

Communion or Camouflage:  
Food and Focal Locales in *Anna Karenina*

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ritics have long recognized the opposition between urban and rustic life in Tolstoy's works as an essential dichotomy that reflects the author's aesthetic and moral views in favor of unpretentious, simple country life. This dichotomy extends to such phenomena as dress and food, and my essay investigates how food motifs in *Anna Karenina* relate to this spatial opposition.<sup>1</sup> Food consumption is not simply a behavior satisfying humans' basic hunger impulse. Gustatory behavior functions as a rich metaphor for human culture in general, as illustrated by Iurii Lotman's study, which examines the secondary, artificial nature of cuisine's aesthetic and semiotic meanings underlying the practice of daily reality (*Velikosvetskie obedy* 14). The manner of food consumption conveys sociological information about an individual: his aesthetic values, his membership in a particular social stratum, or his ideological predilection. Thus, by analyzing several episodes in *Anna Karenina* that exemplify Tolstoy's representation of food consumption in aristocratic Russian cities and in the country, I attempt to show what features Tolstoy incorporates to characterize each gastronomic culture.

*City Dwellers: Oblonskii and Princess Betsy*

In his article on the culinary culture of the Russian imperial capital, George E. Munro notes that St. Petersburg in the eighteenth century, less than a century after its establishment, was already a voracious consumer of foodstuffs (31). Munro investigates the food habits of the wealthy nobles, who enjoyed, along with sumptuous dishes, elements of theatricality in eating, while the poor, who were not able to afford such luxury, developed a humble, but, as he argues, robust enough palate. Free from concerns about the cost of food, the elite of St. Petersburg paid more attention to such things as exquisite porcelain containers than to the contents themselves (Munro 31).

Eating occasions provided an opportunity to show off their wealth and power. Munro's cultural and historical observations seem to find confirmation in Tolstoy's gastronomic picture of the late-nineteenth-century Russian capitals, which, in Tolstoy's oeuvre, are inhabited predominantly by aristocrats. As the primary goal of eating motivated by instinct recedes to the background, the urban nobleman's gustatory behavior is instead placed in a sophisticated context, one of ritual and theatricality.

Eating is, no doubt, the most ordinary ritual in our everyday lives. David Kertzer, writing from a sociological perspective, defines ritual as "symbolic behavior that is socially standardized and repetitive" (9). Here Kertzer points out qualities that are common to all rituals: regularity, repetition, and symbolism. Yet, according to Orrin E. Klapp, there are two more qualities that characterize rituals. First, ritual is concerned with emotions rather than practicality. Second, ritual is filled with significant, symbolic gestures that "dramatize" the ritual process in order to create a vital experience (10-12). Considering that drama originated in ritual, the dramatic quality inherent in ritual comes as no surprise. On the contrary, it explains the affinity of ritual and drama, and, furthermore, implies how ritual and theatricality, an outcome of putting a drama on stage, may overlap. As Jindřich Honzl states, ritual and theater share fundamental traits. They are, most of all, signifying (symbolic) actions (136). The main distinction, however, lies in the presence of spectators in theatrical performance, whereas, in the case of ritual, the line between audience and performers is hard to draw, since spectators play an active and empathetic part in ritual. Meanwhile, spectators of drama *look at* performance, perceiving the action they are watching as theatrical. Rhetorical conventions concerning space, time, setting, etc., are essential for theater in creating interaction between audience and actors. In the description of Oblonskii's dinner with Levin, Tolstoy shows dining as a theatricalized ritual emphasizing Levin's role as a spectator.

To begin with, in choosing the *Angliia* over the *Hermitage* on the grounds that it is not good to avoid the former because he owes more money there (8: 36), Oblonskii expresses his 'benevolent' patronage. It is his way of conveying a peculiar sense of conscience that is possible only for those who are free from material concerns, or, more accurately, ignore them. Although unconsciously, Oblonskii here demonstrates his privileges as a member of the upper class. His carefree attitude leaves him free to enter the luxurious establishment

and lavish money on expensive fare. The restaurant exerts an immediate influence on Oblonskii,<sup>2</sup> as well as on Levin, who notices a suppressed radiance on Oblonskii's face. For Oblonskii the *Angliia* is a familiar locus, where he can gratify his rampant appetite.

