back into nature where they can now re-occupy their natural position from which men removed them. Although they are no longer living, it is here that men allow a horse to regain its dignity and true worth as a horse, and a woman hers as a human being. A significant factor in this process is that once dead, these other beings are no longer a threat to the male ideology that seeks to divide the two worlds into dominant and subordinate respectively. As pointed out in the previous chapter, Kholstomer indeed threatens these boundaries and is struck with a painful blow by a man to re-establish his perceived

superiority and rights to control. A woman too is physically abused when she threatens a man's perceived superiority. Killing a horse and a woman is an extreme example of the same physical actions that these beings have suffered throughout their lives in order that men maintain their ideological superior position in relation to these other beings. The physical action of killing is but a more conclusive means to enforce and maintain the same male ideology, for these dead creatures can no longer challenge those boundaries.

Thus, it is when a horse and a woman are free from masculine ideological parameters and the domination inherent in those systems that they are conceived differently by men. A woman is lifted from the world of lower animals and returned to the human world from which men have displaced her. Removed from a male-constructed human world, a horse and a woman are finally valued.<sup>28</sup>

When a woman is removed from a patriarchal world, even if it is by death, she is seen not only as a human being but as a "sister" with whom men should unite as helpmates to create a righteous society and the Kingdom of God on Earth, according to Pozdnyshv. He considers relationships based on lust and sensuality to result inevitably in discord and disharmony between men and women, even within marriage. His marriage is an extreme example in which he claims that his wholly physical relations with his wife led to her death.

When a woman becomes an object of masculine sexual desire, through the processes that I outline in Chapter One, the resulting destructive relationship between

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<sup>28</sup> Kholstomer becomes food for the dogs and a valuable source of sustenance for a mother wolf and her five hungry cubs on the night of the slaughter. Толстой, «Холстомер», pp. 36 – 37; Tolstoy, 'Kholstomer,' pp. 438 – 439.

husband and wife is clear from Pozdnyshev's example as discussed in my previous chapter. By de-sexualisation of the object of sexual desire, a woman can be recognised as something other than an outlet for masculine sexual expression. The fundamental basis for establishing cordial, non-sexual relations similar to those of brother and "sister" between the sexes that no longer results in the abuse of women is thereby set. So while a woman's political value wanes as her childbearing days expire, she is now recognised for her true worth as a fellow human being. A politically imposed sexuality may help a nation rise to new economic heights, the resulting subordination of women, however, hinders any chances of escaping from that "complete and utter brothel" that symbolises a spiritually and morally sick society. Pozdnyshev explains:

И во имя этой любви, т. е. пакости, губит, — что же? — половину рода человеческого. Из всех женщин, которые должны бы быть помощницами в движении человечества к истине и благу, он во имя своего удовольствия делает не помощниц, но врагов.

In the name of this love, that is, this filth, he destroys—what? Why half the human race! All the women who might help the progress of mankind towards truth and goodness he converts, for the sake of his pleasure, into enemies instead of helpmates.<sup>29</sup>

Pozdnyshev thus recognises the absolute "power" of sexuality that Foucault describes. He holds its singularly most accountable for the destruction of a righteous social order and the abuse of women's mental and physical lives. He now recognises how men systemically destroy women through a politically stimulated sexual obsessiveness that results in too frequent and often violent sexual expression and leads ultimately and inevitably to the death of his wife.

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<sup>29</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 36; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 150.

Paradoxically, however, murdering a woman marks a transition for Pozdnyshev out of a politically imposed sexuality that “destroys” women, and onto a path to truly ‘know’ a woman as a fellow human being. Pozdnyshev observes:

Вы заметьте: если цель человечества — благо, добро, любовь, как хотите; если цель человечества есть то, что сказано в пророчествах, что все люди соединятся воедино любовью, что раскуют копья на серпы и т. д., то ведь достижению этой цели мешает что? Мешают страсти. И страстей самая сильная и злая и упорная — половая, плотская любовь.

Just think: if the aim of humanity is goodness, righteousness, love—call it what you will—if it is what the prophets have said, that all mankind should be united together in love, that the spears should be beaten into pruning-hooks and so forth, what is it that hinders the attainment of this aim? The passions hinder it. Of all the passions, the cruellest and most stubborn is the sex-passion, physical love.

Pozdnyshev recognises that “идеал кроликов или свиней, чтобы расплодиться как можно больше” [the rabbits’ and pigs’ ideal of breeding as fast as possible], which indeed epitomises the political foundations of rising capitalist nations, must be reversed in order to achieve human dignity, including that of women too:

... потому если уничтожатся страсти и последняя, самая сильная из них, плотская любовь, то пророчество исполнится, люди соединятся воедино, цель человечества будет достигнута.

