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Anna Karenina: Tolstoy's Polemic with *Madame Bovary*

PRISCILLA MEYER

Did Tolstoy intend a dialogue with Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* when he wrote *Anna Karenina*? Boris Eikhenbaum agrees with the French critics who found traces of Tolstoy's study of French literature in *Anna Karenina*, though he emphasizes the complexity of Tolstoy's struggle with the tradition of the "love" novel.¹ George Steiner long ago concluded that "all that can be said is that *Anna Karenina* was written in some awareness of its predecessor."² But the evidence of that awareness is so abundant and suggestive that it is worth examining the possibility of a more detailed dialectic than Eikhenbaum and Steiner suppose.³

Tolstoy arrived in Paris on 21 February 1857. Less than a month earlier, on 29 January, Flaubert and the editors of *La Revue de Paris* had been taken to court for "outrage to public and religious morals and to morality."⁴ The defendants were acquitted of all charges, which verdict was announced on 7 February.⁵ Tolstoy alludes to none of this in his diary, noting on the day of his arrival, "spent a lot of money,

I would like to thank my wonderful colleagues Michael Danahy (Romance Languages) and Susanne Fusso (Russian) for their painstaking readings of the draft of this article.

¹ Boris Eikhenbaum, *Lev Tolstoi. Semidesiatye gody* (Leningrad, 1960), 152. He quotes S. de Pirelée's "Léon Tolstoi" (*Mademoiselle* 19 [1911]) as an example of judgments widespread in the French press that *Anna Karenina* "makes one recall" *Madame Bovary*.

² George Steiner, *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky* (London, 1959), 48.

³ Other critics have rejected this possibility. Several French opinions are collected in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1965). For example, Romain Rolland: "The effect of Tolstoy's art does not depend on stylistic contrivance as does Flaubert's" (p. 189); André Maurois, "What does Tolstoy owe to Balzac, Flaubert? He read them, but it does not seem to us that he learned writing technique from them. His realism does not resemble that of our naturalists. . . . Elegant literary devices in the spirit of Flaubert are foreign to him" (p. 219–20); and Jean Jaurès: "Tolstoy is most concerned with moral problems. You cannot compare him in this respect with Balzac, Sand, Flaubert, Zola. . . . Flaubert cares most about artistic form, but feels a scornful pity for the unhappy and grey human race!" (p. 580) All unattributed translations are mine.

⁴ Herbert Lottman, *Flaubert* (London: Methuen, 1989), 137. All dates are in New Style.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 139.

saw absolutely nothing. Diarrhea.”⁶ In Paris he spent a lot of time with Turgenev, went frequently to the opera, and admired the many plays of Molière he attended. He also read a lot of Balzac—*Cousine Bette*, as well as the foreword to the *Comédie Humaine*, which he finds “petty and arrogant” (10 April 1857) and is disgusted by Balzac’s “depravity” (20 April). At the time that Tolstoy was reviling Balzac, Michel Lévy brought out *Madame Bovary* in book form (in mid-April), which was followed by a flurry of reviews, in Sainte-Beuve’s regular Monday column for *Le Moniteur Universel*, and in all the major journals;⁷ later there were responses by George Sand, Baudelaire and many others. Fifteen thousand copies of the novel were sold in two months. As Francis Steegmuller put it, “since the death of Balzac, no novel had so impressed the public.”⁸

But Tolstoy says nothing about all this in his diaries. In fact, he who says so much about so many things over so many decades says almost nothing about Flaubert’s novel. When G. A. Rusanov spent two days talking about literature with him in August 1883, Flaubert is mentioned: “*Madame Bovary* T. had forgotten, but he remembers that when he read it, he had ‘liked it.’”⁹ Forgotten it!

Tolstoy did, however, express his admiration for Flaubert years later. In an interview with a French journalist in 1904, he said:

One of my most favorite writers is your incomparable Flaubert. There is a truly magnificent artist, strong, exact, harmonious, full-blooded, perfect. His style is filled with the purest beauty. Can one say this of many writers?¹⁰

Furthermore, Tolstoy’s library contained a copy of the Russian translation of *Madame Bovary* published in *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* in 1858.¹¹ Interestingly, it had been torn out of the journal and bound together with Shakespeare’s *Othello*,¹² suggesting that Tolstoy did indeed read Flaubert’s novel in the context of the adultery question that so occupied him in the early 1870s.¹³

The genre of the novel of adultery was, of course, widespread in European literature of the nineteenth century, and its representatives naturally share many features: notably, it is the fate of adulteresses either to go mad or, more often, to die, by disease (Nana gets smallpox), or in childbirth, or they are murdered. Adulterous males die on the battlefield, in a train crash, in exile. A child often serves as a source

⁶ Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii (PSS)*, 90 vols. (Moscow, 1928–58), 47:113. Future citations to the *PSS* will be given by volume and page number in the text.

⁷ Lottman, *Flaubert*, 140.

⁸ Francis Steegmuller, *Flaubert and Madame Bovary* (London, 1947), 286.

⁹ Quoted in N. N. Gusev, *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva L. N. Tolstogo 1828–1890* (Moscow, 1958), 561. Tolstoy did, however, comment on reading Turgenev’s translation of Flaubert’s *The Catholic Legend of Saint Julian the Hospitaller* in *Vestnik Evropy*: in a letter to Strakhov (22 April 1877), Tolstoy called the tale “an abomination” (“merzost’”) and “disgusting filth” (“vozmutitel’naia gadost’”) (Gusev, *Letopis' zhizni*, 472). But in a later letter to Strakhov (1881), he called *Anna Karenina* “merzost’” as well (ibid., 63, 61).

¹⁰ George Henri Bourdon, “En écoutant Tolstoi,” *le Figaro*, 15 March, 1904. Quoted in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* 2:21.

¹¹ *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 1858, no. 8:1–222.

¹² V. F. Bulgakova, ed., *Biblioteka L'va Nikolaevicha Tolstogo v Iasnoi poliane* (Moscow, 1975), pt. 2, no. 3558.

