

LIZA KNAPP

Columbia University

Dostoevsky and the Novel of Adultery: *The Adolescent*¹

1. The Novel of the Accidental Family as a Novel of Adultery

As Dostoevsky developed a new form, which he christened novel of the accidental family in *The Adolescent* (1875),² he drew on a variety of

¹What follows is based on a talk *The Adolescent* as a novel of adultery given on April 15, 2005 at “Dostoevsky Dismembered: Decentering a Great Writer,” a symposium at the University of Pennsylvania. It is taken from *Dostoevsky and the Novel of the Accidental Family*, my book-in-progress that traces Dostoevsky’s creation of this new form of family novel from early stages in *Netochka Nezvanovna* through to *The Brothers Karamazov*.

In my work on Dostoevsky here and elsewhere, I have drawn inspiration from a host of Dostoevsky scholars, far and near: for this article, I owe a special debt to Deborah Martinsen for her masterful suggestions.

For quotations from Dostoevsky’s works, I give the volume and page numbers of the following edition in parentheses in the body of the text: F. M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-1990). The English translations of passages cited from *The Adolescent*, with occasional emendations, have been taken from: Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Adolescent*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage, 2003). Page numbers of this translation appear within the parentheses after the semi-colon that follows the volume and page numbers of the Russian edition.

²Dostoevsky concludes *The Adolescent* with comments by Nikolai Semenovich, Arkady Dolgoruky’s former teacher and the first reader of the manuscript that makes up the body of the novel. Nikolai Semenovich observes that a new form of novel is required to chronicle the life of the new Russian family, which he dubs “accidental” [случайный]. Nikolai Semenovich compares this manuscript with existing forms of the novel, starting with the novels of “the Lore of the Russian Family” [Предания русского семейства] that Pushkin would have written, had he not fallen victim to his own adultery plot (13:453; 561). In the body of Arkady’s manuscript, Dostoevsky also incorporates allusions to the different forms that the novel of the accidental family

models, including: the novel of “fathers and sons” (Dostoevsky thus settles accounts with Turgenev), the family chronicle celebrating “the traditions of the Russian family” (which Aksakov and Tolstoy produced and Pushkin had mused about in *Eugene Onegin* and might have written had he lived long enough to “descend to humble prose”), the Bildungsroman (with Tolstoy’s trilogy as the Russian model and *David Copperfield* as the English one),³ the bastard tale (seminal, according to Marthe Robert, to the origins of the novel as a genre), the “poor Liza” or seduction tale, the fictional “autobiography” (*Jane Eyre*), the novel of sensation (an obsessive or “infernal” passion for Akhmakova results in a number of wild behaviors and topoi, such as eavesdropping, blackmail, struggles over firearms), the Russian Primary Chronicle (according to Dmitrii Likachev, Dostoevsky recreates aspects of “chronicle time” and imparts to his narrator features of a chronicler), and confession (from the ostensibly autobiographical narratives of Augustine and Rousseau to the overtly fictional narratives of children of the century and other types).⁴

assimilates and undercuts. The notebooks for the novel provide additional, often quite explicit, evidence of the metanovelistic layer.) For discussion of “the novel of the accidental family” as it emerges in *The Adolescent*, see: Liza Knapp, *The Annihilation of Inertia: Dostoevsky and Metaphysics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 167-171.

³As Dostoevsky argues in *Diary of a Writer*, gentry traditions support the formation and ensure the survival of Tolstoy’s more privileged hero; Dostoevsky suggests that the Bildungsroman of a child of an accidental family will be more open-ended. Much as he admired and was influenced by Dickens’s *David Copperfield*, Dostoevsky sought to steer clear of its early pathos and final triumphalism.

⁴Scholarship on the literary models and sources *The Adolescent* is rich. The oeuvre of Mikhail Bakhtin and the following studies were seminal to subsequent work in this field: A. L. Bem, *U istokovov tvorcestva Dostoevskogo* (Berlin: Petropolis, 1936); Jacques Catteau, *La Création littéraire chez Dostoïevski* (Paris: Institut d’Études Slaves, 1978); Horst-Jürgen Gerigk, *Versuch über Dostoevskijs "Jüngling". Ein Beitrag zur Theorie des Romans* (Munich, Fink Verlag, 1965); Robert Louis Jackson, *Dostoevsky’s Quest for Form* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966); Konstantin Mochul’skii, *Dostoevskii: zhizn’ i tvorcestvo* (Paris, YMCA, 1947). Dmitrii Likhachev discusses “chronicle time” in *The Adolescent* and elsewhere in *Dostoevsky in Poetika drevne-russkoi literatury* (Moscow: Nauka, 1979), 305-318. See *Roman des origines et origines du roman* (Paris: Grasset, 1972) by Marthe Robert for discussion of *The Adolescent* as an exemplary bastard tale.

The superb commentary in volume 17 of the *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1976) by G. Ia. Galagan, E. I. Kiiko, A.V. Arkhipov, K. M. Azadovskii, and I.D. Iakubovich is an invaluable resource on these literary models and in drawing attention to metaliterary references within the novel and notebooks.

To this list of models that Dostoevsky assimilated and undercut, I would like to add the novel of adultery. Certainly, as the Bildungsroman of the adulteress's child, *The Adolescent* could be seen as the natural sequel to the novel of adultery. What happens if we see *The Adolescent* as an actual novel of adultery, but one after Dostoevsky's own heart and in accordance with his poetics?

Adultery has been a staple of the novel from its early stages: Boccaccio's *Elegy of Lady Fiammetta* (1343-45), Lafayette's *Princesse de Clèves* (1678), Behn's *Love-Letters between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684-87), which figure among the very first novels of their respective national literatures, are novels of adultery. Novels of adultery such as Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857) and Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1877) (arguably also Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* [1850]), figure among the preeminent novels of the nineteenth century.⁵ Two heroes of Balzac's *The Muse of the Department* (1837) conclude that all literature turns on adultery and that if you banish illicit love, there would not be many books to read beyond Pascal and Bossuet.⁶ And Tolstoy in *What Is Art?*, written when he himself no longer practiced the novel genre, declares that "adultery is not only the favorite, but almost the only theme of all novels."⁷

Dostoevsky's oeuvre lacks a full-fledged novel of adultery: the novella "The Eternal Husband" (1870) is usually seen as his closest attempt.⁸ And yet novels of adultery, including European classics like

For further discussion of *The Adolescent* as Bildungsroman, see Margaret Goscolo, *The Bastard Hero and the Novel* (New York: Garland Press, 1990). Kate Holland's dissertation and recent work addresses "the problem of genre" (from folklore to family novel) in relation of Dostoevsky's novels including *The Adolescent*; her book, *The Novel in the Age of Disintegration: Dostoevsky and the Problem of Genre after the Great Reforms* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press: 2013), is forthcoming.

⁵ For discussion of the context in which the novel of adultery flourished and of the reasons for the subsequent demise of the genre, see Tony Tanner, *Adultery in the Novel: Contracts and Transgression* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).

⁶ Honoré de Balzac, *L'illustre Gaudissart; La Muse du département* (Paris: Garnier, 1970), 211.

⁷ Leo Tolstoy, *What Is Art?*, trans. Aylmer Maude (New York, Macmillan, 1985), 75.

⁸ Dostoevsky engaged with the novel of adultery in two other works that were critical to his development of the novel of the accidental family, his pre-exile *Netochka Nezvanovna* and his post-exile *Notes from the Dead House*. (Both cases are discussed in my *Dostoevsky and the Novel of the Accidental Family*.) In the final section of *Netochka Nezvanovna* the husband of Netochka's foster mother ostensibly forgives his

Madame Bovary, not to mention more programmatic Russian variations, such as Aleksandr Druzhinin's *Polinka Saks* (1847) and Nikolai Chernyshevsky's *What Is To Be Done?* (1863), are among the important intertexts for his novels. Dostoevsky was clearly drawn to the thematics of adultery, but he aligned himself with his beloved Dickens in writing novels that protest against the principles that fuel the adultery plot. In *Dombey and Son* (1848), Dickens tempts the reader with all the topoi as it casts Edith Dombey in the role of adulteress, only to have her reveal at long last to Florence Dombey that she had not been guilty of adultery after all. In the process, Dickens lays bare the dynamics of the adultery plot, implicates the reader in the process of (falsely) condemning the adulteress, while working all along to develop "a deeper and more charitable kind of understanding."⁹ In *The Adolescent*, where the adultery is real and documented, Dostoevsky achieves a similar effect using a totally different strategy.

In a canonical novel of adultery, the identity of the adulteress is obvious even if she does not wear a scarlet letter on her breast like Hawthorne's Hester Prynne. Novelists often indicate that the adulteress is by no means the only one with sin. For example, Hawthorne's narrator notes in regard to the community that stands on judgment of his

wife for an illicit love (not necessarily consummated), but he torments her mercilessly for this transgression; Dostoevsky suggests that Alexandra Mikhailovna's own experience of adulterous love and guilt moves her to compassion for the orphaned Netochka.

In *Notes from the Dead House*, Dostoevsky sets up what might have been a novel of adultery by making the fictional narrator, Gorianchikov, guilty of murdering his wife in a fit of jealousy. However, his manuscript, at least as edited by the narrator of the preface who acquired Gorianchikov's manuscript after his death, focuses on life in the Dead House and fails to address directly either his crime or the adultery that presumably drove him to it. In "Akul'ka's husband," a tale inserted into *Notes from the Dead House*, the theme of adultery returns in a first-person account by a husband who justifies the murder of a wife who was guilty of adultery of the heart.

⁹Nicola Bradbury, "Dickens and the Form of the Novel," *Cambridge Companion to Dickens*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 160. Bradbury writes that Dickens "betrays a fascination" with "the old topos of romance, adulterous love," but "explore[s] its allure in a deconstructive way." Of the suspicions about the adultery of Edith Dombey and Carker, Bradbury writes: "The mere suspicion of illicit passion tempts the reader with its telltale signs to construe a hidden narrative..." She notes that Dickens makes the reader complicit in supposing Edith guilty, whereas his ultimate goal is to develop in the reader "a deeper and more charitable kind of understanding" (160).

adulteress, “if truth were everywhere to be shown, a scarlet letter would blaze forth on many a bosom besides Hester Prynne’s.”¹⁰ Dostoevsky’s novel of adultery stands out because it fails to stigmatize its adulteress, Sophia Andreevna Dolgorukaia. That the first-person narrator of the novel is her love child, Arkady Dolgoruky, certainly plays an important role in how the adulteress is treated. The notebooks of the novel show that Dostoevsky considered using third-person narration before eventually deciding on first-person narration. In choosing the latter, he made the novel more Arkady’s, thereby including features of the bastard tale, Bildungsroman, and conversion narrative.¹¹ But Dostoevsky still envisioned that at certain points his first-person narrator would narrate “as if also *from the author*,” especially when it came to depicting scenes that happened “before” or “without” him (16:101). Dostoevsky thus uses a

¹⁰ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (New York: Penguin, 1986), 78.