... therefore if the passions are destroyed, including the strongest of them—physical love—the prophecies will be fulfilled, mankind will be brought into unity, the aim of human existence will be attained.<sup>30</sup>

The paradox of the murder of a woman is that Pozdnyshev achieves the highest human ideal through this monstrous act. Based on a Fyodorovian interpretation of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Henrietta Mondry perceptively deduces that by murder “Pozdnyshev performs the act of metaphysical self-castration”; that the “answer to ‘why Pozdnyshev kills his wife’ ... is to belong to the eunuchs, the ‘eunuchs who have made themselves

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<sup>30</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», р. 30; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 142.

eunuchs, in order to enter the Kingdom of God.” Pozdnyshev thus achieves “a state of purity and sainthood through the release from his sexual, earthly desires.”<sup>31</sup>

As a symbolic “eunuch,” Pozdnyshev no longer participates in the “passions of physical love” and in his symbolic detachment from sexuality, he no longer participates in the politics that “make sex desirable.” His castration is thus not only a “metaphysical self-castration” that detaches him from sexuality, but it is also clearly a political castration that in reality leaves him detached from the politics of a sexually orientated mainstream society.

Pozdnyshev’s rejection of sex is therefore a political gesture against a regime that once had him bound to a life of lust and sensuality. It is after the detachment from a politically imposed sexuality that a woman’s status can be rehabilitated in a man’s eye. Mondry’s “metaphysical self-castration” thus represents a symbolic mutilation of the genitals that constitute a genitally dominated masculine sexuality. By killing his wife, by changing her status from being an object of masculine sexual desire, which leads to her subordination, she can now be seen in a “different light.”

An important factor in Pozdnyshev’s altered vision of his wife is not only her removal as a sex object from Pozdnyshev’s life by death, but also the de-sensualisation of a woman by physically altering her external appearance. As pointed out in a number of cases in the previous chapters of this thesis, Pozdnyshev considers women’s bodies and their physical appearance to be essentially erotic and seductive, and their behaviour

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<sup>31</sup> Mondry, ‘One or Two “Resurrections”?’ pp. 178, 181, 182. The quote “eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs, in order to enter the Kingdom of God” refers to another biblical epigraph of *The Kreutzer Sonata* which quotes Matthew XIX: 12: “For there are eunuchs who were born thus from the maternal womb, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs, in order to enter the Kingdom of God. He who is able to accept it, then accept it.” Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 7 (omitted from Maude’s translation).

aimed ultimately at securing a male mate; Pozdnyshev believes this to be essentially animal in nature. When Pozdnyshev kills his wife, he first beats her, causing bruising and disfigurement to her face, then he throttles her, causing severe bruising and blackening around her neck, and the knife wound to her stomach causes bleeding which stains her once-elegant and beautiful dress. Pozdnyshev thus makes his wife ugly, de-sensualising her as a sexual being. She can now be seen as a human being and a sister as outlined above. Therefore, looking at his wife's dead body Pozdnyshev recalls: "Красоты не было никакой, а что-то гадкое показалось мне в ней" [There was nothing beautiful about her, but something repulsive as it seemed to me].<sup>32</sup> Pozdnyshev is no longer sexually aroused by her; he no longer "desires" sex. He therefore does not wish to copulate in a society with a politically imposed ideal like "the rabbits' and pigs' ideal of breeding as fast as possible."

Although Pozdnyshev duplicated himself five times for his country, he is now politically non-compliant. As Foucault says: "We must not think that by saying yes to sex, one says no to power; on the contrary, one tracks along the course laid out by the general deployment of sexuality." Thus, as is evident from Chapter One, to participate in sex is to be politically compliant. To oppose or "reverse" political power, Foucault explains that

it is the agency of sex that we must break away from, if we aim—through tactical *reversal* of the various mechanisms of sexuality—to counter the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures, and knowledges, in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 76; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 207.

<sup>33</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 157.

By saying “no” to sex, through his “metaphysical self-castration,” Pozdnyshev both “breaks away from the agency of sex” and opposes political power. He “destroys the passions” through his symbolic self-mutilation and the very real mutilation and de-sensualisation of his female object of his desire. He obliterates the political objective to “make sex desirable.” Through this “reversal of various sexual mechanisms,” which have shaped his life, Pozdnyshev undoes that which was politically done to him. He symbolically arrives back at a state of childhood innocence or “sainthood” as Mondry suggests, which he laments over losing.