—Не изменить ли план, Левин?—сказал он . . . . И его лицо выражало серьезное недоумение.—Хороши ли устрицы? Ты смотри.

—Вчера получены-с.

—Так что ж, не начать ли с устриц, а потом уж и весь план изменить?

—Мне все равно. Мне лучше щи и каша; но ведь здесь этого нет.

—Каша а ла рюсс, прикажете?—сказал Татарин, как няня над ребенком, нагибаясь над Левиным.

—Нет, без шуток, что ты выберешь, то и хорошо. Я побегал на коньках, и есть хочется . . . .

—Ну, так дай ты нам, братец ты мой, устриц два, или мало—три десятка, суп с кореньями. . .

—Прентаньер,—подхватил Татарин. Но Степан Аркадьич, видно, не хотел ему доставлять удовольствие называть по-французски кушанья.

—С кореньями, знаешь? Потом тюрбо под густым соусом, потом. . . ростбифу; да смотри, чтобы хорош был. Да каплунов, что ли, ну и консервов.

Татарин, вспомнив манеру Степана Аркадьича не называть кушанья по французской карте, не повторял за ним, но доставил себе удовольствие повторить весь заказ по карте.<sup>3</sup> (18: 37-38)

Complying with the conventions of a place where he feels fully at home, Oblonskii is cheerfully eager to enjoy the most exotic, exquisite, and delicious morsels, though he does not fully abide by the norms eagerly practiced by the waiters. As did other social institutions of the time frequented by the upper echelon, *Angliia* prefers French to the vernacular. Playing the role of an enthusiastic priest at this ritual site, the Tatar waiter refers to the dishes by their French names, although he does not dare to do so to Oblonskii's face, for the latter

estranges the familiar, generally used French names by replacing them with Russian equivalents. This mischievous deviation from conventions, as Lotman argues, allows Oblonskii to enjoy the aesthetic pleasure of “estrangement,” no less than the Tatar waiter enjoys the use of foreign names (Lotman 11). It is a “fun”<sup>4</sup> activity in which both client and waiter experience pleasure. The easygoing Oblonskii expresses “serious perplexity” upon learning about a new menu item (oysters) that he has not taken into account. Since dining provides him with both aesthetic and gastronomical pleasure (and pleasure is his divinity), Oblonskii pays utmost attention to all the details of the menu for the best selection.

By contrast, Levin cannot join in their ritual. Though he also calls dishes by Russian names, his motivation for doing so substantially differs from Oblonskii’s. Whereas the latter derives aesthetic pleasure from the very act of ordering, Levin reveals both indifference to gourmet food and alienation from his friend’s insatiable self-indulgence.<sup>5</sup> Preoccupied by the innocent image of Kitty, Levin feels revulsion at the false hair and make-up of the French woman at the counter and at private rooms where men take female guests who are obviously not their spouses.

Moreover, by mentioning *shchi i kasha*, the staple of Russian dishes, Levin makes an explicit argument against aristocratic gastronomic culture, favoring, instead, the essence of a rural diet intended to supply sufficient nutrition for work. In this regard, when Levin says that any food would be delicious after a vigorous bout of skating, his attempt to soothe his friend’s dissatisfaction at his indifference comes closer to the mark by relating appetite to the expenditure of physical energy. His eating habits are in keeping with those of peasants actually engaged in physical labor. Levin notes that palatal pleasure divorced from daily activities occupies the center of urban dining. Worse than that, urban noblemen draw out their meals as long as possible and let their nails grow as long as they can keep them. Although Oblonskii defends such practices by declaring, “цель образования: изо всего сделать наслаждение” (18: 40),<sup>6</sup> Levin deplores the artificiality and idleness of urban life in its culinary culture and in Grinevich’s long nails.