¹¹ Dostoevsky follows the model of Dickens in drawing into question whether his first-person narrator is the hero of the tale he tells—or not. Thus, David Copperfield opens his narrative by drawing his status into question: “Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show.” In *Bleak House* (1853). Esther Summerson, who shares the narration, by turns, with a third-person omniscient narrator, also expresses anxiety about whether the story she tells should be about her or about others. Whereas Dickens decided to have it both ways in turns, Dostoevsky, after vacillating about his choice of form, opted for first-person narration, which he adapted into a hybrid form so that Arkady could include material “as if also *from the author*” (16:101). *The Adolescent*, following the precedent of Dickens’ orphan narratives, raises the question of whether children from “accidental families” grow up to be the heroes of their own tales or whether they have different, more communal, narrative concerns and are willing to cede to others. This feature also accounts for the messier plots of Dostoevsky’s and Dickens’ novels of the accidental family. The protagonist may be less likely to be monomaniacally focused on one central character or biological family line.

The Adolescent is further linked to *Bleak House* as narratives marked by the illicit sexual past of the narrator/protagonist’s parents. Both narratives seek to penetrate the mystery of their origins. (In Dickens’s novel, as is typical, unraveling the mystery consists of revealing identity and reconstructing facts, whereas Dostoevsky dispenses with this kind of narrative suspense to focus on the mysteries of the human heart.) In a telling Dickensian move, Esther Summerson’s godmother, who schooled Esther to greet her birthdays as anniversaries of her disgrace, has a stroke right after interrupting in a vengeful fury Esther’s reading aloud of John 8:1-12 (*Bleak House*, ch. 2). She dies a week later. Operative in Dickens’s novel is the tension between Christlike compassion and a spirit of vengeance. In Dostoevsky’s novel, as will be seen below, the former carries the narrative.

hybrid mode of narration to depict the mysteries of Arkady's (three) parents' relations, which ultimately emerge as the heart of the novel.

According to Bill Overton's typology, a novel of adultery requires that adultery be regarded as a sin or crime. Thus, for example, Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma*, which hinges on two adulterous affairs, is disqualified as a novel of adultery because it "grants little significance to marriage."¹² In Arkady's narrative, adultery is regarded as a sin. Arkady wonders how his mother could have arrived at such a sin when she was clearly "crushed ... by all the notions of the sanctity of marriage" [придавленная всеми понятиями о законности брака] (13:12; 13). In having adultery signify in *The Adolescent*, Dostoevsky reproduces the major topoi of the genre to create a novel that transcends not only the standard adultery plot with its interest in policing and punishing the adulteress, but also the variations envisioned as liberal correctives to this plot.

2. Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Dumas's Verdict

To understand the relationship of *The Adolescent* to the genre of the novel of adultery, it is helpful to juxtapose it to *Anna Karenina*, which also began serial publication in 1875.¹³ (Publication of Dostoevsky's novel in

¹²Bill Overton, *Fictions of Female Adultery, 1684-1890: Theories and Circumtexts* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002), 5. Thus, according to Overton, not every novel that features adultery is a novel of adultery. Overton notes that *The Charterhouse of Parma* "is never described as a novel of adultery, even though the liaisons of two pairs of adulterous lovers are central to its action" (5).

¹³In fact, as Dostoevsky saw it, *Anna Karenina* displaced *The Adolescent* in *The Russian Messenger*. *Anna Karenina* and *The Adolescent* both began to appear at the start of 1875, in Katkov's *Russian Messenger* and *Notes of the Fatherland*, respectively. Dostoevsky had originally thought of placing the novel in the *Russian Messenger* (where he had published his other novels), but ended up accepting Nekrasov's offer in part because he thought that Katkov was not offering him enough money; when he later learned that Katkov had committed to *Anna Karenina* (at twice Dostoevsky's rate), he concluded that *Anna Karenina* had displaced *The Adolescent*. Dostoevsky's initial decision to take on the novel of adultery while Tolstoy was also writing one is a coincidence, but it reflects the degree to which adultery was in the air at the time. A. L. Bem has discussed a number of possible ways that *The Adolescent* evokes Tolstoy and polemicizes on aesthetics grounds with his oeuvre. Bem argues that Dostoevsky did end up responding to *Anna Karenina* once both novels were under way: Bem finds evidence that Dostoevsky had the already-printed section of

Nekrasov's *Notes of the Fatherland* was completed by the end of the year, despite a three-month gap between the appearance of parts 2 and 3; publication of *Anna Karenina* stretched on into 1877.) *Anna Karenina*, often categorized as a novel of adultery, in its own way transgresses the boundaries of the genre and transcends the model of *Madame Bovary*. As Tolstoy's wife asserted, familiness was the idea that inspired Tolstoy to write this novel (just as the Russian people was the idea that inspired *War and Peace*).¹⁴ The lore about the genesis of *Anna Karenina* often refers to Tolstoy's viewing the corpse of his neighbor's mistress, after she had flung herself on the railroad track. This image of the dead mistress inspired Tolstoy to celebrate familiness. In *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy's adulteress dies, whereas the Levin family unit survives at Pokrovskoe. The novel thus preserves the idea that Tolstoy set out to celebrate in this novel. Whereas for some readers *Anna Karenina* ultimately unravels into two novels, a novel of adultery and a family chronicle, other readers see more direct links between the two. Once Anna is dead and forgotten, it may seem as though the adulteress dies *so that* familiness can be preserved.¹⁵ While not the only possible way of understanding the ending, this may be the most obvious explanation of Tolstoy's interweaving of the plotlines to make *Anna Karenina* something other, or more, than simply a novel of adultery.

Like *Anna Karenina*, *The Adolescent* combines adultery and familiness (also sacred to Dostoevsky), but Dostoevsky combines them in the *same* plotline and in the *same* family. Whereas Tolstoy plays on a binary opposition between unhappy and happy families, if only to deconstruct it, Dostoevsky bypasses this binary opposition altogether and uses *The Adolescent* to establish his claim to a new form of family novel. His novel of the accidental family captured the condition of the Russian family as he saw it, in a state of "chaos" and "decomposition," but ripe

Anna Karenina in mind when he wrote the versions of Versilov's confession that contain the famous moment where Versilov tells Arkady of his "favorite author" who now appears washed up.

It may be conceivable that Dostoevsky knew that Tolstoy was writing a novel of adultery (or simply about adultery) somewhat in advance of when *Anna Karenina* started to appear. Bem notes that Dostoevsky was fascinated with Tolstoy and tried to extract information about him from Strakhov starting in 1870.

¹⁴ Sophia Andreevna Tolstaia, diary, March 2, 1877.

¹⁵In her dissertation, "Infected Families: Outsider Figures in the Works of Leo Tolstoy" (U.C. Berkeley, 2001), Anne Hruska argues that the Tolstoyan family thrives by excluding outsiders, from adulteresses to other pariah figures.

for rebirth in a more loving form. In the form and content of *The Adolescent*, Dostoevsky hints at the program that would surface episodically in his one-man journal *Diary of a Writer*, in which he would comment on the state of the Russian family (25:173).¹⁶ Dostoevsky had, in fact, been at work on developing his new form of family novel at least since *Netochka Nezvanova*, the work left unfinished in 1849. In the 1870s, however, Dostoevsky, for all his genuine appreciation of Tolstoy's genius as a novelist, increasingly presented his own work as an alternative to Tolstoy's outmoded and elitist chronicles of the "genetic family" with their retrograde paradigms of "family happiness," which did not speak to the Russian people.

Tolstoy and Dostoevsky incorporated into their fictional worlds many of the same facts of Russian life and artifacts of European culture; yet when a common element appears in the Tolstoyan and Dostoevskian environments, differences stand out. We see this phenomenon, a form of complementary distribution, at play as they each responded in their novels to the verdict of "Tue-la!," with which Alexandre Dumas fils ended his pamphlet "L'Homme-femme" (1872). What is to be done, Dumas asks, with an adulterous wife? Dumas concludes, in the treatise's famous last line, that if all else fails—if she fails to be redeemed by motherhood or by the authority of her husband—the husband has the right and perhaps even the duty to kill his unfaithful wife. Dumas thus condemns the adulteress to death.

Dostoevsky put Dumas's pamphlet on his list of works to read in Ems during the summer of 1874 or 1875 (27:111).¹⁷ Whether he read it in Ems

¹⁶ For discussion see my "Myshkin Through a Murky Glass, Guessingly," *Dostoevsky's The Idiot: A Critical Companion* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 202-206; and *The Annihilation of Inertia: Dostoevsky and Metaphysics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 167-171.

¹⁷ The list also includes Dumas's *Affaire Clémenceau* (which, like *The Adolescent*, is the first-person narrative of an illegitimate son who suffers in boarding school as a result of his origins) and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, works that also were relevant to *The Adolescent*, which Dostoevsky began to draft in 1874 and started to publish in 1875. (For discussion of the relevance of these books on the Ems list to *The Adolescent*, see below). Dostoevsky visited Ems in the summers of both 1874 and 1875. The list Dostoevsky compiled of books to read in the library in Ems "if there will be time" is dated 1874-1875 by the editors of Dostoevsky's works (27:111). It seems more logical that Dostoevsky would have wanted to read these books in 1874 as he was preparing his novel, but also possible that he would want to do so in 1875 when publication was in midstream. Whether the list dates from 1874 or 1875, it attests his interest in these works in conjunction with *The Adolescent*. And,

or not, Dostoevsky was clearly familiar with its contents and conclusion from the wide coverage it received in the press. An article in *Notes of the Fatherland* observed that Dumas's "Tue-la!" had become a subject of parody and, in 1873, Dostoevsky, as editor of *The Citizen*, had published a piece by Nikolai Strakhov that referred to it. Interest in Dumas was renewed when he was elected to the Académie française in January 1874; the actual induction took place in February 1875, while Dostoevsky and Tolstoy were in the midst of novels in which they, too, asked what it to be done with an adulterous wife.

