

Of Love and Marriage: a Study of THE KREUTZER SONATA

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to determine if the theory of “intertextuality of the arts” is valid. When applied, does it actually deepen insight into and appreciation of literature? The theory is put to the test in a study of Leo Tolstoy’s “The Kreutzer Sonata.” This short story takes on the challenging topic of marital morality in late 19th century Russia. It discusses whether it is proper that a wife should allow herself to be seduced by music into marital infidelity. The issue is complicated by the fact she has not been given the respect a wife is due. In addition to other concepts and theories included in the research, the perspective offered by musicology is considered.

Keywords : The Kreutzer Sonata, Leo Tolstoy, intertextuality

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีจุดมุ่งหมายที่จะหาคำตอบว่าทฤษฎี “สหบทแห่งศิลปะ” นำมาใช้ในความเป็นจริงได้หรือไม่ เมื่อนำทฤษฎีนี้มาใช้แล้วทำให้เกิดความเข้าใจและความซาบซึ้งในวรรณคดีที่ลึกกว่าหรือไม่ ในการพิสูจน์ ผู้วิจัยใช้เรื่องสั้น “The Kreutzer Sonata” ของ Leo Tolstoy ซึ่งว่าด้วยประเด็นอันยากจะหาข้อสรุปเรื่องศีลธรรมชีวิตสมรสในสังคมรัสเซีย ช่วงปลายศตวรรษที่ 19 เรื่องสั้นนี้อธิบายว่าเป็นการเหมาะสมหรือไม่หากภรรยาจะปล่อยใจตามดนตรีและลงเอยด้วยการไม่เชื่อตรงต่อสามี การที่ภรรยาไม่ได้รับการให้เกียรติอย่างที่ภรรยาพึงได้รับยังเพิ่มความซับซ้อนแก่กรณีปัญหาอีกด้วย นอกจากมโนทัศน์และทฤษฎีอื่นๆ ที่กล่าวถึงในงานวิจัยนี้ ยังมีการพิจารณาจากมุมมองของดนตรีศึกษาอีกด้วย

คำสำคัญ : The Kreutzer Sonata, ลีโอ ตอลสตอย, สหบทแห่งศิลปะ

Introduction

In the past the study and criticism of each field of art was usually limited to the scope of a particular subject. Then the concept of intertextuality came into existence in the 1960s. Post-Structuralist philosopher Julia Kristeva coined the term and it soon became widely known in academic and art criticism circles. She introduced the concept that the message obtained from a piece of writing can be shaped by ideas obtained from other pieces of writing. This can happen through the writer's referring to other existent texts, or the reader analyzing one piece of writing by linking it to other texts.

Kristeva's theories on intertextuality gained a wide following among academics worldwide. In Thailand, Emeritus Professor of German at Silpakorn University Dr. Chetana Nagavajara has been a leading exponent of intertextuality as it applies to his various areas of expertise. His approach to this discipline is based to a large extent on the work of German literature scholar Oskar Walzel. Applying these methods to critical studies of Western literature has significantly raised academic standards, especially in the field of comparative literature (2003:37). As for the study of other art forms, this method has opened a way for deeper comprehension and appreciation of the arts. There is greater scope for criticism as well. Therefore, academic papers about different kinds of intertextuality found within the arts appear regularly. Creative works then reveal themselves to be multi-dimensional. A cross-fertilization of ideas and their expression takes place, even among forms that seemingly have little in common. Studied in this way, works of art acquire the depth needed to portray life in all its complexities.

Music is a medium that can play a substantial role in the appreciation of literature. There has been an examination of this matter through a study of *The Marriage of Figaro*. Originally a play by French playwright Pierre Augustin de Beaumarchais, it was adapted by Mozart for his opera of the same name. In this satire of the aristocracy, Cherubino, a page of Count Almaviva, is forced to join the military. Figaro, the Count's valet, then sings a nine-page long aria, a selection of which follows below.