On the margins of the institutionally sanctioned occasion, Levin perceives their actions as a theatrical performance, and is unable to restrain a smile at hearing the Tatar waiter call Parmesan “*your* [i.e. Oblonskii’s] cheese,” whereby their ritualistic menu-selection acquires

an esoteric coloration. Along the same lines, while eating oysters, Levin finds more pleasure in watching Oblonskii than in consuming them himself. The epicure completely engrossed in refined dishes obviously gives pleasure to the waiter serving him, as well. In short, the ritual of aristocratic dining as enacted by Oblonskii and the Tatar waiter employs features of a theatrical performance, with Oblonskii in the main role.

Princess Betsy's tea party presents another theatricalized ritual, but in this case constructed on different principles. What strikes readers most here is that tea itself rarely appears. The consumption of the beverage is not realized, tea merely maintaining its nominal existence, while conversation comes to the fore.

The chapter that depicts the tea party begins with Princess Betsy's return from the theater, "не дождавшись конца последнего акта" (18: 140).<sup>7</sup> As soon as she arrives home she powders her face and adjusts her hair for the gathering,<sup>8</sup> as though preparing for her own performance at home instead of watching the one at the theater.

Почти в одно и в то же время вошли: хозяйка с освеженною прической и освеженным лицом из одной двери и гости из другой в большую гостиную с темными стенами, пушистыми коврами и ярко освещенным столом, блестящим под огнями свеч белизною скатерти, серебром самовара и прозрачным фарфором чайного прибора.

Хозяйка села за самовар и сняла перчатки. Передвигая стулья с помощью незаметных лакеев, общество разместилось, разделившись на две части,—у самовара с хозяйкой и на противоположном конце гостиной. . .<sup>9</sup> (18: 140)

The theatricality Munro identifies in the obsession with serving pieces marks the inclination to stage a show that prevails here. Princess Betsy's tea party takes place in an exquisite setting with silver utensils and a translucent tea-service. Yet Tolstoy gives no description of the tea they drink<sup>10</sup> or how they brew it. Compared with the scene at the *Angliia*, that absence is striking, but it is most likely an intentional omission by the author intended to highlight the "small talk."

Rather than serving as a metonymy for tea, the samovar is

inseparably associated with the hostess, as if they were one set. Princess Betsy sits beside the samovar at the beginning of the tea party, and the text repeatedly notes her proximity to it: “около самовара и хозяйки” (18: 141),<sup>11</sup> “спросила хозяйка от самовара” (18: 142),<sup>12</sup> etc. This recurrent linking of person and object at a social gathering suggests the hostess’s shallow, impersonal relationship with her fellow humans.

The hostess, like the Tatar waiter at the restaurant, defines her prime task as ensuring that the ritual proceed smoothly. Accordingly, Princess Betsy skillfully handles the conversation so that all participants are properly entertained. The need to “keep things going until the end” (Burns 17) propels the hostess to cling to the samovar, because a samovar is a most useful item for “prevent[ing] awkward silences, open hostility, or sheer boredom[,] which may cause people to leave” (Burns 17). Princess Betsy relies on tea as a boost for conversation. For instance, when the chatter in the circle round the ambassador’s wife stops and Princess Betsy wants to unite the whole company into a single group, she addresses the ambassador’s wife: “Решительно вы не хотите чаю? Вы бы перешли к нам” (18: 143).<sup>13</sup> She mentions tea only when people stop talking and, consequently, have nothing to do until they find a new topic.

Anna utilizes tea in a similar fashion. She informs Vronskii of Kitty’s illness, ostensibly with the intention of criticizing him for his dishonorable treatment of Kitty. When Vronskii asks her for more details, Anna, in order to add a solemn touch to her reproach, relies on a theatrical pause. Instead of responding to his request, Anna “встала и подошла к Бетси.—Дайте мне чашку чая” (18: 146).<sup>14</sup> At the tea party, in short, the tea itself appears to be a theatrical prop.