The murder, which Mondry confirms is a detachment from that “wasteland of sexuality,”<sup>34</sup> marks the transition out of his former world and back into the other—a reversal back to the morality and innocence of what “ought to be.” It is a claim to the illusive moral character that Pozdnyshev was only ever able to “imagine” he had while held in his politically useful relations with women.

From the viewpoint where everything is reversed, Pozdnyshev viciously attacks existing social order and formulates the antithesis (or antidote) to a sick world concocted from precisely those materials that Foucault describes in *The History of Sexuality*. From here, all the misgivings of political posturing that are responsible for the abuse of women unfold and the unseemly reality of masculinity is exposed.

It is precisely from the perspective of a symbolically reborn Rousseauvian child free from political corruption that Pozdnyshev makes his most profound revelations

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<sup>34</sup> Mondry, ‘One or Two “Resurrections”?’ p. 182 citing Benson, *Women in Tolstoy*.

regarding men and women;<sup>35</sup> he finds the fundamental basis for his answer to the “real question of women’s rights.” In total opposition to his former convictions that a woman is a vastly inferior creature, the animal he always believed her to be, he finds that, in fact, she is a man’s equal; a woman is not only a human being, as identified post-mortem, but she is, moreover, a human being equal to the male of that same species. Pozdnyshev now considers the notion that “мальчики и девочки рождаются одинаково” [boys and girls are born equal].<sup>36</sup>

Pozdnyshev suggests that men and women are born brother and sister, distinct by gender, but not where gender defines status. However, when social conditioning introduces sexuality to these distinct but equal children in their mid-teens, males assume a superior role and force women down into a subordinate position, as outlined in the previous chapters. In detaching himself from sexuality, Pozdnyshev removes “sex” from his equation of women to sex, and because sex equates to the physical, women were also equated to the animal. Pozdnyshev’s new understanding of “what ought to be” is that when a woman is no longer considered a wholly sexual, and therefore physical being, she is no longer equated to an animal. When gender differences are not calculated on the sexual role-play in a male-dominated world, equality between the sexes is established.

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<sup>35</sup> Referring back to my Chapter One, Tolstoy explains the Rousseauian concept of childhood innocence and purity: “Man is born perfect...but every successive step and every successive hour threaten destruction and do not hold out hope for the restoration of destroyed harmony. Our ideal is behind, and not ahead of us.” Hence the necessity for a return or reversal back to the childhood ideal, for progressing along the line of mainstream life will only lead to further destruction according to Rousseau.

<sup>36</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», p. 321; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 227.



However, for all Pozdnyshev's ill-conceived ideas about women in his former life, he is unhappy considering a woman as simply "equal." In an attempt to reconcile his guilt and the nastiness of his life as a typical male, he bows in shame to offer women what is justly theirs. In comparison to patriarchal man, he gives women their deserved superiority over those men. Thus, in the most telling reversal of all, Pozdnyshev realises that women are actually not simply equal to men, but that they are in fact "несравненно выше" [immeasurably superior]. Speaking of a woman he took as his property, treated like an animal, then slaughtered like a beast, Pozdnyshev asserts that his wife was "несравненно выше меня, как и всегда всякая девушка несравненно выше мужчины" [immeasurable superior to me as *all* maidens *always* are to man]. And if a woman acts unbecomingly in society, as Pozdnyshev frequently claims they do, he is now honest enough to admit: "Ясно, что это оттого, что мужья развращают, нравственно принижают своих жен до своего уровня" [Clearly, it is because the husbands pervert their wives and bring them morally down to their own level.]<sup>37</sup>

In rehabilitating a woman's status to that of a human being, not the animal she was previously considered, and to portray her now as a superior being to the male human animal, Pozdnyshev further supports his analogy by making an even more explicit case for masculine inferiority. After returning a woman to her rightful place in the human world, Pozdnyshev also re-evaluates the status of men in relation to her. He finds that there is also a marked shift in his perception of men, but in the opposite

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<sup>37</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», р. 321; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 226 – 227 (my italics).

direction. Roles are reversed; from the human world that marks the top of the hierarchical scale of all living creatures to which women now belong, Pozdnyshchev finds that it is he, through his actions as a typical male, who should be displaced into that lower world of “животные” [domestic animals] where women were once held.

As already mentioned, Pozdnyshchev identifies the conflicting nature of the reality of his character with what he imagined himself to be: “Да, свинья я был ужасная и воображал себе, что я ангел” [Yes, I was a dreadful pig and imagined myself to be an angel]. No longer deluded by his self-righteous imaginings, Pozdnyshchev recognises himself to be an animal—“a pig,” a dirty creature according to Pozdnyshchev’s cultural perception,<sup>38</sup> now grossly inferior to his female human counterpart.