No more hanging around all day with the girls,
no more cream buns and custard tarts,
no more charades and blind-man's-bluff;

just good soldiers, by God: weather-beaten and ragged-assed, weighed down with their muskets, right face, left face, forward march.²

The presentation in the form of music adds an interesting dimension to the story. The libretto escalates up the arpeggio³ with merriment; and even though it is repetitive, the musical appeal captivates and makes the listening experience well worth it. There are also other musical elements that add color to the story. For example, the horns are used to mock the character of the count who is a hunter. The opera's journey through conflict and episodes of bedroom farce is reflected in the dissonance in the early and middle phases of the piece. Towards the end as tensions are resolved, the brightened mood is conveyed in an atmosphere of consonance.

Another example of a study of the intertextuality that can occur between music and literature is illustrated in an article entitled "Multidisciplinary Criticism for Reciprocal Guidance" by Dr. Chetana (2003). It discusses the value of applying musical knowledge to the process of literary analysis. The author refers to a critique of the translation of the Oresteia trilogy by Aeschylus published in Times Literary Supplement, December 17, 1999, which has been compared to Mozart's music. Michael Silk, a professor of Greek language and culture, compared a translation of the trilogy by Ted Hughes, a British poet of the late 20th century, to one by John Dryden a British poet of the 18th century. Silk claims Hughes' version lacks the quality of mildness present in the former version. The professor explains that serenity, which is a characteristic inherent in Greek tragedy, is conveyed by the rhythm in the work of Dryden. The effort by Hughes, on the other hand, is somewhat tone-deaf in this regard. Silk elaborates on this by saying that the feel is "Not 'Mozartian' enough". For Silk then, intertextuality moves not only across different media but back and forth through time as well, even as far back as the fifth century BC.

Whereas musical knowledge can be useful in the interpretation of literature, literary knowledge benefits the study of music as well. This is demonstrated in the same article by Dr. Chetana where he examines De Profundis, a piece of music by the American musician Frederic Rzewski. A composition for piano, it was created as a musical complement to Oscar Wilde's memoir De Profundis. To achieve a deeper level of appreciation when listening to this composition, the listener should have

² Beaumarchais, *The Marriage of Figaro*, tr. Bernard Sahlins. Copyright 1994. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee 1332 North Halsted Street, Chicago 60622, p. 29.

³ broken chord

some understanding of the thoughts and feelings of Wilde, who was imprisoned on a charge of sexual perversion when he wrote *De Profundis*. The listener can gain a better understanding of Wilde's seething mental state, virtually on the verge of insanity, which is the source of this artwork.

E. M. Forster's *Howard's End* is another example of how literature can deepen the appreciation of music. There is a sequence in the novel featuring a performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. It presents the many ways in which music influences people's lives. There is the sheer enjoyment of music for its own sake. This can be seen in the way Mrs. Munt, caught up in the rhythmic power, sways subtly in time with the music. One's imagination can be energized by listening to music. Helen imagines heroes and shipwrecks amidst the overwhelming current of the sound. Moreover, music which reaches the level of sophistication of a symphony by one of the world's greatest composers demands of the serious listener a corresponding sophistication. Tibby is well schooled in the art. When she listens to the work of the great composer, she pores over the musical score at the same time. Music can also arouse strong feelings, such as nationalism. During the concert Fräulein Mosebach is conscious of the fact that Beethoven is a fellow German. Lastly, music can act as a catalyst in the development of human relationships. The young man who accompanies Fräulein Mosebach to this orchestral performance finds himself captivated as much by her as he is by the music. In other words, music can bring people together. Society as a whole benefits when music plays a central role in local culture.