According to Boris Eikhenbaum, Tolstoy ruminated on Dumas's verdict as he began to compose *Anna Karenina*.¹⁸ Eikhenbaum reports that Tolstoy wrote his sister-in-law in 1873 praising Dumas for his lofty understanding of marriage and man's relationship to woman in general (119).¹⁹ Although Eikhenbaum expresses dismay at the degree to which Tolstoy appears to accept the license to kill that Dumas grants to husbands, he notes that Tolstoy had his own special way of responding to ideas. While Tolstoy avoided direct reference to Dumas's verdict in the novel, in the drafts of the dinner party scene at the Oblonskys' (part 4), the conversation was to turn to the "polemics" that surrounded "L'Homme-femme," and Rovskii (an early incarnation of Levin) was to argue Dumas's line ("он говорил, что ее надо убить"), even developing and supporting it ("развивал и подкреплял...").²⁰ In the final version, Tolstoy complicates Levin's response to adulterous women, including Anna Karenina, whom he initially condemns, by showing him empathetic to—or seduced by—Anna, when he finally meets her. As Anna kills herself, thus inflicting on herself what Dumas considered just deserts for adulterous wives, many readers cannot help but feel that *Anna Karenina*, for all its glory, follows the masterplot of death for the adulteress in what seems at times to be a punitive spirit even though the novel is, on the

regardless of whether he actually found the time to read or (in the case of *Madame Bovary*) reread these works, Dostoevsky was clearly aware of their connection to his novel of adultery/bastard tale, *The Adolescent*. Dostoevsky also refers to "L'Homme-femme" in *The Diary of a Writer* of July/August 1876 (23:94).

¹⁸ Boris Eikhenbaum, *Lev Tolstoi, Semidesiatye gody* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1974), 119-126.

¹⁹ The programs that Dumas outlines for rehabilitating the adulteress through motherhood resemble the neo-Rousseauvian prescriptions advocated by Tolstoy for solving social problems in his later treatise "What Then Is To Be Done?"

²⁰ Eikhenbaum, 124-125.

whole, characterized by a tension between sympathy and condemnation for its heroine.²¹

In *The Adolescent* Dostoevsky shows how far he was from Dumas and Tolstoy on the judgment of the adulteress and how different his novel of adultery was from the one Tolstoy was composing at Yasnaya Polyana. Dumas fils was clearly on Dostoevsky's mind as he composed *The Adolescent*: his reading list for the Ems library for 1874 or 1875 (27:111) included, in addition to *L'Homme-femme*, Dumas's *Affaire Clémenceau: Mémoire de l'accusé* (1867), a first-person bastard tale with features in common with *The Adolescent*. Both address the plight of illegitimate sons and feature early episodes describing the ridicule they suffer from their classmates because of their status. Clémenceau's mother is unwed (and not an adulteress, like Arkady's mother). However, Dumas's novel becomes an adultery tale: the narrator Clémenceau writes from prison as he awaits trial for having stabbed his adulterous wife. In his narrative, he seeks to justify his act, in a mode that looks forward to *L'Homme-femme* (and that may have inspired Tolstoy's "Kreutzer Sonata"). In the course of his career, Dumas fils moved from interest in, and sympathy for, the plight of fallen women (*La Dame aux camélias* [1848]; the sympathy for the unwed mother at the opening of *Affaire Clémenceau*) to preaching what Anatole France called a "gospel of punishment" and touting family values in a moralistic way. All this is alien to Dostoevsky who, by lifting the death sentence from the adulteress, envisions a new mode of novel.²²

Dostoevsky invites us to read *The Adolescent* as a rebuttal of Dumas and his verdict on the adulteress by referring to it explicitly. As Alphonsine, Lambert's French accomplice in his crimes of blackmail and kidnapping, but ultimately his victim, is guarding Arkady, she pours out her soul to him, complaining bitterly about Lambert, saying that there has never been a man "so cruel, so Bismarck" as he and complaining that he looks on a woman as "une saleté de hasard." Alphonsine then suggests that Lambert's contempt for womankind reflects the prevailing view: "Une femme, qu'est-ce que c'est dans notre époque? 'Tue-la!'—voilà le dernier mot de l'Académie française!.." [A woman, what is she in our time? "Kill her!"—that is the last word of the Académie française!..]

²¹Tanner, 14.

²² Nathaniel Hawthorne had, in his own way, lifted the death sentence in *The Scarlet Letter*. By contrast, *Madame Bovary*, *Anna Karenina*, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, *Effi Briest*, *The Awakening* and even *Polinka Saks* end up with the adulteress dead of unnatural causes or tragic illness.

(13:277; 339). With her poodle in her arms, Alphonsine may be one of Dostoevsky's wicked parodies of the French, but her remarks cut through to a vital truth. Dostoevsky imparts to this seemingly petty French minor character a question that looms large in his novel and beyond. What, indeed, does Dumas's verdict suggest about the value of a woman's life? And what value does a woman's life have in a culture that honors and glorifies a man who declares the right of husbands to kill disobedient wives? By explicitly quoting "Tue-la!" and presenting it as "the last word of the Académie française," Dostoevsky not only implicates this ultimate French authority in misogyny, he also evokes its role in passing literary verdicts and determining literary tastes according to patriarchal values.²³ The election of Dumas fils to the French Academy suggests endorsement of his literary works, from his novel *La Dame aux camélias* to his increasingly moralistic novels, dramas, and pamphlets. And, as Alphonsine indicates, it even suggests that French Academy ratifies Dumas's verdict.

Alexandre Dumas fils also figures as a sinister French double of Arkady Dolgoruky: Dumas fils, a lovechild separated from his mother and raised in boarding schools until taken in by his larger-than-life father, embraced authorship as a means of securing his place in society and coming to terms with his family origins and his and his father's love lives. Dostoevsky's young hero follows a similar path as he starts writing his "notes" in an effort to make sense of his own illegitimate origins, to sort out family romances, and to define his place in the world. As the novel ends, his first reader and critic, his former tutor Nikolai Semenovitch intimates that Arkady Dolgoruky may even become a novelist some day. But, by this stage, it is amply clear that Arkady Dolgoruky will be a very different novelist: his novels of the accidental family were a far cry from

²³ In celebrating Dumas fils, the French Academy continued its tradition of condoning literature that would keep women in their place and confine them to certain kinds of literary plots. See Joan DeJean, "Notorious Women: Marriage and the Novel in Crisis in France 1690-1710" (56-69) in *Scarlet Letters: Fictions of Adultery from Antiquity to the 1990s*, ed. Nicholas White and Naomi Segal (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1996), and *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) on how the French Academy from early on feared the novel as an upstart genre liable to spread subversion to women. The election of Dumas fils may be seen as the continuation of the policies and attitudes begun by Boileau in his attempts to discredit and control the novel as a transgressive genre that could potentially be used to promote subversive plots about women. Joan DeJean suggests that Boileau may have been angling for election to the Academy when he composed his "Satire on Women" ("Notorious Women," 66-67).

what Anatole France called the “gospel of punishment” [l’Évangile du châtiment] propagated by Dumas fils.

3. *Madame Bovary’s* Other Russian Relation

In “The Egyptian Stamp,” Mandel’shtam famously refers to Anna Karenina as *Madame Bovary’s* Russian sister. Given the differences in morphology between *Madame Bovary* and *The Adolescent* (for example, Emma ends up dead; Sophia does not) and the differences in realism (Flaubert is often associated with a form of godless realism, while Dostoevsky practices a kind of realism that depends on God’s presence), can a case still be made for including Dostoevsky’s novel in this sisterhood of novels of adultery?

Dostoevsky read *Madame Bovary* for the first time in 1867, a full decade after its publication and trial. During an otherwise tense meeting in Baden-Baden, Turgenev recommended *Madame Bovary* to Dostoevsky, declaring it to be the greatest novel of recent times. According to Anna Dostoevsky’s testimony, she and her husband spent their last money to buy the book and were both tremendously impressed.²⁴ Dostoevsky soon paid homage to *Madame Bovary* in his own fiction. In *The Idiot*, *Madame Bovary* becomes the bedside reading of Nastasya Filippovna during her last days (it is also possibly read by Myshkin, who pockets the book from her table).²⁵ Dostoevsky’s novella “The Eternal Husband” picks up where *Madame Bovary* left off: with a husband discovering his wife’s adultery from letters found after her death, with a meeting between the cuckold and the lover, and with an exploration of the fate of the adulteress’s child.²⁶ Dostoevsky and Flaubert share an interest in the

²⁴ A. G. Dostoevskaja, *Dnevnik 1867 goda* (Moscow: Novaia Moskva, 1923), 214.

²⁵ On Dostoevsky first reading *Madame Bovary* before writing *The Idiot*, see Liza Knapp, “Introduction,” *Dostoevsky’s The Idiot: A Critical Companion* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 7-9, 44-45.

²⁶ Dostoevsky’s novella details the psychology of an eternal husband, a man whose fate is to be a cuckold, or so the title implies. Whereas Charles Bovary’s “fate” (“C’est la faute de la fatalité!” he tells Rodolphe at the end of the novel) is encoded in his name, with its evocations of charivari, Dostoevsky suggests that it is the *nature* of the eternal husband to be a cuckold. Dostoevsky thus explores the relations of the cuckold and the lover, as well as the fate of the adulteress’s daughter, as if expanding on the suggestive but cursory treatment of these subjects in *Madame Bovary*. For her welfare, rather than leave her with her drunk and demented father, the lover arranges

cuckold, or “eternal husband,” who inspires charivari wherever he goes. Above all, in his study of “the eternal husband,” Dostoevsky carries to absurd psychological depths the refusal to condemn his adulterous wife that defines Charles Bovary.

Dostoevsky’s notebooks record his plan to reread *Madame Bovary*, as well as the works by Dumas fils mentioned above, in Ems during either the summer of 1874 (or 1875) “if there will be time” (17:111). Dostoevsky’s reading list confirms that he had these two French masters in mind as he composed his own novel of adultery. Dostoevsky’s adultery tale clearly runs a different course from that of *Madame Bovary*, but Dostoevsky follows Flaubert in developing strategies and staging scenes aimed at making the reader question the impulse to discipline and punish that often drives adultery tales. At the very opening of *The Adolescent*, Dostoevsky signals this concern in what may be a tribute to the opening of *Madame Bovary*.