This tea party eliminates any pleasure in drinking tea, but finds its enjoyment elsewhere, in elegant conversation (*iziasbchnyi razgovor*) or small talk. As the narrator puts it, the conversation cannot avoid “три неизбежные темы: последние общественные новости, театр и осуждение ближнего” (18: 142).<sup>15</sup> Participants in the tea party do not express their inner feelings or thoughts, which the conventions of a tea party disallow. Simple speech with a pinch of meaning, as best performed by Princess Miagkaia, is perceived as a most welcome witticism. No matter what topics the guests embark on, their conversation rarely fails to end up in a single “верное, никогда не изменяющее средство—злословие (18: 141).<sup>16</sup> However, they do not slander those present at the party. They hint at the relationship

between Princess Betsy and Tushkevich, but only briefly. Similarly, their gossip about the Karenins stops when Anna arrives. They avoid unpleasant confrontations, because one of the rules of the tea party is the observance of outer propriety.

Amidst people who behave and speak from behind a mask of decorum, Anna and Vronskii stand out by violating the conventions. Instead of joining the ritualized conversation, they engage in a fate-determining talk, in which Anna implicitly acknowledges her love for Vronskii. Their passionate eagerness disturbs the others, for, at a party, one is supposed to feel “as if all were equal, as if one honored each of them” (Simmel quoted in Burns 17), whereas Anna and Vronskii’s private talk makes others feel ignored. At the same time, the theatrical illusion produced and enjoyed by the other guests suffers an unexpected rupture, and a different theatricality emerges. Now, though the guests pretend to be unaware of Anna and Vronskii’s behavior, nearly all of them glance across at them. With the spotlight removed from them, their roles are reduced to those of mere spectators. Moreover, Anna and Vronskii’s conversation discloses the falsehood of the tea party characterized by its superficial chatter. The pettiness of backbiting cannot be in sharper contrast to the two lovers’ search for the truth of their feelings.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, not surprisingly, the guests pass judgment on the couple: “Это становится неприлично” (18: 148),<sup>18</sup> a consensus followed by the hostess’s promptly putting an end to the couple’s conversation. The ritual of eating and drinking in high society ultimately serves as a camouflage or displacement enacted by privileged consumers.

#### *Country Masters: the Levins*

By contrast, a rural diet, invested with positive values, is at the heart of Levin’s<sup>19</sup> rustic life. The most noteworthy feature of his rural dietary regime is that the Levins, though aristocrats, not only consume, but also produce food: Levin engages in mowing and harvesting, and takes care of an apiary. In addition, his family members participate in collecting and producing food: the Levins and their guests pick mushrooms<sup>20</sup> and Kitty makes jam.

Jam-making is, in particular, the architectural counterpart of Princess Betsy’s tea party, their common denominator being women’s dominant roles in each activity (Levin calls the former a *zhenskoe tsar-*

*stvo*) and the association between food motifs and love. The two scenes, however, are fundamentally different in many respects. To begin with, Kitty's jam-making is conducted at a practical level. Levin's kitchen is not a theatrical High Society salon, but a place in which to live and work. Kitty's food-producing activity turns into a battleground concerning a domestic issue. Agaf'ia Mikhailovna, formerly in charge of Levin's household, is reluctant to accept a new method of making jam, no matter how trivial the novelty might be (no water is used in the jam). It is no less than a power struggle between the old tradition of the Levins and the new ways introduced by a young mistress. Two other Shcherbatskii women (Kitty's mother and sister) take part in this event, supporting Kitty's successful take-over as mistress of the household.