The visual arts too are prominently represented when exploring intertextuality in the arts. In an academic article entitled "The Interrelationships of the Arts" authors F. David Martin and Lee A. Jacobus explain how the poet Robert Fagles was inspired by a famous painting by Vincent van Gogh. For Fagles, *The Starry Night* was more than a startlingly vivid display of the night sky. He wrote a poem of the same name, imagining how the artist used painting to bring relief to his tortured soul. The article also mentions Anne Sexton, an American poet who struggled with mental illness and underwent therapy for it. Sexton, who was endowed with amazing imagination, was inspired by *The Starry Night* to write a poem. This painting for her reflected the myriad cruelties of life. Such was the power of the picture; Sexton saw in it a not unwelcome vision of her own death. Interestingly, in conveying the torment present in the painting, both poets thought of the curvy lines in the sky as dragons. In Western culture dragons are biblical in origin and terrorize mankind, constantly reminding him of his fallen state. Rather than a coincidence, both poets conjuring dragons is an example of the similar responses to art of people who have a common cultural heritage.

As seen in the examples, people experience art in different ways. In certain circumstances it can be appreciated on multiple levels, depending on a person's background and education. Perceptive individuals are conscious that a message inherent in a work of art can be acquired by the examination of other relevant sources, such as works produced by other forms of art. Thus, applying the concept of intertextuality fosters awareness in the public and artist alike that art is not produced in isolation. It draws inspiration from multiple sources and disciplines. Art can be enriched by crossing boundaries and interweaving different methods of expression. However, some Western scholars just accept intertextuality as a given and neglect to examine it seriously. A more active approach in this regard would open a whole new range of perspectives and reinvigorate critical studies of art (Chetana 2003:37-39).

The Kreutzer Sonata

So just how valuable a tool is intertextuality when studying the arts? To find out the answer to this, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, a short story by Russian writer Leo Tolstoy published in 1889, was selected as the main focus of this research. The text is appropriate to this study because it is a piece of literature using music as a motif. This offers the opportunity to see whether the investigation of the music alluded to in the title adds a significant dimension to the examination of love and marriage. Will the application of other mediums of expression shed new light on the issue of moral values, the principle theme of this piece by the Russian master?

As a vehicle for Tolstoy's moral beliefs, this short story invites one to question the relationship between marriage and love. After finishing the book one may ask, "Is it always evil to love outside marriage?" This question is a challenge to the traditional view that an extramarital love affair is a moral transgression. In the attempt to find the answer, let us first examine the common assumption that marriage is taken to be a union based on love. The weakness of this notion is obvious, for examples of marriage without love are seen everywhere. Besides, love is a vague, ambiguous concept. What indeed are the factors that could help identify something as love? With such diversity of perspectives, it is fair to say that marriage and love are often regarded as two separate things. A "love" affair, subject as it is to wide interpretation, cannot then be a meaningful violation of the marriage vows.

Given this, can an extramarital love affair be judged immoral? From another point of view, the Christian one, the answer is yes. Even though love can be considered a matter apart from marriage, there is religious law to abide by. This is stated in a variety of ways in the bible: for example, "What God has joined together,

let man not separate" (Mark 10:9). In this context as Jesus was discussing morality regarding divorce, a marriage blessed by God must not end in divorce because husband and wife are united as one. Dissolving this union, as an extramarital affair would do, is not permitted. Love, per se, is not relevant in this context at all. The following biblical passage explains the point in more detail.

²Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

³"What did Moses command you?" he replied.

⁴They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."

⁵"It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. ⁶"But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' ⁷For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, ⁸and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. ⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

¹⁰When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. ¹¹He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. ¹²And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery." (Mark 10:2-12)

The salient point in this context that is the union of man and woman is God's will. With marriage, husband and wife become in effect a single being. When Jesus mentioned divorce, which ends the divinely sanctified union of a man and a woman, he was talking about divorce being a sin. Love as a prerequisite for marriage is not stated anywhere in the bible. Nonetheless, if one is married one has to abstain from adultery. Love is not a condition of marriage, and its absence is not grounds for separation. However, to have an extramarital affair is prohibited because it inevitably involves adultery, and adultery is a sin.