As he introduces his narrative and himself, Arkady tells the reader right off that his legal father, Makar Ivanov[ich] Dolgoruky, was the former house-serf of the landowner Versilov, who is his biological father.²⁷ Arkady harps on the problems caused for him by his name, which made it necessary for him to explain that he was *simply* Dolgoruky, and not a Prince Dolgoruky (13:7; 7-8). Yet, as the ensuing narrative makes clear, his real gripe relates to his status as Versilov’s illegitimate son (and the son of an adulteress). After preliminaries about his origins, Arkady records a short episode to illustrate how he suffered at the hands of his fellow classmates. Arkady asks, “How does a schoolboy question a new boy?” [Школьник как спрашивает новичка?]. He then generalizes about how a new boy inevitably becomes “everyone’s victim” [общая жертва] subjected to ridicule and abuse. In his case, the ordeal began when it was revealed that he was not a prince. Arkady notes that subsequently, as his despair and exasperation at the teasing increased, he would simply blurt out that he was “the illegitimate son of [his] former

for the adulteress’s daughter her to be taken in by the family of his own former sweetheart, a family that proves to be welcoming, unlike the Homais who shun Berthe. Since the adulteress is dead of natural causes before the action begins, Dostoevsky is able to explore new plot possibilities for the novel of adultery, which traditionally has as its telos the punishment or reform of the adulteress.

²⁷By providing this information from the start, Dostoevsky distances himself from the Dickensian “novel of origins” where the identity of the parent[s] is withheld until the end and where that mystery drives the plot.

master, Mr. Versilov” [незаконный сын моего бывшего барина, господина Версилова], thus owning up to his illegitimate (and adulterous) origins (13:7-8; 7-8).

What happens here to this “new boy” [новичок], together with other features of Arkady’s experience in boarding school, calls to mind David Copperfield, when he is “a new boy in more ways than one” (Ch. XVI, as well as Ch.VI).²⁸ Indeed, at least from *David Copperfield* (1850) on, the humiliation of the “new boy” has become a topos of the Bildungsroman.²⁹ And this patently Dickensian scene showing a “new boy” being humiliated at school also links *The Adolescent* to *Madame Bovary* (1857). In a marked move, Flaubert begins his novel adultery with the young Charles Bovary rather than the young Emma Rouault.³⁰ More specifically, the novel opens with a “we” in school setting: “We were in study hall when the headmaster came in, followed by a *new boy* [un *nouveau*, in italics in the original], not wearing the school uniform, and a school servant carrying a large desk.”³¹ In the ensuing scene, this *nouveau*, Charles, a fifteen-year-old from the country who arrives wearing a ridiculous hat, is subjected to the kind of treatment that Arkady would declare universal for “new boys” at school: he is everyone’s victim, the scapegoat. Charles is made to seem ridiculous in the eyes of his

²⁸ Still, as the notebooks make quite explicit, Dostoevsky’s Arkady was not to fall into a Dickensian orphan plot, with a whining hero: “I don’t want Copperfield” [Я не хочу Копперфильда] (16:221).

²⁹ Dumas’s *Affaire Clémenceau* also contains an analogous early scene of harassment of *le nouveau*.

As Robert Belknap has observed, it is typical of Dostoevsky’s poetics of appropriation to have multiple separate or mutually interrelated sources for any one element. Thus, Arkady, taunted as “new boy” [новичок], joins a host of forerunners, including young Clémenceau, humiliated for being fatherless, young Bovary, subjected to a schoolroom charivari, and David Copperfield as “a new boy in more senses than one” (title of chapter 16). That Dostoevsky’s Gorianchikov comments that the other convicts subjected him when he first entered the prison hospital to the kind of scrutiny suffered by a new boy [новичок] at school (4:132) shows that Dostoevsky had a longstanding fascination with this topos, one that predates his reading of *Madame Bovary* but that could in fact owe something to Dostoevsky’s reading of *David Copperfield* (while still in Siberia).

³⁰ My discussion of the opening scene of *Madame Bovary* draws from Tanner’s “Charles Bovary Goes to School” (236-254), as well as from his arguments about the seminal importance of John 8:1-12 to the novel of adultery (esp. 20-22).

³¹ Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. & ed. Paul de Man (New York: Norton, 1965), 1.

classmates also because of his parental legacy, even if his origins are not scandalous as Arkady's. He suffers because of his maternal legacy, embodied in his ridiculous hat, and because of his patrimony in the form of his (bovine) name: when asked his name by the teacher, Charles cannot even articulate it properly. What he utters sounds like "Charbovari." Flaubert scholars have noted that as pronounced by le *nouveau* this name evokes associations that are to be tied up with his identity, his fate, and the novel's plot. In "Charbovari" Flaubert suggests the bovine realm of carts and cows, but he has also planted a reference to "charivari."³² Aside from being the name of the satirical journal in which Flaubert found the model for the ridiculous hat Charles wears, this term, used to denote the ritual cacophonous mocking serenade by a mob on a couple's wedding night, predicts and encodes Charles Bovary's fate. Although a charivari could accompany any kind of wedding, it was usually thought to be the community's response to a marriage that was bound to result in the wife making a cuckold out of her husband.

Why does Flaubert use this scene of initiation, standard fare for a Bildungsroman (as its presence in the earlier *David Copperfield* [1850] or the later *Affaire Clémenceau* [1866] attests), to open his novel of adultery? Why start with the judgment and humiliation of *le nouveau*? The *charivari* may be a clue: the commotion made by the mob as it ridicules the vulnerable new boy, Charles Bovary, seems to destine him for perpetual ridicule and eventual cuckoldry. More significantly, the charivari staged by the schoolboys signals Flaubert's interest in how the community feeds on disciplining and punishing its deviants. In the opening scene of this novel of adultery, Flaubert thus enacts a judgment scene that evokes the judgment of the adulteress described in John 8:1-11, a scene featuring a mob of scribes and Pharisees, ready to cast stones at the deviant, being inspired to look into their own hearts before condemning the deviant.³³ As Tony Tanner has argued in his classic

³² For extended discussion, see: Jean-Marie Privat, *Bovary Charivari: Essai d'ethnocritique* (Paris, CNRS Éditions, 1994).

³³ This opening scene of *Madame Bovary*, in fact, functions much like the opening scene of another important novel of adultery, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), which begins with Hester Prynne set forth in front of the crowd of Puritan scribes and Pharisees, not with a hat and a ridiculous name, but with a scarlet letter. Hawthorne shows the crowd reacting to Hester: some complain that her punishment is too merciful because according to the "Law and statute-book" she ought to die, but a lone voice speaks out for sympathy, reminding the rest that she must be suffering inwardly.

study *Adultery in the Novel*, this gospel pericope, so often reenacted or evoked in novels of adultery, encapsulates the tension between the impulse to punish the adulteress in the name of the social order and the call for the individual to look within, leave judgment to God, and show compassion to the sinner.

In the judgment of Charles Bovary, a fractured version of the gospel scene, Flaubert's teacher punishes him by having him conjugate "*ridiculus sum*," but adds with some compassion that he should not worry about his cap, which had gone missing in the commotion. Although the charivari dies down, the schoolboys periodically throw paper pellets at Charles, thereby recalling the stones that the scribes and Pharisees suggested should be cast at the adulteress (John 8:5). Flaubert's catchy use of the first person plural to open the novel ("We were in study hall..." "Nous étions à l'étude...") has the effect of including the narrator and the reader among those who will either join the charivari aimed at ridiculing Charles or look into their own hearts and refrain from condemning this unfortunate *nouveau*. As Tanner notes, with the opening word "we" and the opening scene of judgment, Flaubert primes his readers for the novel of adultery to follow, for the reader, along with the community, will be called on to judge—or show compassion for—the adulteress, the cuckold, and their child.³⁴

Flaubert famously announced that "the artist in his work should be like God in the universe, present everywhere and visible nowhere," but, as Pericles Lewis reminds us, "his idea of the godlike artist did not involve meting out punishments or pronouncing moral judgments."³⁵ Whereas the consensus among readers may be that Flaubert's adulterous

Tolstoy likewise incorporates direct and indirect references to John 8:1-12 in *Anna Karenina*.

³⁴ From Emma's cousin who spits through the keyhole of Emma and Charles's bridal chamber, to the townswomen who suggest that women like Emma should be whipped, to the blindman whose song haunts her death, to the Homais who refuse to let Berthe, the adulteress's child (and Homais's goddaughter), even play with their children, the community subjects Emma, Charles and Berthe to charivari and censure, and in the process models possible responses on the part of the reader. In the abiding love of Charles, in the compassion of Larivière, and in the adolescent adoration of Hippolyte, Flaubert provides alternatives. "What say you, reader?" is the challenge that Flaubert presents to us. (As discussed below, Flaubert's narrator refrains from judgment.)

³⁵ Pericles Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 42. Flaubert's statement about the artist being like God appeared in a letter to Louise Colet, December 9, 1852.

heroine Emma Bovary is unappealing and unsympathetic, especially when one compares her to Anna Karenina, Flaubert, for all his penetrating and merciless realism, still achieves a compassionate mode of narration. Flaubert's narrator does not cast stones.³⁶ Harry Levin has suggested that Flaubert incorporates into the novel, as it nears its end, a model of the lofty authorial stance that he himself in fact aspired to—in the person of Larivière, the fatherly doctor called to Emma's deathbed.³⁷ Larivière looks "into your soul" with a "glance more penetrating than his scalpel"; he is used to suffering, yet he cannot help holding back a tear of compassion even for the likes of Emma and Charles Bovary. *Madame Bovary* incorporates a variety of responses, from "our" charivari in the classroom or the shunning of Berthe Bovary by the Homais family to the abject love of Charles for Emma and the tear shed at the deathbed of the adulteress by Larivière. Ultimately, whether the reader pities the adulteress or not, Flaubert at the very least pushes the reader to face the scribe and Pharisee within. Flaubert's compassionate or at least non-judgmental narrator makes *Madame Bovary* into an important model for *The Adolescent*, Dostoevsky's novel of adultery.

In the trial following the publication of *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert's accusers condemned his novel for being too soft on crime and not vocal enough in affirming normative values. The author did not appear to condemn Madame Bovary for her adultery; nor did any character in the book. As Charles Baudelaire noted in his defense of *Madame Bovary*, for a world supposedly "engendered by Christ," this world was far too quick to cast stones at novelists who appeared not to condemn their

³⁶ See Harry Levin, *The Gates of Horn: A Study of Five French Realists* (New York: Galaxy/Oxford University Press, 1966), 263.

³⁷ Levin, 269. Flaubert describes Larivière as follows: "The doctor's buttoned cuffs slightly covered his fleshy hands—very beautiful hands, never covered by gloves, as though to be more ready to plunge into suffering. Disdainful of honors, of titles, and of academies, hospitable, generous, fatherly to the poor, and practicing virtue without believing in it, he would almost have passed for a saint if the keenness of his intellect had not caused him to be feared as a demon. His glance, more penetrating than his scalpels, looked straight into *your* soul, and would detect any lie, regardless how well hidden. He went through life with the benign dignity [...] [T]his man, accustomed as he was to the sight of pain, could not keep back a tear that fell on his shirt front." Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, Norton Critical Edition, ed. & trans. Paul de Man, (New York: Norton, 1965), 234.

adulteresses.³⁸ Flaubert's accusers may have been guilty of not understanding the workings of his free indirect discourse.³⁹ They also did not seem to understand Flaubert's godlike mode of narration—or the extent to which he captured the ethos of the gospel pericope about Christ and the woman taken in adultery.