¹³ See Eikhenbaum, *Lev Tolstoi*, pt. 2, chap. 4.

of grace.¹⁴ As Tony Tanner puts it in *Adultery and the Novel*, the problem of a woman's role in marriage becomes a paradigm for the problems created by interrelating patterns, of which marriage is the mediator that attempts to harmonize the natural, the familial, the social, the religious and the transcendental realms.¹⁵ Certainly this describes concerns of both Flaubert's and Tolstoy's novels and could account for some of the similarities of plot line: a woman in her twenties with a young child is married to a man she finds dull (and who becomes ludicrous and pitiful in her eyes once betrayed); she takes a passionate lover and the relationship deteriorates into sensuality, in part due to its illicit nature. The women begin to imagine the decline of their lovers' ardor; with Emma it is her second lover who brings out her fears of losing him—like Anna, Emma becomes more and more demanding, increasing her lover's alienation. Both Léon's and Vronsky's mothers oppose their sons' liaisons—they are jeopardizing their careers. The adulteress tries to be ever more physically alluring but becomes jealous and desperate as she feels she is losing her lover. With nothing meaningful left, she commits suicide in a moment of frenzy. The novel passes judgment on her—she has broken both divine and human law, but she has our sympathy inasmuch as we are made to consider society's complicity in the adulteress's unresolvable dilemma. As Tanner puts it, "the tension between law and sympathy . . . holds the great bourgeois novel together."¹⁶ While marriage brings harmony in Shakespeare's mythologized society, in nineteenth-century society marriage is the mythology which the novel of adultery demythologizes.

No doubt it is this fairly elaborate and precise set of parallels that has led many critics to note, *en passant*, certain similar features between the two novels—the whole description of the decline in the relationships between Emma and Léon and Anna and Vronsky, for example.¹⁷ But none of them has proposed an overall relationship of *Anna Karenina* to *Madame Bovary*. Steiner, for all his initial disavowal that no more can be said, seems to be nursing a suspicion: he writes that Anna's inability to focus on reading her book on the train ride home to Petersburg "seems to derive directly from Tolstoy's remembrance of *Madame Bovary*." He hedges his bets: when Anna suddenly notices the absurdity of Karenin's ears at the station, Steiner queries: "Is this not Tolstoy's version of Emma Bovary's discovery that Charles makes uncouth noises while eating?"¹⁸

It is worth pursuing Steiner's speculation that Tolstoy incorporates remembered details of Flaubert's novel into *Anna Karenina*. The two sets Steiner mentions cannot be said to be central in themselves. Given the extensive congruence of the novels' plots, it would be unlikely that these would be the only details to correspond in over eight hundred (English) pages.¹⁹ There are remarkable parallels between the two novels not only in theme and plot line, but in character description, motifs and central emblems.

¹⁴ Judith Armstrong, *The Novel of Adultery* (London, 1976), chap. 3, esp. 121–37.

¹⁵ Tony Tanner, *Adultery and the Novel* (Baltimore, 1979), 15–17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁷ See Armstrong, *Novel of Adultery*, 11–112.

¹⁸ Steiner, *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky*, 67.

¹⁹ Citations from both novels will be drawn from the English translations: *Madame Bovary*, trans. Alan Russell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950); and *Anna Karenina*, trans. Rosemary Edmonds (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1954).

HEROINES

There are several similarities in appearance between Emma and Anna, though they may carry different meanings in the text; it will be possible to infer what Tolstoy might be suggesting by these parallels once they are sketched out. Emma surprises Rodolphe by being “turned out like a Parisian!” (p. 143); her elegance of dress and manner is remarked by all throughout the book. She has a “bird-like tread” and dark hair (p. 120). At her father’s farm, the wind ruffles “stray wisps of hair at the nape of her neck” (p. 30). Her eyes are “made to look black” by her “long curving lashes” (p. 148). During her relationship with Rodolphe, Emma is repeatedly described with narrowed eyelids or half-closed eyes. These features will recall Anna’s elegance of figure, light tread, black hair with “the willful little curls that always escaped . . . on the nape of her neck” (p. 93), and her habit which grows after she enters into adultery of narrowing her eyes, squinting through her “thick lashes” (p. 75).²⁰

The break in the heroines’ lives is located in a ballroom scene;²¹ the Viscount’s ball at La Vaubyessard gives Emma her first experience of the fatal taste for luxury, aristocracy and sensuality she acquired at the convent. It is emblemized by the cigar case with the green silk border that Charles finds in the road on the way home to Tostes. This green is related to the color of both of Emma’s lovers’ coats: Rodolphe is wearing a “green velvet frock coat” when Emma first sees him, and Léon wears a green coat to his tryst with Emma at the Rouen cathedral that leads to the infamous carriage ride (p. 140).

An elegant ball also determines Anna’s fate: there Vronsky forsakes Kitty for her. The ball scenes are naturally characterized by their luxuriousness, which in both is indicated by hothouse plants: it is winter in Moscow when Kitty wears a rose in her hair and Anna has pansies at her wrist; the landing with the mirror at which Kitty pauses is lined with “growing plants” and the staircase is “flower-decked” (pp. 91, 90). The ladies at La Vaubyessard wear in their hair “forget-me-nots, jasmine, pomegranate blossoms, wheatears or cornflowers,” while Emma, like Kitty, wears a rose in her chignon; the guests are served pomegranates and pineapple (pp. 63, 62). The elegant foreign influences in Moscow are French or English, while Anna wears Venetian lace; in France the old chateau at La Vaubyessard has been torn down and a “modern building in the Italian style” erected in its place (p. 59). Emma’s fatal dance is a sensual waltz with the Viscount which leaves her dizzy and panting; the waltz is the determining dance for both Anna and Kitty for it is the dance that makes Vronsky’s preference for Anna clear to Kitty.

Anna shares another determining scene with Emma: the opera. Both Flaubert and Tolstoy maintain an ironic distance from the opera, describing it as the meeting

²⁰ Anna’s squint has also been used to suggest a source for *Anna Karenina* in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*. See Edwina Jannie Blumberg, “Tolstoy and the English Novel: A Note on *Middlemarch* and *Anna Karenina*,” *Slavic Review* 30 (October 1971): 561–69. Blumberg draws parallels in plot and characterization (dry husband drives young wife into adultery with younger man; vacation in Italy with portrait painting, amateur versus professional). Eliot’s Maggie Tulliver (*Mill on the Floss*) as well as George Sand’s eponymous Indiana are unhappy black-haired married women tempted to adultery. Interestingly, none of the motifs discussed in the present paper are thematized in these novels.