Until the about the mid 20th century, Western writers delving into the matter of moral behavior within marriage addressed the issue from a Christian perspective, at least in part. Christian ethics had had a profound influence on social mores for

almost 1500 years. However, Christianity itself had itself been divided, sometimes bitterly, for nearly the same length of time. Marriage in each Western society evolved in its own way, with elements drawn from a variety of sources. Therefore, a more comprehensive study of intertextuality in the short story *The Kreutzer Sonata* is required. A deeper probing into the matter means including an examination of other perspectives such as feminism, transcendentalism and musicology and how they relate the central themes of love, marriage and infidelity.

It is appropriate to begin the discussion with a brief sketch of the story itself. A couple exchanges wedding vows, but what do they really know of one another as they enter married life? In the story one partner feels deprived in terms of the respect due to a spouse, or even a human being for that matter. The root of this deplorable treatment can be traced to one pivotal factor – the formation of the husband's character.

So who then is Posdnicheff, the husband in question? It would seem there is no shortage of reasons for Posdnicheff thinking that he is superior to his wife, for indeed he is 'superior' to many people. He is a member of the aristocracy, with wealth and high education. In common with those born into this lofty status, his behavior reflects many of the stereotypes of his class. While he is still a bachelor he has sexual intercourse with women in the community, none of whom is a prostitute. He thinks there is nothing wrong with this because by giving money to these otherwise respectable women, he believes he is acting responsibly (Tolstoy 2006: 12-13).

Having neatly rationalized his promiscuity, Posdnicheff allows a casual contempt for women to develop in his mind. Virtually any woman in society, including his own wife, is really no different than a prostitute as far as he is concerned. This is evident when he gives vent to the following: "...compare the wretched, the despised, with the women of the highest society: the same dresses, the same fashions, the same perfumeries, the same passion for jewelry, for brilliant and very expensive articles, the same amusements, dances, music, and songs. The former attract by all possible means; so do the latter" (Tolstoy 2006, 17). Unfortunately, he chooses not to moderate this sweeping denunciation of women in any meaningful way. When he talks about what he sees in the woman who is to become his wife, he thinks it is basically carnal, "Yes, and I, too, was captivated by jerseys, bustles, and curly hair" (Tolstoy 2006: 17).

When it comes to relations between men and women, Posdnicheff's cynicism knows no bounds. He sees an ulterior motive in everything. A woman's natural assets, an inclination to provide love and emotional support, are deemed to

be mere ploys. Romance, sensuality, the feminine mystique are just ways to secure a marriage certificate. He reveals this dismissive attitude toward the opposite sex when he declares that women and their mothers exhaust themselves in "a hunt for a husband" (Tolstoy 2006: 19). Painting, appreciating music and drama and other forms of artistic cultivation are all available to women in the story. However, Posdnicheff assumes the real purpose for such pursuits is not self expression. They are actually just means employed by high-class 'women of pleasure' to seduce and please a man. Activities that are considered by most members of society to be romantic, civilized or pleasurable, such as reading poetry or going on a boat ride together, are no more than subtle methods of entrapment.

However, both parties are guilty in this regard according to Posdnicheff. The male sex exploits the kind of behavior society permits it to get away with. Indulging in excessive food and beverages, the stimuli of physical, animalistic desire, while neglecting healthy pursuits, all have only one real end in mind – carnal satisfaction. He can see nothing above this level when he contemplates the relationship with the woman who had become his wife. (The past perfect tense is used for his wife's death occurs before the story begins.)

Given his utter lack of esteem for women and the institution of marriage, it is not surprising that Posdnicheff is subject to attack by some feminist philosophers for "sexual objectification." In feminist parlance this means regarding her solely as a thing for gratification. According to Laurie Shrager this, "violates the moral imperative to treat people as autonomous, rational subjects" (2007). By ignoring this moral imperative, his chance of finding the natural beauty of a partnership of compatible souls is thus destroyed. Posdnicheff sees her not as a rational autonomous human being, but an object to be used. What follows, is what Harry Brod calls "the loss of positive human interaction and self-realization" (Shrager 2007). Not only does he devalue her, but also himself. He deprives himself of the privileged status of a contributor to a worthy relationship.