Dostoevsky was subjected to similar criticisms: he was accused of being too soft on criminals, including fallen women, of airing reprehensible views, of not stating his own view authoritatively enough, of allowing too much “polyphony.” In fact, even without having been put on trial, Dostoevsky, at various points, has been as misunderstood as Flaubert. Although worlds apart in so many respects (Flaubert's use of so-called “free indirect discourse” vs. Dostoevsky's use of “polyphony”⁴⁰; Flaubert's “naturalism” vs. Dostoevsky's “fantastic realism”), Flaubert and Dostoevsky both took to heart the message of John 8:1-11 in a way that led to charges that their modes of narration were not authoritative. In their novels, too much is left up to the reader.⁴¹ As a result, Flaubert's realism applies a penetrating glance into the souls of adulteress, cuckold, scribe, and Pharisee, but may not ultimately be as soulless as some critics have suggested. (The narrator may well, like Larivière, shed a tear of

³⁸Baudelaire noted that the world condemning *Madame Bovary* “could hardly be entitled to throw the first stone at adultery. A few cuckolds more or less are not likely to increase the rotating speed of the spheres and to hasten by a second the final destruction of the universe. The time has come to put a stop to an increasingly contagious hypocrisy” (Charles Baudelaire, “*Madame Bovary*, by Gustave Flaubert,” Norton Critical Edition of *Madame Bovary*, 342).

³⁹ See Dominick Capra, *Madame Bovary on Trial* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) and Lewis.

⁴⁰ I am aware that some narratologists argue that Flaubert's “free indirect discourse” ends up undermining the “voice” of his characters because the narrator has the effect of talking over them or refusing to let them speak for themselves; in this respect, free indirect discourse differs from “polyphony.” The point I am making is that both novelists were perceived as not narrating authoritatively enough.

⁴¹ Flaubert's realism in *Madame Bovary* is hard on Emma, most agree. The novel may ultimately be harder on its scribes and Pharisees, from the schoolboys to the Homais family, despite their apparent triumph in the form of Homais's Légion d'Honneur. They triumph by being ruthlessly selfish and self-serving, even while advocating family values. As Baudelaire pointed out, Flaubert's realism illuminated the failings of the Church: “We expect the Church to be like the divine Mother, ready at all times to extend a helping hand, like a pharmacist who always has to be available,” but Emma finds that the pharmacy is closed (Norton Critical Edition of *Madame Bovary*, 342).

compassion even though his profession has made him quite used to human suffering.) More specifically, Dostoevsky's response to the pericope about Christ and the adulteress may have rendered him incapable of writing a "conventional" novel of adultery.⁴² Regardless of the plot trajectory (and what happens to the adulteress at the end), a novel "engendered by Christ" (to borrow Baudelaire's phrase) would naturally be loath to condemn its adulteress even when it makes her sin apparent. Dostoevsky, however, goes beyond Flaubert in exploring new plot possibilities for the novel of adultery.

4. The Horns of Pushkin and Radical "New" Adultery Plots in *The Adolescent*

Early in *The Adolescent*, Dostoevsky plants overt references to radical attitudes about adultery that were gaining currency at that time. Arkady

⁴² In fact, Dostoevsky began to treat the subject matter of adultery through the prism of this gospel passage in *Netochka Nezvanova* (1849), a work he envisioned as his first full-fledged novel. In the drafts, the adulterous couple exchanges a copy of a copy of a painting by Emile Signole depicting Jesus and the adulteress in John 8. In *Husbands, Wives, and Lovers: Marriage and Its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), Patricia Mainardi comments on the relative dearth of representations of Christ forgiving the adulteress in nineteenth-century French art, saying there were "virtually none," Signole's painting being the one exception she found (180 and n. 6, 268). This fact makes Dostoevsky's reference to this particular painting all the more revealing and shows the extent to which Christ's treatment of the adulteress, in word and image, was seminal to his treatment of adulteresses and fallen women from the 1840s on.

If Dostoevsky fails to follow the masterplot and fails to create a classic novel of adultery, it may be because, as a novelist, he behaved too much like Jesus in that scene described by John. In *The Idiot*, his hero Myshkin is in fact accused by Radomsky for outdoing Jesus: Radomsky tells him that Jesus forgave the adulteress but stopped short of encouraging her behavior. The pericope of Christ and the adulterous woman repeatedly emerged in Dostoevsky's thinking as he wrote *The Idiot*. Myshkin embodied this kind of Christlike understanding, which was non-judgmental in nature. Myshkin's behavior was too much for Radomsky, Prince Shch., and many of the residents of Petersburg and Pavlovsk whose response was more scribe-like and Pharisee-like than Christlike. The same may be said of the narrator, as well as many of the readers who have thought that Myshkin should have shown a tougher kind of love. Their responses all suggest the extent to which this kind of love is perceived as a threat to the social order. (See my "Myshkin, Through a Murky Glass, Guessingly," *Dostoevsky's The Idiot: A Critical Companion*, 191-215).

begins his narrative by attempting to unravel the mystery of his parents' adultery. Tempted by new social ideology to present his parents' adultery and his illegitimacy not as a shameful sin, but as a fact of life, if not possibly even a form of social protest against the old order, he had gone from identifying himself as "simply Dolgoruky" to blurting out what was apparently the real issue for him, namely, that he was the "illegitimate son of his former master, Mr. Versilov." One of his teachers (but only one) even regarded him as being "full of a vengeful and civic idea" [полон мстительной и гражданской идеи]. Arkady, however, stopped boasting about his adulterous origins when one of his classmates remarked, "Such feelings, of course, do you honor, and you undoubtedly have something to be proud of; but all the same, if I were in your place, I wouldn't celebrate my illegitimacy so much...you act like a nameday boy" [Такие чувства вам, конечно, делают честь, и, без сомнения, вам есть чем гордиться; но я бы на вашем месте всё-таки не очень праздновал, что незаконнорожденный... а вы точно именинник!] (13:8; 8). In this way, Dostoevsky repeats the dynamic of the "Pavlishchev's son" scandal in part 2 of *The Idiot*: whereas the young radicals, touting the enlightened social ideals of revolution, reveal Burdovsky to have been the illegitimate son of Pavlishchev and assert his rights and, more specifically, his claim to patrimony in the name of enlightened new social ideals, Myshkin notes that this boasting should be avoided because it compromises and possibly violates Burdovsky's mother: the son should be more respectful and protective of his mother. (The boy who sets Arkady straight is characterized as being "a very sarcastic fellow" and thus no Myshkin.) The rationale in both cases is the same: while their births may not be causes of shame, these sons do a disservice to their mothers by revealing, for their own profit or satisfaction, that they were born out of wedlock. Arkady confesses that after being told this, he "stopped *boasting* that [he] was illegitimate" [перестал хвалиться, что незаконнорожденный] (13:8; 8).

The narrator Arkady also mentions that Versilov had read Aleksandr Druzhinin's *Polin'ka Saks*, an 1847 novel of adultery, considered liberal in its time and subsequently regarded as a precursor to Nikolai Chernyshevsky's more radical *What Is To Be Done?* (1863). Dostoevsky thus invites us to consider the relationship of *The Adolescent* not only to *Madame Bovary*, but to new liberal views on the sanctity of marriage, which, in their own tendentious ways, opened up new plot possibilities for the adultery tale.

Druzhinin's novel of adultery avoids the classic tragic—and punitive—ending by introducing apparently more enlightened responses to adultery. Thus, the older and wiser husband, on learning that his wife has fallen in love with a dashing younger man, arranges for his wife to have her freedom to go off with her lover; he declares that he will henceforth be like a father to her. The wife is deeply moved by her husband's sacrifice and loves or respects him all the more. Druzhinin is recognized to have taken the kernel of his plot from George Sand's *Jacques* (1833). Chernyshevsky's *What Is To Be Done?* displays roughly the same morphology, with the politics updated and radicalized.⁴³

Dostoevsky's adultery tale in *The Adolescent* runs as follows: to fulfill her father's deathbed wish, eighteen-year-old Sophia marries middle-aged Makar Dolgoruky; Arkady claims not to know whether Makar married her "with great pleasure or only to fulfill his responsibility" [с большим ли удовольствием или только исполняя обязанность] (13:9; 9); within six months of this marriage, Versilov and Sophia begin their affair "just so" [так] (13:9; 10); Makar goes off to become a pilgrim, leaving Sophia free to live in adultery with Versilov. To this extent, Dostoevsky's adultery plot reads much like the masterplot for the liberal novel of adultery set forth above. For the morphology of Dostoevsky's novel of adultery to parallel that of a liberal social novel of the 1840s, inspired by George Sand, is not surprising. After Sand's death, Dostoevsky wrote an encomium in his 1876 *Diary of a Writer* acknowledging her formative influence on him (23:30-37). Plot similarities between *The Adolescent* and *What Is To Be Done?* are less expected. Is this what happens to his plot when Dostoevsky writes for a more liberal journal like *Notes of the Fatherland*?

As he wrote *The Adolescent*, Dostoevsky seemed to distance himself from more conservative political and literary platforms, even if this did not mean that he embraced mainstream liberal views or those of his host journal. (He vowed to his wife that he would not make accommodations to *Notes of the Fatherland*.) Still, Dostoevsky even invites the reader to consider possible affinities between communism and the vision of Makar

⁴³ The variations have largely to do with how to make it possible for the wife to marry her lover: in *Jacques*, the eponymous hero commits suicide but generously stages it so that it looks like an accident; in *Polinka Saks*, Saks appears to arrange a divorce (he has Polinka sign some papers, she goes into hiding, and when she emerges she is told that she is now free to marry her lover); and in *What Is To Be Done?* the husband fakes a suicide.

Dolgoruky. After listening with rapt attention to the teaching of Makar (who emerges as Arkady's and the novel's spiritual hero), Arkady labels it communist. Not familiar with this term, Makar expresses an interest in whatever Arkady could tell him about this way of thinking. Presumably, the reader will understand more than Arkady and thus be able to see an element of affinity between communist ideology and Makar Dolgoruky's spirituality, while never losing sight of the profound differences.