²¹ Steiner compares the two ball scenes, too, contrasting Flaubert’s ironic distance which he finds artificial to Tolstoy’s using no single point of view (*Tolstoy or Dostoevsky*, pp. 65–66).

place of the best society. Flaubert stresses the provincialism of audience and performance of the celebrated tenor Lagardy, who combines “ingredients of the hairdresser and toreador” (p. 235). Tolstoy focuses on the hypocrisy and affectation of the society condemning Anna for crimes they themselves commit. The performance by Patti is incidental; but one wonders how Tolstoy selected the apparently random bit of social chitchat which closes the scene: Vronsky's friend Stremov says to Anna, “There are no more tenors. *Le moule en est brisé*” (p. 578). The opera scene determines Emma's next adulterous affair: from being in love with the legend of the tenor Lagardy she begins to imagine herself his mistress; at that point Léon appears in her box and her fantasy devolves to him. The failure of Emma's second attempt to find love leads to her demise. For Anna, her evening at the opera reveals conclusively the impossibility of her position in society, which contributes to her final tragedy.

There are more similarities. For example, the way their husbands summon the heroines to bed: Charles says, “Come on, Emma, it's time,” while she is waiting for Rodolphe (p. 181); Karenin comes in to Anna's room at midnight in his bedroom slippers and says, “Time for bed now,” with a “special smile,” and Anna, thinking of how Vronsky looked at Karenin at the station, goes into the bedroom with her usual fire “quenched or hidden far away” (p. 127). We can add to Steiner's soup-slurping/ears-protruding parallel Charles's “stubby” fingers and Karenin's habit of cracking his knuckles; Charles's “common” manner and Karenin's pedantic one (p. 199).

Tolstoy uses several motifs to characterize Anna that Flaubert had used for Emma. Vronsky's relations with his race horse Frou Frou are clearly meant to relate to his affair with Anna; Emma's affair with Rodolphe begins when they go riding together on his horses. The horses and heroines are linked by a bird motif: In Tolstoy's novel, after Frou Frou falls, she begins “fluttering on the ground . . . like a wounded bird,” while Anna in the stands is described a few pages later as “fluttering like a caged bird” (pp. 218, 223). Emma has a “bird-like step,” and swallows dart by when Emma comes to Abbé Bournisien for spiritual guidance (p. 120); Rodolphe's house has two “swallow-tailed weathervanes” (p. 176); and Emma's dreams are said to “[drop] in the mud like wounded swallows” (p. 197). Thus the bird motif connects the heroines to their adulterous affairs; Flaubert names the coach that takes Emma to Rouen for her trysts with Léon the *Hirondelle*, which means “swallow” in French.

Anna and Emma share another motif—fog, haze, mist. When Emma takes Rodolphe as her first lover she is ecstatic: “A misty blue immensity lay about her” (p. 175). The scene of her first tryst with Rodolphe is surrounded by mist, from the “haze in the poplars” to Emma's features that are discernible “in a haze of blue” through her blue veil (pp. 171, 172);²² her vision of eloping with Rodolphe “hovered

²² Flaubert also uses a blue haze in *A Simple Heart*. The story is a kind of complement to *Madame Bovary*, as Tolstoy's later stories *The Kreuzer Sonata* and *The Devil* are to *Anna Karenina*. Flaubert wanted to answer the charge that he was inhuman in his novel when he wrote the touching tale of Félicité's truly ideal loves. Her religious fervor is associated with a blue cloud of incense when, on her deathbed, Félicité achieves the religious exaltation that Emma had only imitated. Félicité associates cigar smoke with her nephew because she learns he is in Havana. The motifs that had denoted corrupt, empty sensuality in *Madame Bovary* are used to connote ideal love in *A Simple Heart*.

on the horizon . . . in a haze of blue” (p. 208).²³ It is the narrator who makes this association, but Anna herself speaks of the blue haze, associating it with the innocence of first love:

“I remember that blue haze, like the haze on the mountains in Switzerland. That haze which envelops everything at that blissful time when childhood is just coming to an end and its huge merry circle narrows to a path which one treads gaily yet with dread into life’s corridor” . . . Kitty smiled . . . “How did she go through it? How I should like to know the whole romance of her life!” she thought, recalling the unromantic exterior of Anna’s husband. (p. 87)

The motif appears again when Kitty realizes the growing attraction between Anna and Vronsky at the ball and “a mist spread(s) over her soul” (p. 96). Tolstoy uses the blue haze for what he deems a genuine form of ecstatic love; by contrast, the violent break of the natural order through adultery he associates with the shrieking, whirling snowstorm surrounding the future lovers’ meeting on the platform, though Vronsky’s pursuit produces “joyful, glowing and exhilarating” visions in Anna similar to Emma’s delight at her new role of adulteress (p. 119). Tolstoy reserves grey mist for another kind of bliss on Levin’s estate, of which more in a moment.

Of course, these similarities between Anna and Emma only make us more aware of how very dissimilar they are. Emma is hopelessly shallow and selfish, as is shown by her relationship to her daughter Berthe. Anna before her affair with Vronsky is intelligent, direct, unpretentious and a devoted mother. Emma’s downfall, like Tatyana’s in *Eugene Onegin*, is caused not by reading romantic novels, as her mother-in-law suggests, but rather by misreading them, identifying with their heroines in a particularly sensual and indiscriminate way. Anna, by contrast (here is Steiner’s parallel again), is unable to read her English novel on her train ride home after dancing with Vronsky. “She was too eager to live herself. If she read how the heroine of the novel nursed a sick man, she wanted to be moving about a sickroom with noiseless tread herself” (p. 115). When she does identify, it is to make an unconscious moral judgment:

The hero of the novel had nearly attained his Englishman’s idea of happiness . . . and Anna was wishing she could go to the estate with him, when she suddenly felt that he must be feeling ashamed and that she was ashamed for the same reason. (p. 115)

It is only the trivial Betsy Tverskaya and her circle who read the way Emma does and project role-playing onto Anna. Betsy reports that Liza Merkalov “raves” about Anna, who is “like a real heroine out of a novel” (p. 319).

And this suggests Tolstoy’s idea: Emma is conceived by Flaubert as an imitation, the product of *idées reçues*, of undigested clichés drawn from a hodgepodge of literature (much as Razumikhin accuses Raskolnikov of being a “translation”). After Emma first enters into adultery, “she remembered the heroines of books she had

²³ Tanner traces the motif of mist, fog and vapors, connecting it to the “fog in Emma’s head” (*Adultery and the Novel*, 312–14).

read, and that lyrical legion of adulteresses began to sing in her memory with sisterly voices that enchanted her" (p. 175).