As the women's chat moves from jam-making and household issues to courtship, this cooking episode is shrouded in romantic overtones, just as liaisons and upcoming marriages make up an indispensable portion of the 'small talk' at Betsy's tea party. The three Shcherbatskii women talk beside the boiling jam about their own romances and the prospective marriage of Varen'ka, just as the women gossip beside the samovar at Betsy's. Yet the crucial difference lies in the nature of their chat: the Shcherbatskii women's conversation is not 'small talk' or gossip about illicit affairs, but centers on the love and proposals that brought about their current, legitimate wedded state. Memories dear to them spread warmth and happiness among the three. Even Dolly, who now has lost faith in her wayward husband, meditates upon her past with a dreamy smile, while Kitty feels that "она с матерью теперь могла говорить, как с равною, об этих самых главных вопросах в жизни женщины" (19: 128).<sup>21</sup> Unlike the slanderous gossip at Betsy's tea party, the Shcherbatskii's conversation over jam-making acquires an intimacy and shared compassion through which a newly-wed can take one further step toward womanhood.

Moreover, it is clear that jam-making is not an accessory to the gathering. The three Shcherbatskii women meet on the porch primarily to demonstrate a new method of jam-making and only when the jam is almost ready does their conversation move toward Varen'ka and courtship. Therefore, it is little wonder that Tolstoy painstakingly documents the stirring of the boiling jam, Dolly's removal of the scum, and the old princess's instructions about preserving the jam, with which the chapter ends. This episode starkly contrasts with the sham of Betsy's tea party, which omits all description of tea-making.

Lastly, the preservation of jam for future use is a sign that Levin's family takes the future into consideration and prepares for it. This approach to life is rarely found in the urban life depicted in *Anna Karenina*, for city aristocrats largely focus on pleasures of the present.

While the jam-making illustrates general features of rustic life, as opposed to aristocratic urban life, Levin's dinner after hay-mowing marks a significant stage in his life as an individual, his spiritual development "from weakness to maturity" (Galagan 147). Until the mowing scene, Richard Gustafson asserts, Levin has been the outsider, "alienated from other people's lives and isolated in his own world of domestic personal interest and intellectual endeavor, buoyed up by his fantasy of family happiness" (425). In the hay-mowing, as well as his dinner with peasants, Levin cherishes the feeling of sharing, which gradually sinks in and eventually leads him to his final recognition of faith at the end of the novel.

In the pertinent scene, the old man who works next to Levin shows him the way to relate to the world around him. The old peasant is not only a master at scything, but enjoys it. Of utmost importance is the fact that, as Gustafson points out, the peasant shares the fruits of his labor:

"[W]henver he found a mushroom, he would bend over, pick it, put it in his pocket, and say 'Another treat for the old lady.'" To him nature exists to be shared. Sergey Ivanovich views nature for his pleasure; Levin uses it for his own profit. But the "old man" is the one who is in touch with nature, because he reaps it to give it away. This generosity of spirit guides all the "old man's" actions, so that when dinner time arrives he offers Levin some of his simple fare of bread moistened with salted water. Levin is delighted with his meal and gets involved in an absorbing conversation with the "old man." "He felt closer to him than to his own brother and involuntarily smiled for the tenderness he felt for this person." In a novel filled with meals marred by failures of sharing—Levin's and Stiva's luxurious repast at the Moscow restaurant, Vronskii's beefsteak snack intruded upon by the leering homosexual officers, Dolly's dinner with Anna at Vronskii's estate, Levin's supper devoured by

Veslovskii during the hunt, and Anna's dirty ice cream—this is a scene of communion, simple, direct, honest. Enjoyed because of the labor done but not as its reward, this meal crowns Levin's lesson in caring and sharing. (Gustafson 423)

This is Levin's first encounter with others in brotherly love. Touched by the old man's sharing spirit, Levin begins to care for him and converses about "все обстоятельство, которые могли интересовать старика" (18: 268).<sup>22</sup>

Labor on the soil brings forth this spirit of brotherly love. Traditionally, peasants have been perceptive about the bond between love and labor, as expressed in their proverb, "Labor is the house that love lives in." Jane Addams aptly interprets the saying as follows: "they mean that no two people or [sic] groups of people can come into affectionate relations with each other unless they carry on together a mutual [sic] task, and when the Russian peasant talks of labor he means labor on the soil, or, to use the phrase of the great peasant Bondereff, 'bread labor'" (Addams 158). Addams here points out the triad of food, labor, and love that is essential to the peasant regime.<sup>23</sup>