In *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky had lampooned the "new" view of love, marriage, and adultery in a conversation between Luzhin and Lebeziatnikov, the first a liberal opportunist and villain and the latter more of a true believer in the new social theory. Lebeziatnikov declares that adultery would cease to signify in the new system of civil marriage: were he to find himself with horns, he would regard his wife with greater respect because of her protest (6:289). Here Dostoevsky carries to the absurd degree attitudes novelized in *What Is to Be Done?*, a work that chronicles the lives of "new people."⁴⁴ When Lebeziatnikov quips that referring to the "horns" of the cuckold would go out of style and cease to figure in the lexicon, he deems it a "nasty, hussar-like, Pushkinian term," thus recalling Pushkin's literary references to the horns of the cuckold (such as those in *Eugene Onegin* [as noted in 7:390]), which were a staple of the literary mode that Chernyshevsky and other radicals rebelled against. By associating "horns" and Pushkin, Dostoevsky also alludes to the fact that the threat of horns contributed to the poet's untimely death: what was the stuff of farce and epigram in other contexts became a tragedy in his own life. A victim of old-fashioned adultery plots (thanks to his embrace of this romantic ethos), Pushkin never lived to write the novels of the family life that the narrator of *Eugene Onegin* mused about writing in his old age.

In *Crime and Punishment*, when Luzhin protests that he does not want to wear horns and bring up other men's children,⁴⁵ Lebeziatnikov

⁴⁴ The subtitle is "From the Tales of New People" [Из рассказов новых людей].

⁴⁵ In his memoirs, Alexandre Dumas père explains that adultery, the stuff of farce in the seventeenth century, became the stuff of tragedy in the nineteenth century in part because the French Revolution abolished primogeniture. Husbands became more reluctant to see their patrimony split between all children born to their wives because this could mean that other men's children inherited. Dumas reasons that under the old régime of primogeniture, patrimony stayed in the family because a husband could (hopefully) rely on the first son being his own. See Patricia Mainardi, *Husbands, Wives, and Lovers: Marriage and Its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003), 1-2.

dismisses children as a “social question” and tables discussion, preferring to expound on horns. Dostoevsky thus identifies what he personally saw as the stumbling block in radical thinking about adultery and other issues. For Dostoevsky, adultery was a family affair. Like Tolstoy, Dostoevsky asked what becomes of the adulteress’s child? Dostoevsky kept coming back to the idea that “socialism” and other social experiments such as those described in Chernyshevsky’s new novel would fail because human beings were not yet ready to turn their back on family life.

The question of what becomes of the adulteress’s child, ignored by Chernyshevsky in his new novel of adultery, lies at the heart of *The Adolescent*. Early in the novel, when Arkady confronts the Dergachev group and rails against their socialist solution to family happiness, consisting of “barracks, communal apartments, *stricte nécessaire*, atheism, and communal wives without children” [казарма, общие квартиры, *stricte nécessaire*, атеизм и общие жены без детей] (13:50; 57), Dostoevsky evokes the radicals’ solution to the problem of adultery and their neglect of children. Arkady’s protest recalls the passage in Dostoevsky’s notebooks of the early sixties in which, after acknowledging in socialism an impulse of love for humanity that was not unlike that of Christianity, he argues that the socialists would fail because human beings would cling to God and family:

Socialists want to regenerate man, to *liberate* him, to present him without God and without family. They conclude that once they forcibly change the economic side of his life, their goals will be reached. But man will change not because of *external* causes, but by no other means than through *moral* change. Man will not abandon God until he has convinced himself mathematically, he will not abandon family until mothers cease wanting to become mothers, and until man consents to turn love into dalliance. Can this be achieved by violent means? And how can one dare say in advance, without experience, that salvation lies in this? And be willing to risk all humanity for it? Western rubbish.

Социалисты хотят переродить человека, *освободить* его, представить его без Бога и без семейства. Они заключают, что, изменив насильно экономический быт его, цели достигнут. Но человек изменится не от *внешних* причин, а не иначе как от *перемены нравственной*. Раньше не оставит Бога, как уверившись математически, а семейства прежде, чем мать не захочет быть матерью, а человек не захочет обратить любовь в клубничку. Можно ли достигнуть этого оружием? И как

сметь сказать заране, прежде опыта, что в этом спасение? Западная дребедень (20:171-2).⁴⁶

Even back in the 1840s, when he had first engaged with the strains of socialist thought popular at the time, Dostoevsky clung to a vision of family happiness: he was thus skeptical of Fourier's phalansteries, but sympathetic to Pierre Leroux's and George Sand's quest to eliminate despotism and increase brotherly love within traditional family structures. Like his creator, Dostoevsky's young fictional hero of the 1870s, Arkady Dolgoruky, protests against the socialists' attempt to dismantle the family and their assumption that family problems such as adultery can be eliminated, Chernyshevsky-style. He refuses to accept the socialists' "finale" of "atheism, and communal wives without children..." (13:50; 57) even if this finale provides creature comforts: "And for all that, for that small share of middling profit that your reasonableness secures for me, for a crust and some warmth, you take my whole person in exchange! With your permission, sir: say my wife is taken away; are you going to subdue my person so that I won't smash my rival's head in? You'll say that I myself will become more reasonable then; but what will the wife of such a reasonable husband say, if she has the slightest respect for herself? No, it's unnatural, sirs; shame on you!" [И за все за это, за ту маленькую часть серединой выгоды, которую мне обеспечит ваша разумность, за кусок и тепло, вы берете взамен всю мою личность? Позвольте-с: у меня там жену уведут; уймете ли вы мою личность, чтоб я не разможил противнику голову? Вы скажете, что я тогда и сам поумнею; но жена-то что скажет о таком разумном муже, если сколько-нибудь себя уважает? Ведь это неестественно-с; постыдитесь!] (13:50; 57-58). Young Arkady, early in the narrative, assumes that the only alternative to the wife-sharing among the new socialists is the bashing your rival's head in that fuels old-school adultery tales. And yet, in his family chronicle, by contrast, adultery spawns new plot scenarios and, as a result, his accidental family ends up happy in its own unique way.

⁴⁶ Stepan Verkhovensky echoes the same sentiments in the draft for *Demons* (11:103).

5. "The Civilizing Influence" of the Novel and a Master's Lust

As a young Arkady attempts to explain his parents' adultery, he invites us to consider the possible influence of literary models on Versilov. Specifically, Arkady notes that Versilov had read both *Polin'ka Saks* and *Anton the Wretch*, "two literary works that had a boundless civilizing influence on our then rising generation" [две литературные вещи, имевшие необъятное цивилизующее влияние на тогдашнее подрастающее поколение] (13:10;10). If the former, Druzhinin's adultery novel[la], was thought to have raised consciousness about women's rights while revealing truths about patriarchal marriage, the latter, Grigorovich's 1847 tale of a suffering serf, often regarded as a precursor to Turgenev's *Notes of a Hunter* and the Russian equivalent of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in its influence on the public,⁴⁷ affirmed that serfs, who were denied human rights, had human feelings. The social issues addressed in these two novels intersect in the landowner Versilov's adulterous affair with his married serf. By planting a reference to these two influential novels of 1847, Dostoevsky reminds the reader of the social work done by nineteenth-century novels in Russia as elsewhere, as they prompted readers to consider aspects of their contemporary reality that they might otherwise neglect. Yet the references to these earlier works also indicate that Dostoevsky's narrative diverges from these tendentious models and intimate what Arkady's tutor will make explicit in the epilogue, that its realities of love, marriage, family life, and gentry/peasant relations are so complex and so chaotic that they require a new form.

According to Arkady, Versilov had possibly been affected by the "civilizing" influence of these works—he suggests that reading Grigorovich's tale of peasant suffering may have brought him to his estate and, thus, into contact with Sophia Andreevna. But, as Arkady puts it caustically, "could [Versilov] have started by explaining *Polin'ka Saks* to her? And moreover, they couldn't be bothered with Russian literature..." [Неужели же не мог начать было объяснять ей «Полиньку Сакс»? Да и сверх того, им было вовсе не до русской литературы...] (13:11; 12).

⁴⁷ Peter Kropotkin makes this analogy in *Russian Literature: Ideals and Realities* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2003, reprint of 1905 edition), 242. Of the impact of Grigorovich's tale, Kropotkin writes, further, that "No educated man or woman of that generation, or of ours, could have read the book without weeping over the misfortunes of Anton, and finding better feelings grown in his heart towards the serfs."

Was the woman's right to hegemony over her own heart, in the spirit of George Sand, as set forth through the liberal but still patriarchal prism of Druzhinin, of any relevance to what Sophia Andreevna lived through? Its liberal solution to extramarital love would have been anathema to Sophia Andreevna as she believed, even as she committed adultery, in the sanctity of marriage.

As for *Anton the Wretch*, Versilov was no doubt outraged and moved as he read of Anton's suffering when his horse was unjustly taken away from him. But the "civilizing" lessons of this literary work appear to have been forgotten when he, a landowner, took the wife of one of his serfs. As Arkady puts it, "Anton only had a horse taken from him, and here it's a wife!" [Так ведь у Антона только лошадь увели, а тут жену!] (13:11; 11). And yet Arkady insists that neither were his parents' relations simply a retrograde case of a "tyrant landowner" ("тиран помещик" in quotation marks in the original; 13:12; 12) exerting his "rights" according to a familiar pattern in life and literature. This scenario, heinous as it is, puts Sophia Andreevna in the role of passive victim of an unjust social custom—whereas she, in fact, feels responsible for her actions.

Sexual relations between landlord and peasant were both a fact of Russian life and a topos in the Russian novel. The coupling of master and house serf figures in the backstory of Turgenev's *Nest of the Gentry*, coming to the surface when Lavretsky, the product of a gentry father and serf mother, infuriated by his wife's adultery, feels the urge to mete out justice to his adulterous wife "as muzhiks do," by "beat[ing] her nearly to death" or by "strangl[ing] her with his own hands." (This is not to say that he does not also recall that his gentry forbearers were prone to their own forms of physical violence against their serfs, but the suggestion is that Lavretsky reasons that his mixed ancestry has made him especially prone to sexual fury.) Turgenev presents Lavretsky's father's step of marrying his peasant mistress and (initially) forfeiting his paternal blessing as an attempt to enact new liberal ideals and show his solidarity with *la déclaration des droits de l'homme*. But all this proves to be a sham or passing fancy, when he selfishly pursues his own individual happiness, abandoning wife and child to the care of his relatives. In *Fathers and Sons* Turgenev joins the widower Kirsanov and his peasant mistress Anfisa together in matrimony, in an act that legitimizes their son. Turgenev's and other literary models hover in the background of *The Adolescent*. Arkady wryly refers to Versilov's "novelistic [or romantic] position as a young widower" [романическое его положение молодого

вдовца] (13:12;13). However, Dostoevsky's Arkady reminds us of the novelistic precedents only to then distance Versilov from these models.