As a result of Posdnicheff's failure to treat his wife with basic human decency, their marital life is a misery. As the story progresses, their plight seems to get worse and worse. Just about any matter degenerates into an ugly dispute. At one point while they are talking about the children's education, the conversation turns into a series of reproaches and attacks on one subject after another (Tolstoy 2006: 42). At times the tension in their quarrels rises to an almost murderous level. He recounts one incident this way. "She knew that she intentionally distorted each of my words, and each of her words was saturated with venom" (Tolstoy 2006: 42). What seems on the surface like communication, however strained, is in truth a means to inflict pain.

It is a complete communication breakdown. There is no connection between souls. Nothing is off limits, not even the children. They are not above cruelly manipulating them if there is any advantage to be gained.

“One would have said that we used them as weapons with which to combat each other. Each of us had his favorite. I made use of little Basile (the eldest), she of Lise. Further, when the children reached an age where their characters began to be defined, they became allies, which we drew each in his or her own direction” (Tolstoy 2006: 36).

This plunges the family into further conflict and emotional turmoil. The mutual hatred of the parents spills over onto the children, who are powerless to cope with it. The whole family is drawn into a cycle of suspicion and recrimination. The marriage is hopeless. Posdnicheff actually admits that when overwhelmed by loathing and despair, he experiences what could be a foreboding premonition. In time he can envision things deteriorating to the point when he “should desire to kill her” or himself (Tolstoy 2006: 42).

A reasonable analysis of the failure of the marriage would lead one to conclude that Posdnicheff deserves the lion's share of the blame. His selfishness, rooted in arrogance and insensitivity is shown to be far from nobility in the presence of the character of the lawyer's friend who happens to be on the same train in which Posdnicheff and the narrator are. When she arrives on the scene, smoking a cigarette and clad in a semi-masculine outer garment (Tolstoy 2006: 3), she appears like a representative of the modern woman. Not surprisingly, she considers herself to be the equal of any man: with equal rights and her value to society recognized and respected. Actually what she says anticipates modern feminism. She asserts that women do not have to bear the debased status with which society encumbers them. They need not be passive objects of desire. Instead, they should enjoy the self-esteem every person is entitled to. They can be recipients of genuine love and affection. Any relationship they enter should be with someone whom they freely choose. This would be based on love with someone who recognizes their common humanity and is committed to an equal partnership.

Furthermore, the way she talks about love almost suggests a spiritual significance. She claims that “only love consecrates marriage” and “the real marriage is that which is consecrated by love” (Tolstoy 2006:7). Although spoken in a modern context, these sentiments reflect beliefs that go back to the beginnings of civilization. Love is a pre-condition for any true marriage. The wedding ritual has

social significance, but the marriage depends on love. Where there is love, it is holy marriage.

Although stated from a feminist perspective there is, paradoxically, an element of religious authority in these assertions. Although they show how marriage can be defined outside the traditional binding contract recognized by the Christian establishment, there is an awareness of the concept of a higher kind of love in the context of sacred marriage. One is invited to consider another way of interpreting the union between man and woman – that above all God intends marriage to be founded on love. Even if this is judged to be a completely radical interpretation, it should not be seen as subverting Christian principles. Rather, it is a reinterpretation of these principles. Given that entrenched practice has proven to be a failure, this promises progress.

Love that is righteous in God's way, as delineated in the Holy Bible, is a good, holy kind of love, and is sublime in essence. In other words, it is based on a devotion to the well-being of others. It is a pure love, devoid of self-aggrandizement. The presence of motive, however cleverly disguised, is an obvious corruption of this noble sentiment. For instance, it is clear that one of the most despicable things a person can do is to exercise the art of seduction only to secure the material rewards an advantageous relationship can provide.