The labor of mowing, in fact, emotionally unites peasants with their master, so that the former no longer feel uncomfortable at the latter's presence when Levin stays with them at dinnertime. Needless to say, labor generates a good appetite. Even before the old man shares his dinner, he offers Levin his kvass. This humble drink has a flavor of the rusty tin box, yet Levin thinks that he "никогда не пивал такого напитка" (18: 267).<sup>24</sup> Along the same lines, the old man's dinner, consisting of simple bread and salted water (*tiur'ka*), tastes so fine that Levin gives up all intention of going home for lunch. Physical toil obviously transforms the most humble food into a meal more delicious than any delicacies. Veslovskii, an urban dandy who visits Levin's estate, experiences the same effect during the hunt. Peasants invite him to have vodka and bread with them. Veslovskii exclaims: "Какой хлеб, это чудо! Délicieux! И водка—я никогда вкуснее не пил!" (19: 160).<sup>25</sup> Clearly, Levin's joy over the kvass resonates here. Through the mouth of an Oblonskii-type figure, Tolstoy adroitly debunks the deceptive illusion of the extravagant meals consumed in the cities. Urban noblemen enjoy various gourmet dishes, most of which are imported (for example, French champagne and Flensburg oysters at the *Angliia*), but, as Veslovskii remarks, these no-

blemen could sample the best food in the countryside. Although Veslovskii likes simple peasant food as much as Levin does, he reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of “brotherhood” by trying to pay for the food. He treats the food not as a sign of hospitality he is supposed to share, but as a commodity he would purchase. Thus, unlike Levin, who feels brotherly love for the old man and consequently enters into a warm conversation with him, Veslovskii does not go beyond merely devouring the food. He never appreciates the essence of communion with others. He comes to the countryside as a visitor and remains alienated from the residents’ (i.e., peasants’) world. Moreover, Veslovskii and Oblonskii do not abandon their habitual urban style of life while in the country, pursuing sensual pleasure, as they join the peasants’ gathering, where Veslovskii is delighted at his discovery of “a perfect Gretchen” (696).

Nature is the privileged place in Tolstoy’s fictional universe (Gustafson 212), the world in which people live and work with their own hands and where Tolstoy’s major characters finally discover the meaning of life. Levin finds this meaning in contact with nature and with people who live in nature.

Tolstoy’s contrast between city and country, at a deeper level, is an opposition between civilization and nature. Tolstoy persistently associates civilization with hedonistic, momentary enjoyment. Most of his city aristocrats cultivate a culture filled with theatricality, without giving a thought to their souls. Modern civilization is ugly, Tolstoy suggests, because man no longer stands in awe of something holy within himself (Speirs 114). Nature, by contrast, has great potential to sustain life and renew it. It provides a chance to recognize worthy values. In nature, a simple diet tends to symbolize sharing and mutual affection. Yet this contrast does not automatically transfer to a clear-cut division of two opposing camps. To put it differently, in the novel, the manner of food consumption is not always strictly bound to a specific locale. Realization of the potentiality of topological appreciation depends on each individual, on whether s/he grasps the teaching of nature and simple folk. To Oblonskii’s and Veslovskii’s ignorance, mentioned above, we may add Anna and Vronskii’s country life and dinner, in which Dolly participates and witnesses the couple’s play-acting.