The lust of fathers and sons for their serfs is also a fact of life in Tolstoy's world of the traditional gentry family. As A. L. Bem has argued, *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth* was seminal to Dostoevsky's conception of the Tolstoyan family. Many features of *The Adolescent* may be read as Dostoevsky's response to the Tolstoyan family chronicle (Bem, 192-214). Thus, we might see the relations of Versilov and Sophia Andreevna as a variation on the episode in Tolstoy's trilogy episode involving the house serf Masha, an object of seduction for the narrator's *papa* and older brother; the narrator experiences similar lustful stirrings but ultimately questions seigniorial ways and even intercedes on Masha's behalf when she wishes to marry a fellow serf; that he is a drunkard likely to beat her adds a Tolstoyan twist to this apparent attempt to act as an enlightened young lord and to recognize Masha's rights to pursue her happiness. In this case, a situation that Tolstoy treats incidentally and cursorily in his trilogy becomes the heart of Dostoevsky's novel of the accidental family.⁴⁸

Arkady insists that his parents' relations deviated from the standard love plot of lascivious master and winsome serf. To prove his point that Versilov was, amazingly enough, not driven simply by sexual desire, Arkady offers a counterfactual conditional: had "entertainment" been all that Versilov had been after, then he would simply have had an affair with the unmarried and very pretty maid Anfisa Konstantinovna Sapozhkova. Hedging about whether or not his own mother had physical beauty or sex appeal, Arkady admits his own limited understanding of the dynamics of adult love. Nonetheless, he wants to believe that physical appeal was not the only criterion, since that would reduce all women "to the level of simple domestic animals" [на степень простых домашних животных] (13:10; 11).

⁴⁸ Nikolai Irtenev fails to take sexual advantage of Masha. Whether it is because he is too shy or not up to competing sexually with his father and brother or whether it is because compassion, the legacy of his mother, overcomes his lust, is a matter of interpretation. If it is the latter, then, in effect, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy move closer together.

6. “Falling into Pity” and the End of the Adultery Novel

Arkady reports that Versilov had claimed that in his affair with Arkady’s mother “there was not the least romance” [романа никакого не было вовсе], that “it all happened *just so*” [всё вышло *так*] (13:9; 10).⁴⁹ Does Arkady’s willingness to accept this desexualized or deromanticized version of his parents’ adulterous liaison simply reflect a natural squeamishness about his parents’ love life?⁵⁰ What if Versilov is telling the truth when he asserts that “романа никакого не было вовсе” [there was not the least romance]? Then where will the plot go? As Arkady reminds us, had sex been the driving force, the attachment between his parents would not have lasted because “the first condition of men like Versilov is to drop the girl immediately once the goal is achieved” [первое условие таких, как Версилов, --это тотчас же бросить, если достигнута цель] (13:12; 13). That this did not happen suggests that in fact there was more to it: “The sheer dimensions to which their love developed already constitute a riddle [or mystery]” [Уж одни размеры, в которые развилась их любовь, составляют загадку] (13:12;13). By contrast, a plot driven by sex would have run a more predicable course especially “once the goal is achieved.”

According to Arkady, Versilov himself denied that sexual attraction and romantic love were what drew him—and kept him attached—to Arkady’s mother.

I remember that one day he mumbled somehow strangely that my mother was one of those *defenseless* creatures, whom you don’t really fall in love with—on the contrary, not at all—but for some reason suddenly fall to pitying, for their meekness, is it, or for what, anyhow? nobody knows this, but you fall into pity for a long time; you fall into pity and become attached.... “In a word, dear boy, it sometimes happens that you cannot even unattach yourself.”

Он, я помню, однажды промямлил как-то странно: что мать моя была одна такая особа из *незащищенных*, которую не то что полюбишь, - напротив, вовсе нег, - а как-то вдруг почему-то *пожалеешь*, за

⁴⁹The Russian original may recall the extent to which sexual love is a staple of the novel since the word роман has the double meaning of romance and novel.

⁵⁰ See Susanne Fusso’s arguments about Arkady’s sexuality and how it “conditions” the narrative. Susanne Fusso, “Dostoevsky’s Comely Boy: Homoerotic Desire and Aesthetic Strategies in *A Raw Youth*,” *Russian Review*, Vol. 59, October 2000, 577-596.

кротость, что ли, впрочем, за что? -это всегда никому не известно, но пожалеешь надолго; пожалеешь и привяжешься... «Одним словом, мой милый, иногда бывает так, что и не отвяжешься» (13:11; 12).

Versilov seems right in his assertion that the pity or tender mercy that binds them is an everlasting love. After all, it survives even Versilov's abandonment of Arkady's mother in Europe and his attempt to "unmarry" her (when he devised the plan to marry Lydia, the stepdaughter of Akhmakova). Would romantic love or sexual passion have been as resilient? Versilov's remarks imply a more lasting kind of attachment that will yield a different kind of plot, one that does not follow a climactic trajectory, like those propelled by desire or vengeance.

That Versilov "fell into pity" rather than into (romantic) love had important consequences for Arkady's family life and for its chronicle. Had Versilov fallen into romantic love with Sophia Andreevna, their story might have resulted in a tighter plot, a more well-formed narrative, and a conventional novel of adultery or "poor Liza" tale, instead of a novel of the accidental family. Where a novel driven by sexual desire is telic, one with tender mercy at its heart will behave more mysteriously and perhaps more messily.

This is not to say that sexual desire is completely absent from the relations of Arkady's parents. Versilov had described to Arkady how, in the early stages of their relations, they "hid in corners, waited for each other in stairways, bounced away from each other like rubber balls, red-faced, if somebody passed by" [прятались по углам, поджидали друг друга на лестницах, отскакивали как мячики, с красными лицами, если кто приходил] (13:12; 12). Versilov's sense of shame suggests to Arkady that they regarded their adultery as a violation of the sanctity of marriage rather than as a master exerting his proprietary rights [13:10-11]. Nonetheless, this description suggests some element of sexual passion. Since Versilov is a master of contradiction, it is very likely that both forms of love were present. Dostoevsky envisions a mysterious mix of tender mercy and sexual love, much as he will in *The Brothers Karamazov*, where, in a significant move, Alyosha Karamazov will be sent out into the world to marry even as he spreads brotherly love to Karamazov brothers and others. By contrast, Tolstoy eventually insisted that tender mercy and sexual love were all but mutually exclusive (to the bewilderment of his wife and the detriment of his fiction).

Konstantin Mochulskii declares the compassionate love or tender mercy (любовь-жалость) that binds Arkady's parents together to be a mystical in origin and "more powerful than the most fiery passion" (427).

He furthermore sees Sophia Andreevna, an icon of humble and grieving motherly love, as someone who “takes sin upon her soul” as an adulteress (427). This mystical compassion remains a mystery to Arkady, although it animates Arkady’s world—and his narrative.

Arkady wants to know how his mother ended up an adulteress. Although he confesses to having sometimes been “unceremonious” with his mother because he was “a crude and ungrateful pup who finds them *guilty before him* [Makar Ivanovich]” [как грубый и неблагодарный щенок, считающий, что *перед ним виноваты*] (13:12; 13), Arkady ultimately, somewhat like the other adulteress’s child brought before the Russian reading public in this same period, Seryozha Karenin, had trouble reconciling his own mother with debauchery. (Seryozha refuses to join those who cast stones at his mother; Anna tells Seryozha that when he is older he will judge her, yet maybe he, too, would not have.) Arkady poses the problem thus:

The question is the following: How could she, she herself, already married for half a year, and crushed, too, by all the notions of the legitimacy of marriage, crushed like a strengthless fly, she, who respected her Makar Ivanovich as nothing less than some sort of God, how could she, in a matter of two weeks, go so far as such a sin? For my mother wasn’t a depraved woman, was she? On the contrary, I’ll say not beforehand, that it is even difficult to imagine anyone being purer in soul, and that for all her life afterwards.”

Вопрос следующий: как она-то могла, она сама, уже бывшая полгода в браке, да еще придавленная всеми понятиями о законности брака, придавленная, как бессильная муха, она, уважавшая своего Макара Ивановича не меньше чем какого-то Бога, как она-то могла, в какие-нибудь две недели, дойти до такого греха? Ведь не развратная же женщина была моя мать? Напротив, скажу теперь вперед, что быть более чистой душой, и так потом во всю жизнь, даже трудно себе и представить (13:12; 13).

Thus, Arkady presents what his mother has done as a sin, but neither he, nor his narrative, condemns her.

7. The Cuckold's Forgiveness and the Novel of the Accidental Family

The novel of adultery depends on the machinations of the cuckold to add tension to the plot and perhaps even to exert some control over its denouement. Makar Ivanovich Dolgoruky, Sophia Andreevna’s husband,

responds to his wife's betrayal and Versilov's tearful confession by letting her go, becoming a spiritual pilgrim, and writing periodic letters, inquiring of the family's health. In ceding his wife, Makar seems to mimic the behavior of Chernyshevsky's Lopukhov, Druzhinin's Saks, or of Sand's Jacques, cuckolds who grant freedom to their wives.⁵¹ But, in fact, it is not what Makar does that marks Dostoevsky's novel of adultery as different—but how he does it.

In what might be seen as Dostoevsky's last word on the adultery novel, when he comes "home" to Sophia Andreevna to die, the pilgrim Makar binds his accidental family together in mystical love. What Dostoevsky does with his adulteress, cuckold, and lover is all the more revealing if juxtaposed to what Tolstoy later does in *Anna Karenina* at the end of Part 4, when he, too, brings together adulteress, cuckold, and lover. What happens threatens to derail Tolstoy's adultery plot, which up until that point had been driven by sex and jealousy.⁵² When Karenin comes home from Moscow, aborting his trip to the far reaches of the empire (the civil-servant equivalent of a pilgrimage), and finds himself at Anna's bedside, as she lies near death from childbed fever, he is suddenly overwhelmed by a feeling of Christian forgiveness and compassionate love, pardons his wife and her lover, and even loves and cares for their child. However, this ménage-à-trois (or accidental family?) is doomed to fail.⁵³ Sex rears its ugly head again, Karenin once again falls victim to "the coarse force" and the action returns to the familiar track of the conventional adultery plot; Karenin's subsequent actions, whether done in the name of his Christ or out of revenge, propel Anna to her death.

By contrast, Dostoevsky's cuckold, Makar Dolgoruky, forgives his wife completely and for all time. Arkady presents this fact as an essential element in his family chronicle (or in his parents' adultery tale) when he closes the first chapter of part 3 (which describes the arrival of the pilgrim

⁵¹ In Druzhinin's novel, Saks liberates both his wife and his serfs, follows his wife and her new husband for a period while he assures himself that she is happy—in fact, she is dying—then goes home to his estate. In Sand's earlier novel, Jacques had been tormented in his nobility.