Rather than seeking to gratify material cravings, one should strive to realize the inherent worth of every human being. Once this is understood and accepted, a person would consequently deem that others are worthy of being treated with the respect due to any human being. From a Christian perspective, one is taught to understand that in a relationship it is constructive to perceive the partner in the light of purity. The Bible says that, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). By bringing a religious dimension to this discussion, it is clear that love is much more than the consummation of fleshly desires. It is the purity found in love that is crucial to our lives. It is what makes life worth living. Christians would characterize it as a gift from God.

Love in its purest form can also be defined as "being a good friend." With a good friend, you can share your deepest feelings and expect sympathy and understanding in return. By embarking on a path of friendship and altruism, chances are good that a meaningful life and benevolent life is well within reach. As limited imperfect creatures, humans cannot be expected to give as much as a deity or a saint. People are obliged to spend time and resources to ensure their own basic needs are met. To be human is to fall from grace on numerous occasions throughout a lifetime.

There is always, however, the possibility of redemption. People understand this on a fundamental level. Despite all their faults and moral failings, we recognize that people deserved to be loved. Appreciation of the innate purity and goodness in the heart of a partner is a goal worth achieving. However difficult that may be, in the end people ought to be loved for who they truly are. We cannot hope to emulate God, who loves flawed human beings with limitless grace and magnanimity, but we can learn much from his example.

Pre- Christian Viewpoints

Plato believed the highest and most fundamental (or pure) kind of reality exists in non-material abstract “forms” or ideas. From his point of view, love of a virtuous or noble nature exists as a form, an ideal that can be felt in the soul. People instinctively, and perhaps naively, tend to expect this sort of love from a partner. With the inevitable deprivation of this cherished ideal the soul, also instinctively, yearns to find compensation. For the long-suffering wife in Tolstoy’s story, love proves to be a complete illusion. Into this void, her affinity for music makes its presence felt and assumes a profound importance. Music comes to play a large part in her quest for compensation. A mutual friend of the couple, a violinist, comes onto the scene. For the wife it is an awakening. The violinist is, in effect, the answer to her prayers. As they play Beethoven’s duet *The Kreutzer Sonata*, it is soon clear deeper chords are being struck.

Spontaneously, emotion flows from both of them. As their emotions mingle with the music, they realize they are sharing a unique experience. More importantly, as a sense of wholeness emerges they realize unity lies at the heart of a loving partnership. This remarkable sharing of emotion through music reveals its beauty to the soul. At times such as this, the Romantic notion that beauty and goodness are one is intuitively comprehended. It would be hard to imagine, after music lifts two souls to a state of ideal union, that beauty could exist without goodness, and vice versa.

Such beauty is integral to the conception of love in the highest form attainable by human beings. That is to say, it is the love of two people who are compatible in every way. They would have the same basic psychological composition and a natural affinity for similar things. The bond between them evolves in a way that each partner seems to complete the other. As for musical taste, is it actually a sign that two people are destined for a harmonious relationship? Plato’s most renowned student, Aristotle, shared with his teacher and many Greek philosophers a belief in the doctrine of *ethos* the inner source, the soul, or original essence that forms a person. They thought *ethos* could reveal moral character. *Ethos* attributes ethical powers to music, powers

that can shape the personality. Beethoven's sonatas are known to provoke strong emotional reactions. In *The Kreutzer Sonata* the characters responses the music are evident, but tragically misconstrued by Posdnicheff.

Tolstoy does not definitively state whether the beauty conjured by the music sends the two musicians on a path toward perfect love. The sonata scene does, however, serve to highlight the failure of Posdnicheff's contribution to the marriage. After leaving the two alone for awhile, he returns convinced that the music had sparked a desire for physical intimacy between them. However, when he finds them they are seated in the drawing room. Although innocent of adultery, it is not certain whether she thinks the feelings the music aroused within her for the violinist are righteous. By not concealing them, it may be inferred that she thinks it is right to let her feelings speak for themselves. Whether she regards this epiphany of the heart as more precious than honoring her marriage, we do not know for certain. However, the whole scene points to the idea that it is just impossible for her to have the heart to appreciate and honor her marital vows and her husband.