While Vronskii<sup>26</sup> and his company heartily enjoy all the European luxury that accompanies dining, Dolly, as a devoted housewife and mother, cannot help feeling unease at the pretense that permeates

Anna's life on Vronskii's estate. Despite the small number of guests, Anna and Vronskii offer a banquet on a grand scale, at which everybody must wear formal evening dress. Accordingly, Anna changes into exquisite dresses three times for each occasion (riding, going out for a walk, and dinner), whereas frugal Dolly has nothing but a patched dress for the dinner. At the table, both Anna and Vronskii assume roles—she that of a coquette, flirting with one of the guests in order to arouse Vronskii's jealousy, he that of a rich landowner. Spontaneity has been replaced by sheer theatricality, and Dolly feels, not surprisingly, “что она играет на театре с лучшими, чем она, актерами” (19: 211).<sup>27</sup> Dolly is an alien in this milieu, as is Levin at the *Angliia*. The lavish, self-absorbed dining ritual coated with theatricality moves its stage from the city (*Angliia*) to the countryside (Vronskii's country estate).<sup>28</sup>

Thus, while Tolstoy lays out a spatial frame that carries two distinct manners of food consumption associated with his ethical judgment, he does not strive to set up a dogmatic scheme. Rather, he creates the illusion of giving his characters freedom of choice as to whether they realize the positive potential of nature or the negative potential of the city. Unfortunately, most of the urban aristocracy, Anna included, opt for a life of self-indulgence and never experience the invaluable moments of the familial spirit of sharing, even in nature; instead, they utilize food as an object of pleasure or as paraphernalia for theatrical rituals.

### Notes

- \* I would like to thank Professor Andrew Durkin and Professor Helena Goscilo, whose comments were an invaluable stimulant for the revision and finalization of this essay.
1. Tolstoyan fare has already been examined by Helena Goscilo. While her analysis is conducted on a larger scale inclusive of other works (*War and Peace*, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, and *What is Art?*), pinpointing how the author incorporates food into his ethics, my paper is limited to *Anna Karenina* and analyzes Tolstoy's use of food from the perspective of spatial contrast.
  2. “Transformation” is a key word in Lotman's discussion of theatricality. Probably because he relies on Petr Bogatyrev's study on theater, Lotman does not offer a clear definition of the term “theatricality.” Yet, we can deduce that he views theatricality as a transformation in which game-playing behavior reconstructs the world according to the laws of theatrical space. See Lotman, “Theater.”
  3. “‘Shall we change our plan, Levin?’ he said. . . . And his face expressing

serious perplexity. 'But are the oysters really good? Now be careful. . .'

'They only arrived yesterday.'

'Well, then shall we begin with oysters and change the whole plan of our dinner, eh?'

'I don't mind. I like *shchi* and *kasha*, but they don't have those things here.'

'Would you like Buckwheat à la Russe?' said the Tatar, stooping over Levin like a nurse over a child.

'No, joking apart, whatever you choose will suit me. I've been skating and I want to eat! . . .'

'Well, then my good fellow, bring us two—or that will be too little, . . . three dozen oysters, and vegetable soup. . .'

'Printanier,' chimed in the waiter.

But Oblonskii evidently did not wish to give him the pleasure of calling the dishes by their French names.

' . . .vegetable, you know. Then turbot with thick sauce; then . . . roast beef (and mind it's good!) and then capon, . . . Yes. And stewed fruit.'

The waiter, remembering Oblonskii's way of calling the items on the French menu by their Russian names, did not repeat the words after him, but afterwards allowed himself the pleasure of repeating the whole of the order according to the menu" (Here I adjust the English translation by Louise and Aylmer Maude for greater precision. Translations are referred to by page numbers in parentheses [here 40-41]).

4. Klapp names "fun" as one of the feelings people would experience during a ritual: "In the case of ritual, though people may not be able to say very clearly what is being done for them, they have a feeling of its importance—that it is 'worthwhile,' edifying, a sacred duty, fun, gives relief, and so on. Such feeling is not a rationalization but a genuine experience" (17).
5. The two characters' confrontation over food grows into a dispute over sexual tastes. On the Tolstoyan association of palatal and sexual appetites, see Goscilo.
6. "the aim of civilization is to get enjoyment out of everything" (42).
7. "without waiting for the end of the last act" (156).
8. In delineating Princess Betsy's preparation for the tea gathering, Tolstoy parallels her with the French woman at the *Angliia* by relying on the details of hair and make-up.
9. "Almost at one and the same time the hostess, her hair rearranged and her face freshened up, entered at one door and the visitors at another of the large, dark-walled drawing-room, with its thick carpets and brightly-lit table, shining in the candle-light with white table-cloth, silver samovar and translucent china.