But Tolstoy wants to consider the dilemmas faced by the adulteress at the deepest level possible, and to do that he creates an appealing, intelligent heroine, one who rejects the accepted practice of deceiving her husband. As is well known, in his early drafts of *Anna Karenina* Tolstoy described his adulteress as unattractive, both physically and morally. As the novel evolved, he seems to have identified with her need for passionate love (to which his story *The Devil* testifies so vividly that it was only published after his death, in 1911), and her stature grew as his sympathy increased.²⁴

It is possible to understand Anna as an ideal version of Emma. Emma admires and imitates luxury; Anna already has it. Emma wants a passionate, aristocratic, dashing lover but finds only imitations of one; Anna gets Emma's wish in Vronsky.²⁵ Emma wants to be the heroine of a novel; Anna is seen as one by her peers. Emma fantasizes eloping to Italy with the pseudo-aristocrat Rodolphe (who clenches his teeth in predatory passion); Anna and the truly aristocratic Vronsky (of the "even," "regular" teeth) do in fact elope to Italy. In this way, Tolstoy isolates and distills the moral and psychological aspects of adultery for a young married woman, purifying it of the concern with social status and material luxury that obsess Emma and positing an intelligent, self-aware heroine. The unfulfilled young woman with small child and uninspiring husband who takes a passionate lover and commits suicide is the obvious point of departure. But something more complex and specific suggests that Tolstoy had *Madame Bovary* in mind while writing *Anna Karenina*, something that indicates a subtle reading and reinterpretation of Flaubert's novel.

EMBLEMS

Much has been written about the centrality of the railroad to Tolstoy's novel.²⁶ Anna and Vronsky meet at the station where a peasant is killed by a train; their understanding is sealed during the snowstorm on the platform on the return trip; Anna throws herself under a train; and we see Vronsky for the last time on his way to war back at the Moscow station where it all began. The train from the outset is associated with metallic clanking, with incipient romantic passion, and with the peasant's death in which Anna sees an omen. Anna and Vronsky both dream of a dirty peasant with a matted beard, and, oddly, in both their dreams he is speaking French. Vronsky "vividly recalled the peasant again and the incomprehensible French words the man had muttered, and a chill of horror ran down his spine" (p. 380). In her dream Anna can make out the words "il faut le battre, le fer; le broyer, le pétrir . . ." (p. 386).

²⁴ Like Gary Saul Morson ("Prosaics and *Anna Karenina*," *Tolstoy Studies Journal*, vol. 1 (1988): pp. 1-12, p. 8), I think that the book condemns Anna, but rather for her breach of the sacrament of marriage than for the self-indulgence that Richard Gustafson berates her for. See Richard F. Gustafson, *Leo Tolstoy: Resident and Stranger* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), esp. 118-32.

²⁵ Judith Armstrong says that Vronsky is not a seducer "of the Rodolphe type" (*Novel of Adultery*, 84).

²⁶ See, for example, Sydney Schulze, *The Structure of Anna Karenina* (Ann Arbor, 1982), 117-22; and Elisabeth Stenbock-Fermor, *The Architecture of Anna Karenina* (Lisse, The Netherlands, 1975), esp. 66-71.

And as Anna falls to the rails, “a little peasant muttering something was working at the rails” (p. 802). The grotesqueness of the dream has to do in part with the incongruity of the muzhik, that essence of Russianness, speaking French. Throughout the novel the corrupt characters speak French, or the innocent ones are distorted by having to use French in elegant society, starting with the Tatar waiter who translates Levin’s soup and kasha into “kasha à la Russe” (p. 47). Like the French language, the railroad is an artificial foreign graft onto Russia causing, among other things, concentration in the cities, as Levin says. The city in *Anna Karenina* is associated with luxury and debauchery; Levin has called Moscow a Babylon, as the Countess Nordston tauntingly reminds him at Kitty’s. And Flaubert does the same with Rouen: “that ancient Norman city lay outspread beneath her eyes like an enormous metropolis, a Babylon awaiting her” (p. 274).

The Yonville priest Bournisien warns against Emma’s proposed trip to the opera in Rouen in language close to Tolstoy’s in *What Is Art?*:

Where you have these couples brought together in luxurious surroundings, with all the adornment of worldly display, the barbarous dressing-up . . . all that must breed a certain laxity, and give rise to unclean thoughts, impure temptations! (p. 229)

The Hironnelle is the conveyance that makes impure temptations available to Emma Bovary. From the outset, the carriage has ominous dimensions, marking key moments in Emma’s decline toward suicide. Charles and Emma arrive in Yonville on the Hironnelle to meet the members of the cast assembled at the Lion d’or. The Hironnelle passes as Léon brings Emma a cactus and while Rodolphe begins his verbal seduction of Emma at the fair. Like the railroad, the Hironnelle is accompanied by the “rattle of old iron” (p. 340). Tanner makes this connection too, noting that iron is “an inexplicably ominous part of [Emma’s] surroundings.”²⁷

The railroad for Anna is associated with the French-speaking peasant; an analogous figure follows Emma alongside the Hironnelle:

Up the hill, in the midst of the carriages, trudged an old tramp with his stick. A mass of rags covered his shoulders, his face was hidden by a battered beaver hat stuck on like an inverted bowl. When he removed this, he revealed where his eyelids should have been a pair of gaping holes all stained with blood. The flesh was shredded into red ribbons, discharging matter which had congealed in green scabs down to his nose. His black nostrils twitched convulsively. To address you, he threw back his head with an idiot laugh; and then his glaucous eyeballs, rolling in perpetual motion, shot up towards his temples and knocked against the open sore.

As he followed the carriages he sang a little song:

“When the sun shines warm above
It turns a maiden’s thoughts to love”

And the rest of it was all birds and summertime and green leaves.
(p. 278)

²⁷ Tanner traces the iron motif (*Adultery and the Novel*, 316–17), connecting the whirring of Binet’s lathe and a passing cart “loaded with iron rods” (p. 303) to the Hironnelle.

The romantic song is in grotesque contrast to the revolting beggar, like the muzhik and the French-speaking world. The heroines' quests for romantic love are far removed from the reality of the world around them. The heart of both novels is contained in this emblem of adulteress, conveyance and grotesque peasant; components of the image map the novels' denouements.

Anna, prompted by the death of the peasant under the train, realizes right away that it is an omen. Emma too begins to sense something uncanny when the hideous beggar appears:

Sometimes he would appear suddenly behind Emma, with his head uncovered. She would spring back with a cry. . . .