Is this out-of-wedlock meeting of two compatible souls a righteous kind of love? This is not an easy question to answer. The voice of feminism heard above, would not likely have a quarrel with a woman who, trapped in an oppressive relationship, takes the opportunity to enjoy a moment of genuine feeling with another person. Tolstoy does not provide definitive guidance from a spiritual standpoint either. In the story, he does not say whether this relationship includes the virtues found in "holy" love, as it is defined in Christian philosophy.

Adding another thread to intertextuality, this love can be regarded as righteous in God's way, if God is defined from the point of view of Transcendentalism, e.g. the idea that the truth should be attained by natural means. One may learn about God through nature, which means chiefly through intuition. Viewed through a transcendentalist lens, righteous love, which is part of the beauty and goodness of God, becomes a matter that is entirely based on one's insight and values. If one finds this premise plausible, then the love between the two musicians can be regarded as blessed by God. A natural grace is palpable when sublime feelings arise. The magic of music is so potent it can create, with no need for words, sublimely wonderful moments.

Stirring the passions as it does, a closer look at the human response to music is called for at this point. Does it actually help to explain in any way the qualities of the soulful love it appears to arouse? Since *The Kreutzer Sonata* plays a crucial role in this story, it is most fitting to examine further this composition and its significance

to the message Tolstoy wants to convey.

Beethoven's Violin Sonata No. 9 in A major, better known as The Kreutzer Sonata, may be interpreted as a paean to the immortal spirit. That is, it gives musical form to the spirit that manages to find courage in life, and happiness even in the midst of agony. This kind of spirit refuses to succumb to utterly unbearable conditions of the kind that would virtually leave a person in a state of living death. To underscore this idea, the sonata was actually inspired by extreme frustration experienced by Beethoven in the year 1802. Shortly before this piece was composed, a suicide note was addressed to his two brothers. In the note the composer apologized for his hot temperament and coarseness. He explained that this behavior resulted from his deafness. A more abysmal fate for a musician with real hopes of a shining future cannot be imagined. Adding to his despair, the treatment he had undergone for deafness for six years proved to be futile. It was such a struggle for Beethoven that he desired to end his life (Gutmann 2007). Eventually he overcame this desperate crisis. The genius of his musical imagination, which was his source of vitality, pulled him through.

An analysis of this composition sheds light on what a person living through this seething agony has to endure. The sonata traces a course from extreme emotional pressure to a dramatic turnaround, where more mellow and cheerful thoughts prevail. Finally, he is emboldened to return to take a look again at the unchanging conditions of the human heart. He finds consolation in discovering there is an element of beauty in the inevitable pain.

The turmoil from the grief and despair is conveyed with clarity in the first movement. As Peter Gutmann pointed out, the music of this movement is complex. The piano and violin parts both "blend and chafe" (2007). They progress in harmony, but then suddenly the song erupts into chaos; the piano and the violin seem to vie with each other in frenzy in the presto⁴. The abrupt shift of mood induces one to imagine a psychotic state. One phase is serene, relaxing; then the following one rushes like a person on the verge of insanity. He then reverses direction and consoles himself by saying that everything will be alright. Then, just as quickly, the other side of the psyche launches a sudden attack ... "No! This torment will never end."