In his expression of self-hate and the deplorable nature of masculinity, Pozdnyshchev not only considers himself “a pig,” but in the latter days of his marriage he slips further down the hierarchical scale. Pozdnyshchev recalls: “Я был как зверь” [I was like a beast]. He thus steps down past the status of “животное” [domesticated animal] where he had once placed a woman, slipping far below to the dark depths of the “зверь” [beast]. He reaches the level where, in reality, ninety-nine percent of the men of class lie in wait for their female prey:

я сделался зверем, злым и хитрым зверем.... Боже мой! что тут поднялось во мне! Как вспомню только про того зверь, который жил во мне тогда, ужас берет.

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<sup>38</sup> Notice that in the past century, the perception of pigs has changed dramatically. Although pigs can still be seen bathing in mud pools and eating food in a manner typically considered unbecoming in human terms, in highly sophisticated urban cultures that are more or less isolated from these rural scenes, the image of a pig is rapidly losing its traditional identity as the dirty animal other. The recent *Babe* films are a prime indicator that impacts many millions of viewers. In *Babe: Pig in the City*, piglet Babe is presented as a clean, adorable creature; a “loveable and precious pig,” “a pig with heart.” Moreover, Babe’s journey from the countryside into the highly civilised human world of New York City marks a crossing of ideological boundaries between animal and human worlds as well as the crossing of physical boundaries, the city limits and the houses within, that traditionally separate, isolate and protect human beings from the ‘natural’ world where animals such as pigs traditionally and ideologically belonged. *Babe: Pig in the City*, George Miller (dir.), Universal Studios, 1998.

I became a cruel and cunning beast.... My God! What had aroused in me. Even to think of the beast that lived in me fills me with horror!<sup>39</sup>

As a beast, and a “cruel and cunning” one at that, Pozdnyshev is an even more despicable creature than the tame “животное” [animal] that a woman was once supposed to be. So although Pozdnyshev lived with a woman whom he considered an animal, in reality, it was he who was inferior to her, and he who did not belong to the human world into which he has since elevated his wife. On a hierarchical scale of ‘human, animal and beast’ in descending order, by elevating a woman to the status of a human being, as a “зверь” [beast] a man now stands symbolically twice removed from her, twice inferior to her. This is Pozdnyshev’s conclusive claim to the reality of social order that is in total opposition to that held by men typical of his class.

When men hold women down as animals, the “delusion and depravity” of the oppressor who believes in his own superiority and supposed rights to deprive another living being of its rights immediately places himself in a worse position than the victim. Seeing a woman now as a human being and exposing the beast that has long been lurking within a man, Pozdnyshev points to the same paradox reflected by the “depraved slaves” and their very “depraved slave owners” discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis.

The de-humanisation of a woman to an animal status by men, which supposedly signifies his superiority, is in fact a form of self-abuse in which victimiser becomes the victim of his very own forces. A man who abuses a woman is not only deluded,

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<sup>39</sup> Толстой, «Крейцерова соната», pp. 66, 69, 56; Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, pp. 194, 198, 179.

depraved and devoid of any human decency, but, as suggested above, he descends even below the level of a so-called “animal” woman. As Pozdnyshv contests, he was the most base creature that roams the earth.

So while considering and treating a woman as an inferior animal forcibly deprives her of all human rights and dignity, the instigators who create a divided world in which they dominate are as base as they are beastly, and it reflects accordingly and directly upon the character of those who hold and impose such views. Within the systems of binarisation that characterise Pozdnyshv’s world, with specific reference to divisions within humanity, Arvind Sivaramakrishnan confirms: “the very creation of a dominant and subordinate class deprives all members of both classes of their humanity.”<sup>40</sup>

Pozdnyshv’s acknowledgement of the nature of masculinity is the most fundamental element in resolving the monumental male/female dichotomy of millennia past. In ‘Animals and Other Worlds,’ Michael Pinsky attests that such “oppositions, repressive as they might be, will continue until the system of production that generates these meanings is displaced or mediated.”<sup>41</sup> Therefore, it is not only necessary for men to reassess their view of and attitudes toward women, but it is integral for males to focus directly upon themselves before the former will ever be possible or have any significant effect on relations between the sexes. By seeing through ill-conceived imaginings of righteousness and superiority, males must shed their misconceptions about women and, moreover, about themselves.