Often he would thrust his hat in at the window as the coach was moving off, clinging to the footboard with his other arm and getting splashed by the wheels. His voice, at first a feeble whine, rose shrilly, rending the darkness like a plaintive utterance of some obscure distress. Heard through the jingle of horse bells, the murmur of the trees and the rumbling of the empty carriage, it had a suggestion of remoteness that upset Emma. It penetrated the very depths of her being like a whirlwind in an abyss. It swept her away into the vast spaces of a limitless melancholy. However, Hivert . . . lashed out at the blind man with his whip. It cut across his sores, and he dropped in the mud with a howl of pain.²⁸

The jingling horse bells are part of a motif that culminates in the tolling of the church bells at Emma's death, just as the motifs of clanking metal accompany Anna's trajectory toward death. The muzhik reappears at Anna's death, and it is ambiguous whether she sees him in reality, or in her imagination:

She tried to get up, to throw herself back; but something huge and relentless struck her on the head and dragged her back. "God forgive me everything!" she murmured, feeling the impossibility of struggling. A little peasant muttering something was working at the rails. And the candle by which she had been reading the book filled with trouble and deceit, sorrow and evil, flared up with a brighter light, illuminating for her everything that before had been enshrouded in darkness, flickered, grew dim, and went out for ever. (p. 802)

Emma's peasant also reappears at her deathbed scene just before the darkness:

Suddenly there was a clumping of sabots on the pavement outside, the scraping of a stick, and a voice came up, a hoarse voice singing:

"When the sun shines warm above,
It turns a maiden's thoughts to love."

Emma sat up like a corpse galvanized, her hair disheveled, her eyes fixed, gaping.

"All across the furrows brown
See Nanette go bending down,
Gathering up with careful hand
The golden harvest from the land."

"The blind man!" she cried.

²⁸Page 278. I am indebted to Anuj Desai for his observations on the uncanny dimension of the beggar.

And Emma started laughing, a ghastly frantic desperate laugh, fancying she could see the hideous face of the beggar rising up like a nightmare amid the eternal darkness.

“The wind it blew so hard one day,
Her little petticoat flew away!”

A convulsion flung her down on the mattress. . . . She was no more.
(p. 337)

II

Tolstoy began his novel with the adultery story, but was discontented with it and set it aside, even after having sent it off to the printer. Gradually he provided what he called the novel’s “scaffolding,” the story of Levin.²⁹ What “scaffolding” does his story provide, and can a relationship be found here, too, to Flaubert’s novel?

When the poet Fet read the first installment of *Anna Karenina*, he wrote Tolstoy, “Fools will carry on about Flaubert’s realism, but here everything is ideal.”³⁰ From the catalogue of similarities that point to differences between Flaubert’s novel and Tolstoy’s, it appears that Tolstoy restores the ideals that Flaubert shows are being lost. Both authors seem to locate the formulation of these ideals in the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Tolstoy described his devotion to Rousseau in 1901:

I have read all of Rousseau, all twenty volumes, including the *Dictionary of Music*. I did better than adore him, I made a veritable cult of him: at fifteen, I wore his portrait around my neck like a holy image. I knew pages of his writing by heart. I think that I could have written them.³¹

Tolstoy listed Rousseau’s *Confessions*, *Émile*, and *Julie, or the New Héloïse* above Pushkin, Schiller and Gogol on a list of about fifteen books that made a big impression on him between the ages of fourteen to twenty.³² At the end of his life, Tolstoy wrote:

Rousseau has been my master since I was fifteen. Rousseau and the Bible have been the two great and beneficent influences of my life. Quite recently I had occasion to reread some of his works and I felt the same elevation of the spirit and admiration as when I read him in my first youth (1905).³³

After his stay in Paris in 1857, Tolstoy made a pilgrimage to Clarens, “the same village where Rousseau’s *Julie* lived.”³⁴

As Milan Markovitch has noted, several of the incidents in *Anna Karenina* may have their source in *Julie*: like Levin, Wolmar works with his peasants, struggles with the question of faith, begins to lose some of his skepticism when faced with the possibility of his wife’s death.³⁵ With Rousseau’s ideals so much in mind, how might Tolstoy have read *Madame Bovary*?

²⁹ Tolstoy’s development of “podmostok” is discussed in Eikhenbaum, *Lev Tolstoi*, 167ff.

³⁰ Letter of 12 April 1869. Quoted in N. N. Gusev, *L. N. Tolstoi, materialy k biografii s 1870 po 1881 god* (Moscow, 1963), 253.

³¹ Paul Boyer, *Chez Tolstoi, le Temps*, 27 August 1901.

³² PSS 66:67–68.

³³ Quoted in Milan Markovitch, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et Tolstoi* (Paris, 1928), 5.

³⁴ Letter to T. A. Ergol’skaia, 18 May 1857, PSS 60:189.

³⁵ See Markovitch, *Rousseau et Tolstoi*, 48–50, for further parallels.

Flaubert lampoons Rousseau, displaying the degradation of Rousseau's ideals that takes place in bourgeois life. Charles's first wife, the scrawny widow Dubuc, is named Héloïse, but is the antithesis of either a romantic lover or a wifely ideal, neither *une ancienne* nor *une nouvelle* Héloïse. Homais invokes a confused version of Rousseau's ideas about education from *Émile* when he encourages Charles to agree to Emma's piano lessons so that she can teach her daughter: "It's my opinion that children ought to be taught by their mothers. It's an idea of Rousseau's, still a bit new, perhaps, but one that's bound to prevail in the end, like mother's milk and vaccination" (p. 272). The lessons, of course, are a cover for Emma's adulterous trysts; and the novel shows romantic literature to be the source of her malaise.³⁶ Another of Rousseau's views travestied is the argument he makes against the theater in *Lettre à d'Alembert*: Flaubert puts it in the mouth of the inadequate priest Bour-nisien, where it is trivialized but proven in some sense to be valid—Emma is corrupted by going to the theater.

Flaubert shows the absence of Rousseau's ideals in contemporary French life. In *Madame Bovary* Flaubert allows his reader to infer the possibility of Rousseauian ideals, in religion, in art, in true science and in nature, through their travesty by the shallow characters (for example, Léon's seduction of Emma begins in the cathedral). The only place these ideals are present in positive form in the novel is in the perfection of Flaubert's verbal medium, over which he is famed for having agonized. Not the characters but the author finds meaning in *Madame Bovary*, as in this impersonal evocation of natural beauty seen from the hill over Yonville:

The water flowing along beside the grass makes a streak of white between the meadow and the plowland, and the whole effect is that of a large mantle spread out before you, its green velvet collar trimmed with a silver braid.
(p. 82)

The green velvet that had betokened luxury and romance for Emma and that Charles therefore uses for Emma's shroud occurs in its only pure role in Flaubert's narration; here the green velvet carries no pretensions, but rather functions as a metaphor that creates a synthesis between man and nature in artistic prose. Man plants the meadow but God makes it grow; the novelist, "like God in the universe,"³⁷ makes the metaphor and divine inspiration assist it to unify the novel's levels of meaning.