⁵² The relevant installment of *Anna Karenina* appeared in the March 1876 *Russian Messenger*. Publication of *The Adolescent* had finished at the end of 1875.

⁵³ Caryl Emerson has suggested that there is some thing false about this scene in *Anna Karenina*: it seems as though it belongs in a novel by Dostoevsky rather than one by Tolstoy. See "Tolstoy versus Dostoevsky and Bakhtin's Ethics of the Classroom," *Approaches to Teaching Tolstoy's Anna Karenina*, ed. Liza Knapp and Amy Mandelker (New York: MLA, 2003), 114-15.

Makar in their midst) with the following observation: “All her life, in fear and trembling and awe, she had greatly respected her lawful husband, the wanderer Makar Ivanovich, who had magnanimously forgiven her for all time” [Очень уж почитала она всю жизнь свою, во страхе, и трепете, и благоговении, законного мужа своего и странника Макара Ивановича, великодушно и раз навсегда ее простившего] (13: 292; 360). The use of the past perfective participle suggests not only that Makar forgave completely—that the perfective action was performed—but that this past action and its effects abide. By contrast, whatever acceptance or forgiveness Jacques, Saks, Lopukhin, Karenin, and other cuckolds proffered to their adulterous wives at various points in other novels seems conditional and angry.⁵⁴ Makar’s forgiveness is of a higher order.

In his most extended pronouncement about his wife’s adultery, Makar acknowledges that his compassionate forgiveness of his wife and Versilov may have run counter to the expectations of the law, to what he *ought* to have done. In his last days, he tells his assembled (accidental) family:

It is I who am guiltiest of all before God in this matter; for, though you were my master, I still shouldn’t have condoned this weakness. So you, too, Sofya, don’t trouble your soul too much, for your whole sin is mine, and in you, as I think, there was hardly any understanding then, and perhaps in you also, sir, along with her,” he smiled, his lips trembling with some sort of pain, “and though I might have taught you then, my spouse, even with a rod, and so I should have, I pitied you as you fell down before me in tears and concealed nothing...and kissed my feet. I recall that, my

⁵⁴ Charles Bovary may come close to a purer form of forgiveness, but he only finds out about his wife’s adultery after she is dead; in general, he lacks the spiritual authority and active love of Makar.

Although the cuckolds of these novels were regarded by critics and fans as being remarkably enlightened in their response, even noble and selfless, there is something disturbing about them. Jacques, it turns out, is tormented by his own tortured family situation; thus his suicide not only liberates his wife but frees him from an incestuous love of his own; his wife is punished for the intrusion of her lover into the nursery where she breastfed her twins (by her husband): the baby seems to die as a result. In *Polinka Saks*, the husband goes to extreme ends to “liberate” his wife (along with his serfs), but he maintains a sordid patriarchal hold, warning the lover that he will punish him if he fails “his” (Saks’s) Polinka. And he ends up stalking Polinka and her lover, under the pretext that he just wants to make sure that she is happy before he goes back to his estate. In fact, she is dying. His triumph comes when he receives a letter from her after her death in which she sings his praises. These model husbands of liberal novels of adultery clearly lack the *blagoobrazie* and the genuinely selfless love that Makar embodies

beloved, not as a reproach to you but only as a reminder to Andrei Petrovich...for you yourself, sir, remember your nobleman's promise, and marriage covers everything... I'm saying it all in front of the children, sir, my dear sir.

А виновен в сем деле Богу всех больше я; ибо, хоть и господин мой были, но всё же не должен был я слабости сей попустить. Посему и ты, Софья, не смущай свою душу слишком, ибо весь твой грех - мой, а в тебе, так мыслю, и разуменье-то вряд ли тогда было, а пожалуй, и в вас тоже, сударь, вкупе с нею,» - улыбнулся он с задрожавшими от какой-то боли губами, «- и хоть мог бы я тогда поучить тебя, супруга моя, даже жезлом, да и должен был, но жалко стало, как предо мной упала в слезах и ничего не потаила... ноги мои целовала. Не в укор тебе вспомнил сие, возлюбленная, а лишь в напоминание Андрею Петровичу... ибо сами, сударь, помните дворянское обещание ваше, а венном всё прикрывается... При детках говорю, сударь-батюшка... (13:331; 410-411).

Makar was aware that according to the law, punitive action should have been taken against the adulteress. Indeed, human institutions, from peasant custom to the French Academy, condone cuckolded husbands taking “justice” into their own hands, at least to some degree. Thus, Makar says, “I might have taught you then, my spouse, even with a rod, and even ought to have...”⁵⁵ Yet, instead of conforming to the injunction to punish, Makar Dolgoruky took pity and forgave his adulterous wife, thereby acting in the spirit of the gospel pericope of John 8:1-11, in which Jesus, reminded by the scribes and Pharisees that according to the law the

⁵⁵ Makar's reference to taking “justice” into his own hands to “teach his wife” “with a rod” to punish an adulterous wife recalls “tale of Akul'ka's husband,” an inserted narrative in *Notes from the Dead House*: the peasant hero-narrator tells his interlocutor, another peasant, of how in a rage of jealousy, he beat his wife to death because she loved another man; he shows no remorse. (His interlocutor condones beating your wife as the best method of keeping your wife in line, but he suggests to Akul'ka's husband that actually killing her is counter-productive.) Gorianchikov, the main narrator of the work, overhears this conversation and includes it in his “notes” without passing judgment. How could he? He himself had been sent to penal servitude for having killed his wife in a crime of passion, no details are given, but the reader is left to conclude that he suspected her of adultery. But he, unlike Akul'ka's husband, appears to have been profoundly changed, for the better, by his experience—he narrates his notes with compassion for sinners, perhaps because he, in the spirit of the gospel pericope, has been convicted by his own conscience and refrains from condemning others. (This is discussed in my *Dostoevsky and the Novel of the Accidental Family*.)

woman taken in adultery should be stoned, defies custom to opt for forgiveness. Makar's Christlike forgiveness further demonstrates how far Dostoevsky's novel is from those novels engendered by the ethos of "Tue-la!"

Makar extends the non-judgmental compassion that he shows to his adulterous wife to other sinners. In discussing suicide with Arkady, Makar recognizes suicide as a grave sin, yet he refrains from judging, telling Arkady "but the Lord alone is the only judge here, for He alone knows everything—every limit and every measure" [но судья тут-един лишь Господь, ибо ему лишь известно все, всякий предел и всякая мера] (13:310; 383). After Makar says that people should still pray for such a sinner, Arkady questions him, "But will my prayer help him if he's already condemned?" [А поможет ему молитва моя, коли он уже осужден?] (13:310, 384). Makar then warns that those who doubt the efficacy of such prayers are themselves straying. He urges Arkady to pray for sinners, asking, "How is it for someone who has nobody to pray for him?" [Так какво же тому, за кого совсем некому молиться?] (13:310; 384). Makar's ethos of praying for sinners, from adulteresses to suicides, rather than condemning them, is a key to Arkady's narrative.

To understand how Dostoevsky transforms the novel of adultery into a novel of the accidental family, it is helpful to juxtapose Dostoevsky's novel to that of Tolstoy (which was, as Eikhenbaum notes, influenced by Dumas's verdict). The universe of Tolstoy's novel lacks the spirit of forgiveness for adulteresses, suicides, and others sinners that Makar practices and preaches. Who is there to pray for Anna, adulteress and suicide? After her suicide, even Dolly seems to forget her. At novel's end, Levin "gets faith from a peasant" (as Dostoevsky quipped in response to *Anna Karenina* in *Diary of a Writer*), but Makar's peasant faith is radically different from the message about living for God rather than for the belly that saves Levin's soul. And, even if we take the epigraph of *Anna Karenina* ("Vengeance is mine; I will repay") in the spirit of Romans to mean that vengeance is God's and human beings should refrain from seeking it on sinners, Tolstoy's novel still seems to suggest that Anna got her just deserts. To the best of the reader's knowledge, nobody prays for Anna's soul, whereas in Dostoevsky's novel of adultery, Makar urges the family that gathers around him to pray even for suicides. How different Tolstoy's novel of adultery would be if in Part 8 the family gathered at Pokrovskoe were told to pray for Anna, a suicide and an adulteress. Instead, they all seem to focus on their own concerns and on saving their own souls.

In *The Adolescent*, Dostoevsky responded to the tradition of the novel of adultery, and to specific tokens of the type. He rejected Dumas's position outright. Like Flaubert in *Madame Bovary*, Dostoevsky was attuned to the temptation of the community to stone the adulteress and to throw spitballs at the *nouveau*. In the long run, however, Dostoevsky did not adopt Flaubert's plot although he did seem to aspire to an authorial stance not unlike that of Flaubert, especially insofar as it might in fact have created, on the literary plane, the aura of a novel "engendered by Christ" (to borrow Baudelaire's phrase). Like novelists with progressive social views, Dostoevsky has the cuckolded husband refuse to take vengeance, yet Dostoevsky does not join those liberals who declare the act of adultery a non-event; in *The Adolescent*, adultery remains a sin. Tony Tanner sees the canonical novel of adultery as poised between two extremes, vengeance against the adulteress or sympathy for her, and stresses the importance of a balance. In going beyond the dichotomy of vengeance and sympathy to create an authorial presence that imitates Jesus in John 8:1-11,⁵⁶ Dostoevsky creates a new kind of novel of adultery. And when he takes the further steps of having his adulterers "fall into pity" and of having his cuckold forgive them once and for all, Dostoevsky binds the accidental family together in a mystical love that creates a new novelistic form, the novel of the accidental family.

⁵⁶ In his seminal study, *Adultery in the Novel*, Tony Tanner argues that classic novels of adultery depend on a tension between on the one hand condemnation of the adulteress, often to death, and on the other hand sympathy for her, like that Jesus shows in the pericope about the adulteress in John 8. Tanner cites *Anna Karenina* as an example of a novel of adultery in which these two "methods of confronting adultery" operate in tension with each other. Tanner continues, "Indeed it is arguable that it is just such a tension between law and sympathy that holds the great bourgeois novel together, and a severe imbalance in either direction must destroy the form" (14). So deeply did Dostoevsky imbibe both the plot and the spirit of John 8, that it may have rendered him incapable of writing a *conventional* novel of adultery, one that (according to Tanner's definition) must strike a balance between Jesus-like sympathy for the adulteress and some more hard-line condemnation of her in the name of the social order.