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<sup>40</sup> Sivaramakrishnan, ‘Living With Alienation,’ p. 104.

<sup>41</sup> Pinsky, ‘Animals and Other Worlds,’ p. 120.

When the underlying nature of masculinity “that generates these meanings” lies bare, Pozdnyshev then realises the unseemly reality of his former life. He thus “displaces” masculinity from its falsely positioned superiority into the reality of its baseness. From there, the image of a female human being is “mediated.” Reconciliation, although too late for the protagonist, is then possible. It is from his protagonist’s example, though, that Tolstoy allows the reader to learn.

Pozdnyshev emphatically obliterates the traditional boundaries that separate men from women. By taking a woman out of the context of a politically empowered sexuality that has produced such grave impressions of women in the male mind, Tolstoy allows his protagonist to see past the constraints of his male-dominated world. Pozdnyshev’s own detachment from the absolute power of a politically imposed sexuality, moreover, leaves him able to identify the reality of his character as a typical male. All the misconceptions of the past that have led to the systematic destruction of women lie bare before the eye. When a woman is finally recognised as a fellow human being—a sister—Pozdnyshev is struck with irreconcilable guilt and remorse for his former misogyny and abuse of that “sister.” The protagonist of *The Kreutzer Sonata* subsequently exposes human existence on such unjust political foundations and demonstrates, as Foucault suggests, that it indeed places man’s “existence as a living being in question.”

# **Conclusion**

Leo Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* is a brilliant exposé of late-nineteenth-century upper class Russian life in which sexuality is clearly the political and economic tool that shapes a nation to which Foucault and Lingis attest. Tolstoy goes much further than delivering a thesis of those politics through his art. He places a protagonist in the centre of that world to explore the effects such political imposition has on the human condition. Clearly, there are breaches of citizens' freedom as the state seeks ultimately to condition and control its subjects. This is a significant factor in the outcome of Pozdnyshev's life, in which he never manages to translate his vision of an ideal life into reality. For the sake of capitalist construction, Pozdnyshev is coerced into too frequent sexual encounters that lead directly to the abuse of women. This undermines his attempts to create a righteous life for himself and destroys the life of the woman he marries.

Although Pozdnyshev retells his life as a representative of ninety-nine per cent of males of his class, he is also possessed of an all-important previously unrealised knowledge that sets him apart, both sexually and socially detached from his male circles. Before, he was surrounded by an omniscient sexuality that had him addicted to sex. Tracking back to the roots of that dependency and following the development of a male through his adolescence demonstrates that from the moment a child's solitary habits are interfered with, male sexuality becomes a state affair and is constructed to serve both proximate and distal political and economic ends.

This thesis then demonstrates how the exploitation of women is fundamental to these political processes. However, Tolstoy brings women's issues regarding oppression and victimisation out of the bedroom where they are stifled by men and into the light of day where they cannot go unnoticed. This points clearly to the central

theme or “feeling” of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, which Tolstoy himself indicates is “about women’s oppression through sexual demands.” Tolstoy investigates the subordination of women and the prevalent masculine view that she is an inferior animal. This is explored through the example of the nameless, faceless, de-personified and de-humanised wife of the protagonist. By intentionally restraining the female character from speaking for herself, a male who is responsible for the abuse of women is heard confessing to the crimes men commit against women.

When a man sees through his own sexuality, he can recognise his domination and abuse of women as unjust and unfounded. This leads to Pozdnyshev’s important comparative views that I outline in Chapter Four. His recognition of what *is*, which is an example of Foucauldian politics in action coupled with strengthened patriarchy that aids those processes, and a different view of what *ought to be*, question the political and social foundations of his society. From his recollections of a life as a typical male, the silenced character of a woman is individualised in fiction and her story uniquely and sympathetically heard in the voice of a male protagonist articulated by a male artist in the late-nineteenth century. The cause of the death of a woman is exposed as lying in the abuse of women at the hands of males who trap her in the politics of a male-dominated society. A woman is now seen as a human being, not an animal; she is seen as a human being who is, in fact, “immeasurably superior” to those men, and implicitly should now be considered and treated accordingly.

Tolstoy subverts the entire basis of masculinity and everything men have lived by for the past few millennia that relies on the subordination of women to fulfil their self-justifying wants of superiority and control. A century ago, Tolstoy makes a deliberate and radical break with the past, questioning centuries-old certainties that



supported traditional social organisation and morality. As men are the creators of those politics, Leo Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* is therefore an indictment of and polemic against the traditional modes of male-constructed and male-dominated social organisation, particularly that of late-nineteenth-century capitalist Russia.

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