While Flaubert leaves the glories of nature and his own description of it beyond the ken of his characters, Tolstoy uses Levin as scaffolding to integrate the ideals contained in *Julie* and *Émile* into the life of the Russian landowner. Flaubert's location of meaning in his own artistic synthesis is, of course, antithetical to Tolstoy's views. But Flaubert's green velvet fields are the point of origin in Levin's quest for meaning as well:

Last year's grass grew green again and the young grass thrust up its tiny

³⁶ Flaubert said of *Madame Bovary*, "It was in hatred of realism that I undertook this book. But I equally despise that false brand of idealism which is such a hollow mockery in the present age." See letter to Madame Roger des Genettes, October or November 1856, in Gustave Flaubert, *Correspondence*, ed. Eugène Pasquelle (Paris, 1900), 4:134.

³⁷ As Flaubert says he should be, "present everywhere, and visible nowhere" (*ibid.*, 2:155).

blades. . . . Invisible larks broke into song above the velvety green fields and the ice-covered stubble-land. . . . Spring had really come. (p. 169)

This is the description of spring on Levin's estate, where, after Kitty has refused his offer of marriage, Levin locates his hopes for the future, first without Kitty, but by the end of the novel, together with her. Like Levin's economic analysis, in which agriculture is the basis of a nation's wealth, his spiritual analysis bases moral existence in working his land.

The scene of Levin's joy on that spring morning brings together several motifs that are crucial to both novels: green, velvet, haze and cigars. While all four motifs depict Emma's moral decline throughout *Madame Bovary*, Tolstoy redeploys them. In this scene the first three convey the joy of man's cooperation with nature while the fourth is made to travesty them as well as the moral vision associated with Levin's farming.

Tolstoy continues the long description of Levin's spring with another "vast expanse of smooth, velvety green carpet" spreading before Levin as he goes about his estate planning to get the manuring done before the first planting (p. 173). And then Oblonsky arrives: Levin "led his guest into the spare bedroom, where Oblonsky's things—his bag, a gun-case, and a satchel for cigars—were also brought" (p. 176).

Cigars are made into a motif in *Madame Bovary* connoting worldliness, luxury and sensuality: the priest has tobacco stains on his chest; Rodolphe smokes a cigar after he first seduces Emma in the woods; Emma gives Rodolphe a cigar case "just like the viscount's" (p. 202); Léon lights a cigar waiting for Emma at the cathedral before their carriage ride. Marking her moral decline, Emma goes out on the street in Rouen with a cigarette in her mouth. The motif originates in the aforementioned viscount's cigar case found on the road after the ball.³⁸

In *Anna Karenina* tobacco plays a similar role. Anna has acquired a tortoise-shell cigar case by the time she meets Levin; it contains the cigarettes she now smokes, tracing her decline as cigarettes do Emma's. The tobacco motif connects her sensuality to her brother, who frequently smokes cigars. He calls them "the crown and hall-mark of pleasure" (p. 178). He lights one after dinner at Levin's when he opines that "a pretty maid is better than an old nurse" (p. 177). It is part of his moral blindness: Oblonsky "enjoyed his newspaper, as he did his after-dinner cigar, for the slight haze it produced in his brain" (p. 19). This haze reminds us of his sister, who, as we have seen, associates blue haze with young love. So it is emblematic that Oblonsky should arrive at Levin's with an entire separate satchel for cigars, which, against the background of the twice-mentioned green velvet fields, is perceived by the reader as their antithesis. In this way, the luxury that Flaubert has Emma associate with the Viscount's green-trimmed cigar case is transferred in *Anna Karenina* to the true source of well-being, the well-tended fruit of Levin's honest toil.

Tolstoy, like Flaubert, uses the motif cluster of haze, green, velvet and cigars. But while in *Madame Bovary* all these motifs are associated with Emma's descent into debauchery, Tolstoy redistributes them: The first three are allotted an additional

³⁸ Louise Colet must have been referring to the motif when she gave Flaubert a jeweled and inscribed cigar holder. See Frances Steegmuller, *Flaubert and Madame Bovary* (London, 1947), 300.

meaning in association with Levin's estate, while Oblonsky obtrudes upon them with his own tobacco haze.³⁹ Interestingly, the drafts for this scene do not combine the "green" with the "velvet," nor do they contain Oblonsky's satchel for cigars.⁴⁰ Instead of the latter, Tolstoy has only: "[Oblonsky's] elegant things—straps, suitcase, bag, gun—were carried in."⁴¹ Later Tolstoy gave Oblonsky a cigar case ("sigaroch-nitsa") which only became a satchel ("sumka dlia sigar") when he prepared the first edition of the novel for publication as a separate book.⁴² Anna's tortoise-shell cigar case is also absent from the published drafts of the scene.⁴³ The late addition of this system of details suggests both the importance of the motif for Tolstoy and his awareness of Flaubert's famous cigar case.

One last motif focuses the essential difference between Flaubert's and Tolstoy's novels: manure. Dmitri Merezhkovsky connects Tolstoy's love of manure to Rousseau in *Tolstoy as Man and Artist*: "The idyllic perfume of manure moved almost to tears . . . Jean Jacques Rousseau. Leo, too, loves its savour."⁴⁴

Levin's romantic joy at the mystery of spring in the scene is coupled with his concern that the manuring be done properly, and the word "manure" is repeated three times in two pages. It is perfectly in keeping with the elevation of Levin's soul and our fresh amazement at nature's miraculous self-renewal. Tolstoy emphasizes the same juxtaposition that had gotten Wordsworth and Pushkin into such trouble years earlier, that of the lofty with the lowly.⁴⁵

Flaubert, too, plays with this juxtaposition, also using manure, but emphasizes the contrast of the lowly to the pseudo-elevated. Rodolphe begins his seduction of Emma at the Agricultural Fair in Yonville. He entrances her with talk of souls ordained to meet by Fate against the counterpoint of the speeches from the Fair's tribunal. Both lines in the counterpoint are made up of horrendous clichés, each set designed to manipulate their audience. Romantic love and political idealism are equally travestied:

³⁹ In *The Lady of the Camelias* the motifs connote opposites: (corrupt) Paris in the distance is "in the mist" (p. 110) while the cottage in Bougival where Marguerite returns to rural innocence has "a green lawn, smooth as velvet" (p. 112). Alexandre Dumas-fils, trans. Edmund Gosse (Guernsey: Alan Sutton, 1991). Sainte-Beuve and other reviewers saw Emma Bovary as a version of Marguerite Gautier (Stegmuller, *Flaubert and Madame Bovary*, 297).