The second movement can be said to comprise a reflection on the details of this manic-depressive condition from many points of views. Then there is an attempt at reconciling the warring factions. It starts softly and gently; then after a while it shifts into a pleasant and joyful mood with a faster beat and lively chords. Moreover,

⁴very fast tempo

the variation in the theme can be interpreted as an attempt to review the matter over and over again, covering every possible detail. The idea is to gather sufficient equanimity to be able to accept the situation, to be ready to face a merciless reality with courage. The movement progresses from the piano figuration to the elaboration of the violin. Then it continues to the passage into the minor, then finally the elaborate combinations. All of this is meant to convey the play of yin and yang, so to speak, in the human psyche. In other words, the continual struggle between the forces of darkness and light shapes one's destiny. Beauty, however, can be found eventually. The minor mode reminds us that contemplation of these issues is nevertheless a painful exercise. Finally, the idea of opening up to all this becomes possible when the phenomenon of collective beauty is perceived.

In the last movement, the conflict introduced in the first movement reaches a resolution. This transpires through the reprise of techniques from the first movement in a more cheerful way, with happier accents, an enlivened thematic progression, and the lively interaction of the major and minor modes. Therefore, this part brings to mind an optimistic view regarding the dark and light sides of existence. Without darkness, the appreciation of brightness is impossible. Accordingly, it can now be seen how the composer is able to look at the heart-wrenching conditions anew with understanding and acceptance. He is now prepared to see beauty in grief. This amazing revelation is a most joyous one.

The portrait of a marriage Tolstoy paints in this story is one of two people whose lives have become an almost unbearable agony. The music awakens in Posdniceff's wife feelings long since dormant. She is uplifted by the reappearance of beauty and the realization that life's sweetness is once again within reach. Is adultery the inevitable result? Posdniceff is convinced of it, but the reader is not given positive proof. If the relationship with the violinist were actually consummated, who could blame her after all she's been through?

The wife finds herself in an intolerable dilemma. If she gets a divorce, she will lose face, but then by remaining in the marriage all the pressure would eventually drive over the edge. Performing *The Kreutzer Sonata* brings all this into sharp focus. The poignancy of the piece draws strong emotions from her. She feels the composition is speaking directly to her, reflecting the distress she has had to endure. By playing it with another person, who is clearly empathetic, it feels like they are recreating Beethoven's piece anew. It is not difficult for her to believe he is there to share the pain inside her. When they get to the part in the composition that portends thoughts of brightness, there is no doubt she succumbs to his charms and realizes that he is indeed the source of her revived spirits. As they get to the final

movement, it may well be she is captivated by the idea that pain and joy can co-exist successfully in the same moment, or within a relationship. One can imagine her thinking, as she gazes at the violinist, 'Why not follow my heart? We are meant to be together. It is my only chance to escape the hell of my marriage.'

No one would dispute that music, ranging in tone from joy to sorrow, is a form of expression that originates in the heart. Therefore a soulful piece of music has the capacity to relieve suffering when shared by sympathetic people. A person who is deeply touched by music can find solace from emotional contact with another person of the same musical disposition. If certain types of music strike a similar chord in two people, they may well be emotionally compatible. This could form the basis of a promising partnership. Certainly in the case of the beleaguered wife, the interlude with the violinist suggests heartening alternatives to the dehumanizing relationship with Posdniceff.

Conclusion

Views ranging from Christianity to feminism on the topics of marriage, fidelity, jealousy, and the role of the sexes have been discussed in this paper. As to how the aforementioned relate to the extramarital romance examined here, one could only conclude that the wife deserves understanding and compassion. However, there is the inevitable guilt felt by anyone inculcated in the traditional notion that adultery is one of the gravest of sins. To give way then to a spontaneous but genuine passion for another may not seem the best solution. Without completely sacrificing an experience as fulfilling as the one inspired by The Kreutzer Sonata, the wife could proceed with a clear conscience by taking heart from Beethoven's example. His creativity and his acceptance of the redemptive power of music sustained him through a life often blighted by sorrow. In the wife's circumstances, where women were left with little or no choice in important matters, the beauty manifested when recreating music with the violinist must suffice as consolation. However, a chaste love remains, along with a fresh appreciation that music has the gift of soothing and healing. Beethoven proved that creating beautiful music, regardless of one's personal miseries, is a worthy endeavor and a cause to live for.

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