The hostess sat down beside the samovar and took off her gloves. The chairs being moved by the aid of unobtrusive footmen, the company settled down, separating into two circles: one with the hostess round the

- samovar, the other, at the opposite end of the room. . . .” (156-57).
10. There were two types of tea consumed in the nineteenth century in Russia. Particularly in the first half of the century, black tea was available only to high society and a few rich merchants. The lower class drank brick tea. On the history of the introduction and consumption of tea in Russia, see “Eat and Temperance,” chapter 6 in Smith.
  11. “around the samovar and the hostess” (158).
  12. “the hostess asked from her place by the samovar” (159).
  13. “Will you really not have a cup of tea? You should come and join us here” (159).
  14. “rose up and went up to Betsy. ‘Give me a cup of tea,’ ” (163).
  15. “the three inevitable topics: the latest public news, the theater, and criticism of one’s neighbor” (158).
  16. “the one sure and never-failing resource—slander” (158).
  17. However, Tolstoy has reservations about Vronskii’s spirituality. Whereas Anna is afraid of love, because it “means too much” to her, Vronskii views courtship and love as a game, in which he sets an ‘aim’ and attempts to achieve it. In fact, Vronskii is very happy after the tea party, because “he [had] made more progress toward his aim in this one evening than he had during the past two months” (167).
  18. “This is becoming indecent” (166).
  19. Scholars tend to divide Tolstoy’s characters into two highly hierarchical groups. For instance, Richard Gustafson distinguishes two personalities: men of flesh and men with the mind of a master. He places Levin in the latter group, which, he maintains, “is not associated with the body or physical pleasure” (Gustafson 209). I disagree with him on this point; I would argue that Levin has spiritual and physical aspects as well. His attraction to Kitty and Anna’s physical charms, let alone a number of love affairs before marriage, proves his physical side. Levin is an ordinary man; nonetheless, what distinguishes him from others is his unfeigned quest for the meaning of life. My opinion finds support in Goswami’s assessment (placed in a somewhat different context) of Levin as “Tolstoy’s exemplary harmonious man” (485), a status he owes, in part, to his capacity for self-control. On types of characters in Tolstoy, see also Ginzburg 347-51.
  20. In Russian culture, mushroom-picking was viewed as a courtship ritual. On the symbolism of mushrooms in connection with the frustrated marriage plot of Varen’ka, see Mandelker 163-78.
  21. “she is now able to talk with her mother as an equal about those chief events in a woman’s life” (655).
  22. “all the particulars which could interest him” (300).
  23. Tolstoy employs another, negative triad of gustatory pleasure, idleness, and sexual debauchery. Tolstoy views the three things as humans’ major sins and understands them as a chain: one inevitably causes the other two sins. In this respect, Levin, having been attracted by Anna, “sincerely con-

- fessed that living in Moscow with nothing but talk and food and drink, he was going silly." On Tolstoy's abstinence from carnal pleasure, see LeBlanc.
24. "has never tasted such a drink" (298).
25. "What bread—wonderful! Délicieux! And the vodka. . . I never tasted better!" (691).
26. The famous epithets, Vronskii's "lower jaw" and "white teeth," as well as his diet of beefsteak contribute to Vronskii's carnivorous image and indicate his spiritual limitations. See Wasiolek 72 and Goscilo 488-89.
27. "as if she was acting in a theater with better actors than herself" (748).
28. Here we can detect that Vronskii's Anglophilic pretensions motivate not only his management ideas but also theatrical dinners, one example of which was presented, symbolically, at the *Angliia*.

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