⁴⁰ PSS 20:214, 217. In the draft for the long paragraph about spring (part 2, chapter 12), mist (*tuman*) is mentioned once. In the final version it appears three times in a way that emphasizes the miraculous aspect of nature's rebirth. The draft uses both green and velvet, but separated by two sentences, whereas the final version breaks the paragraph into two sections, each of which combine them. See V. Zhdanov and E. Zaidenshnur, eds., *Anna Karenina* (Moscow, 1970), 133, 136.

⁴¹ PSS 20:217.

⁴² The correction was made in Tolstoy's handwriting. I am grateful to Tatiana Georgievna Nikiforova of the Tolstoy museum archive (Akademiia khudozhestv) in Moscow for her help in discovering this.

⁴³ PSS 20:505–6.

⁴⁴ Dmitri Merejkovsky, *Tolstoi as Man and Artist* (London, 1902), 64.

⁴⁵ Tolstoy uses the motif again later in *The Devil*, assigning it the opposite meaning: the phosphates that Irtenev has been fertilizing the fields with are associated with his peasant mistress who has borne him a child, a point made by Elliott Mossman in "Plus s'accuse, plus s'excuse: Tolstoy's Confessions" (Paper delivered at the annual ATSEEL convention, New York, December 1992). The motif thus carries the opposition between ideal wedded love to the lust that undermines it. This suggests that in Tolstoy's creative process, Anna's adultery becomes the necessary complement to Levin's wedded bliss, serving to purge it of the illicit passion that destroys her.

“We, now, why did we meet? What turn of fate decreed it?” . . .
 “General Prize!” cried the Chairman.
 “Just now, for instance, when I came to call on you . . .”
 “Monsieur Bizet of Quincampoix.”
 “. . . how could I know that I should escort you here?” . . .
 “Manure!” (p. 161)

Manure and fertilizers are mentioned three times in as many pages from the Yonville tribunal: “Work above all at the improvement of the soil, at producing rich fertilizers, at breeding horses, cows, sheep, pigs!” (*les races chevalines, bovines, ovines et porcines!*) (p. 160/177).

What Flaubert uses to mock cynical political exploitation of a bovine peasantry Tolstoy makes the basis of Levin’s faith—Levin thinks joyfully of his future herd of cows bred from Pava even during his despair over Kitty’s refusal. In Tolstoy’s drafts for *Anna Karenina*, Levin was to have come to Moscow not to propose to Kitty but to show Pava at an agricultural fair. Oblonsky was to have met him there by chance, in the company of one of his mistresses.⁴⁶ Thus we have the same intersplicing of the adulterous couple with the agricultural concerns as in *Madame Bovary*, with the same redistribution of censure: while Flaubert mocks both, Tolstoy shows the agricultural, marked by the manure motif, to embody an elevated moral ideal, while adulterous love is a travesty of the ideal of married love that is based in nature.

Thus in *Anna Karenina* Tolstoy examines the question of what men live by in order to consider the problem of adultery, returning to his beloved Rousseau for a basis. Anna’s great tragedy is that she is condemned by the very honesty that constitutes Levin’s virtue: both characters adhere to Tolstoy’s Rousseauian ideals by refusing to abide by public opinion and meaningless social convention. But while Levin flouts the frivolous conventions of society, he comes to accept the wisdom of those related to God; Anna flouts both kinds and is repaid accordingly.

Flaubert does not make this distinction; the villain of his novel is his *bête noir*, the *idée reçue*, the cliché, the unexamined view, and all the damage it can do. *Madame Bovary* ends not when Emma dies, but after the chemist of Yonville, Monsieur Homais, has received the Légion d’honneur.

Homais is the chief agent of events in the novel. He talks Charles into performing the operation on the club-foot Hippolyte because he has read about a new method in the newspapers. Homais talks Charles into taking Emma to the theater in Rouen. It is among Homais’s chemist supplies that Emma finds the arsenic to kill herself. Finally, it is Homais who tells the blind beggar to come to Yonville so that Homais can apply ointment to his eyes, which culminates in Homais having him imprisoned. Homais and the pseudo-science he preaches are a parody of Him who would make the lame walk and the blind see.

In *Anna Karenina* the person who acts as go-between as well as purveyor of the accepted view is Oblonsky. He corresponds in many ways to Homais, and even has the same number of children (six). Tolstoy endows Oblonsky with many lovable characteristics so that the reader tends to accept him as uncritically as Oblonsky’s friends

⁴⁶ PSS 20:52–57.

do, but nonetheless shows him to live without any moral basis for his actions and to lack the capacity for independent thought.⁴⁷

Oblonsky is a liberal who gets all his opinions from the newspapers:

And although he was not particularly interested in science, art or politics, on all such subjects he adhered firmly to the views of the majority, as expressed by his paper. . . . The Liberal Party said, or rather assumed, that religion was only a curb on the illiterate; and indeed Oblonsky could not stand through even the shortest church service without aching feet, or understand the point of all that dreadful, high-flown talk about the other world, when life in this world was really very pleasant. (p. 19)

Homais as a man of science has no use for religion, and constantly baits Bour-nisien. Homais is a chemist, while Oblonsky is head of a court house, but the language describing him smacks of the medical: Oblonsky is said to act in spite of himself “‘by a reflex action of the brain,’ now thought Oblonsky, who had a leaning towards physiology.”⁴⁸ He is said to “‘have a beneficent and jolly physical effect” on the people he meets.⁴⁹

Oblonsky too acts as go-between in all the important interactions of the novel:⁵⁰ he summons Anna to Moscow; brings Kitty and Levin together; obtains Karenin’s consent for a divorce; and introduces Levin to Anna, to mention the most important.

Homais and Oblonsky are linked by a shellfish motif. In Moscow Oblonsky takes Levin to dinner against his will at a restaurant whose elegance seems to defile Levin’s feelings for Kitty. They have three dozen oysters, described so as to emphasize Oblonsky’s sensuality: “‘Not bad,’ he said, tearing the quivering oysters from their pearly shells with a silver fork and swallowing them one after another. ‘Not bad,’ he repeated, turning his dewy, brilliant eyes from Levin . . .” (p. 48).

Homais arrives in Rouen and drags Léon off to a long lunch at a pretentious restaurant. Léon is in despair because he knows Emma is waiting for him, but is forced to listen to Homais “‘expound immoral theories on women” (p. 290). Red lobster claws had lain over the edge of the platter at La Vaubyessard as part of the abundant luxury; by the end of the book, via a series of permutations, the crustacean motif, like other motifs connoting luxury, has descended along with Emma to become a ludicrously defiled token of elegance and romance:

[Homais and Léon] could see in the broad sunlight a little fountain gurgling into a marble basin, where among watercress and asparagus three torpid lobsters were stretched out with some quails lying on their side all in a heap. (p. 290)

⁴⁷ Gary Saul Morson agrees: “Stiva is the villain of the book, its representative of what evil is” (“Prosaics and *Anna Karenina*,” *Tolstoy Studies Journal*, vol. 1 [1988]: pp. 1–12, p. 6) as does Dostoevsky, whom he cites.

⁴⁸ Page 15. *Refleksy golovnogo mozga* is the title of a book by Professor Sechenov who carried on a polemic with another scientist in the periodicals Oblonsky would have read. See Louise and Aylmer Maude, trans., *Anna Karenina*, 2 vols. (London, 1939), 1:495.

⁴⁹ Part 1, chapter 5. “Bylo chto-to, fizicheski deistvovavshee druželiubno i veselo na liudei, vstrechavshikhsia s nim.” Rosemary Edmonds translates this “acts like a tonic” (p. 27). The Maudes have “had a physical effect on” (1:17).

⁵⁰ Schulze also makes this point (*Structure of Anna Karenina*, 151).

Madame Bovary closes with Homais's reward for his destructive meddling. In the final part 8 of *Anna Karenina* we learn that Oblonsky has won the post at eight thousand rubles a year that he has been discreetly lobbying for.⁵¹ He is to be secretary of the committee of the consolidated agency of credit balance of the southern railways, which he describes to Karenin in Homais-like journalese as "a new institution of undoubted utility" (p. 754). Given the role of railways in the novel and Levin's view that their premature proliferation is detrimental to agriculture, Oblonsky's post and the entire agency suggests that its utility is precisely dubious, and that Oblonsky's phrase is a ready-made piece of high-flown obfuscation. He is rewarded with the post for his readiness to employ the ready-made phrase, idea, way of life unquestioningly, although the railroads that will supply him extra income have been the means of his sister's destruction.

Homais is, of course, master of the cliché, which he assembles with demonic rapidity for the articles he writes for the local newspaper, the Rouen *Beacon*. "'C'est là la question,' as the paper was saying the other day," he prattles, having forgotten the irrelevant (to him) source of his tag line (p. 221). Oblonsky quotes Levin the same verses about a young man in love that he later repeats to Vronsky as both are on their way to see Kitty.⁵² In both cases, there is ironic meaning for the reader, but while Homais cannot know that Hamlet's suicide soliloquy pertains to Emma, Oblonsky knows that Levin and Vronsky are apparently both in love with the same woman.

If Emma's history illustrates the tragic results of acting out her projective reading of romances, Homais displays the destruction caused by misapplied materialism, embodied in his apothecary's faith in science. Emma is a second-hand version of Chateaubriand's René; she devalues his romantic quest for an ideal by embodying it in tawdry reality. Homais, on the other hand, presents the degradation of Rousseau's progressive views and of Enlightenment ideas. Emma is guided by sensuality; Homais is unrestrained by any moral principle. Oblonsky combines these features. As Anna is the best possible adulteress, he is the best possible sensualist, enjoying oysters, women, hunting, and his friends with appealing good health, energy and bonhomie. But he is nonetheless the Enemy; he represents the destructive force of Tolstoy's novel, for it is this life force and sensual appetite that lead Anna to go against her moral principles and precipitate her suicide.

Tolstoy's polemic with European literature, focused on the "woman question" and the novel of adultery, is, as Eikenbaum wrote, "a dialectic unity, the result of a complex mental process."⁵³ That complexity seems to have included an attempt to apply values absorbed from Rousseau to the problem of adultery, and these values appear to have been more specifically elaborated in dialogue with Flaubert than has been supposed.

The parallels between *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina* show both authors to be concerned with the decline of cherished values; emblemized by the adulteress

⁵¹ I am indebted to Rachel Trousdale for pointing out this parallel.

⁵² Pushkin's translation of Anacreon's fifty-fifth ode.

⁵³ Eikenbaum, *Lev Tolstoy*, 152.

in the conveyance accompanied by the grotesque peasant with his inappropriate language, a people is shown to betray its own best nature and traditions through shallow understanding of them. Instead of Flaubert's trivial heroine, Tolstoy posits the best possible case, but Anna is no less than Emma doomed by the inherent contradictions both of her society and of adultery itself.⁵⁴

Tolstoy, then, may be said to be restoring Rousseau's views by giving them a dignity, freeing them from the parody with which Flaubert degrades them. Levin is a true *Émile*, learning from his own experience the cost of luxury, the superiority of things made by oneself, the freedom to enjoy black bread and not to be a slave to public opinion.⁵⁵ Instead of allowing Oblonsky's Homais-like success to dominate part 8, Tolstoy rewards Levin with a son and a revelation about the nature of human existence. This is Tolstoy's antidote to adultery, an evolving answer to the question of how to live a meaningful life.

Answering Flaubert with Rousseau, Tolstoy is able to reinfuse idealism into the realist novel which he felt had become distressingly naturalistic (remember his remarks about Balzac). While the romantics insisted on the unattainability of a Platonic Ideal in the real world, Tolstoy shows a more Aristotelian possibility: the continuous approach toward the ideal in the real; the holy ideal of the beloved can be transformed, painfully and gradually, into the actual wife, and the novel of adultery into a *profession de foi*.

⁵⁴ As Stenbock-Fermor puts it, Anna is "entrapped by mistaken culture with its machinery, dances, provocative dresses, and all the artificial comforts and social conventions" (*Architecture of Anna Karenina*, 70).

⁵⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile* (New York, 1974), 153–54, 163.