

## “Kreutzer Sonata” I. N. Tolstogo in the context of social discourse of the XIX Century: social and ethical aspect

“Sonata Kreutzer” I. N. Tolstogo en el contexto del discurso social del siglo XIX: aspecto social y ético

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### ABSTRACT

“Kreutzer Sonata” L.N. Tolstoy is one of the key works of the late XIX century. The publication of the story served as an impetus that caused a wide discussion of the problems of family, marriage, gender, and the status of women. The ban on censorship only contributed to an increase in interest in the story. Kreutzer’s sonata was read not only in capitals and large cities, but also in remote counties. The object of discussion was family values based on the concepts of marriage set forth in the Bible and the teachings of the Holy Fathers. The words of the main character of Pozdnyshev show flaws in Orthodox marriage.

**Keywords:** L.N. Tolstoy, The Kreutzer Sonata, social discourse.

### RESUMEN

«Kreutzer Sonata» L.N. Tolstoi es una de las obras clave de finales del siglo XIX. La publicación de la historia sirvió como un ímpetu que provocó una amplia discusión sobre los problemas de la familia, el matrimonio, el género y la condición de la mujer. La prohibición de la censura solo contribuyó a aumentar el interés en la historia. La sonata de Kreutzer se leyó no solo en capitales y grandes ciudades, sino también en condados remotos. El objeto de discusión fueron los valores familiares basados en los conceptos de matrimonio establecidos en la Biblia y las enseñanzas de los Santos Padres. Las palabras del personaje principal de Pozdnyshev muestran fallas en el matrimonio ortodoxo.

**Palabras clave:** L.N. Tolstoi, La sonata de Kreutzer, discurso social.

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## **Introduction.**

"Kreutzer Sonata" L.N. Tolstoy was a momentous event in the socio-political life of the end of the 19th century, which caused a wide public resonance not only in our country, but also abroad. Its name corresponds to the name of the chamber sonnet of Ludwig van Beethoven, which indicates the particular importance of this musical institution in the context of the story (Fisenko, 2015; Fisenko, 2015; Fisenko et al, 2019). Exact quotes of the Gospel texts, taken as an epigraph to the tests, speak about the philosophical perception of the problem of the story, set the moral reference point of the work. The story was initially banned by censorship. Despite this, it spread throughout the country and in "distant provincial backwoods, almost everyone belonging to the so-called society considered it their duty to get out sometimes with great difficulties to read this work". Permission to publish the story was obtained only after a personal meeting between the wife of the writer Sofia Andreevna and Alexander III (Adonina et al, 2018; Azimov & Schukin, 2009; Kosareva et al 2019).

## **Discussion of the problem.**

### **Discussions related to the release of the novel "The Kreutzer Sonata" by L.N. Tolstoy.**

Immediately after the release of the story (1891), both enthusiastic and sharply criticizing articles appeared in the press regarding the problems of the family and marriage, the status of women, discussed by the heroes of the Kreutzer Sonata. V.A. Zhdanov in his work "Love in the Life of Tolstoy" traced the evolution of the writer's views on family and marriage, examining the family life of Tolstoy. The researcher believed that the "Sonata" condemns vices and glorifies morality, condemns "selfish love that interfered with the continuation of the family" (Gez, 1985). The publication of the story caused the appearance of articles on the status of women in Russian society, which has been developing for a long time, ideas about Christian marriage, male and female virtues. In Russian society, family values were based on Christian concepts of marriage, which were set forth in the Bible and the teachings of the Holy Fathers. By the end of the XIX century. the need has ripened for reforming the institution of the family. This fact was also recognized among the clergy, but there was no unity of opinion. In family matters, the Church defended the Orthodox canons. In his works, Tolstoy reflected in many respects the opposition to the Church views on the problems of Christian marriage, which led to the discontent of the clergy. So, in the sermon of the Kharkov archpriest Butkevich, it was said that Tolstoy's works were distinguished by "destructive power and corrupt character", and "Kreutzer's sonata" was characterized as "clumsy, dirty and immoral story" (Opulskaya, 1979). Beginning criticism of the views of the writer subsequently resulted in the "Definition" of the Synod. As far as the writer was concerned, the problem of family relations raised by him, we can judge from his diary entries: "And then I wrote and write a story, a story about carnal love, sexual relations in the family. And this is more serious. Maybe not necessary And as always, when busy with good things, in this direction, supporting him, external events take shape. The other day I received letters and brochures from shakers from America. Do you know their teachings? Especially against marriage, i.e. not against marriage, but for the ideal of purity beyond marriage". For women and sexuality, Tolstoy throughout his work was controversial. Gradually he moves away from the denial of marriage. This can clearly be seen in the example of his late work. Tolstoy sees the meaning of a woman in childbirth and helping her husband (see L.N. Tolstoy "The Truth About Women"). Only a woman can give birth to a man, therefore, a woman's life is comprehended by the call "to give birth, feed and raise the greatest number of children who are able to work for people according to her worldview" (see L.N. Tolstoy "On Women"). To "grasp the worldview of her time", a woman does not need special education, she does not need to participate in social work, she only needs to "read the Gospel and not close her eyes, ears and, most importantly, hearts". Men and women are equalized before God in the call to serve him, but their forms of service are different. Thus, the work of the writer "Sexual Lust" and "On Women" is permeated by the idea of keeping the body and soul in chastity, as it "gives incomparably more benefits than even a happy marriage" (L.N. Tolstoy "Sexual Lust").

### **Disclosure of the views of L.N. Tolstoy on the "family issue".**

The basis for the plot's concept was a letter from an unknown woman, which was received by Tolstoy in February 1886: "So, the main idea, rather, the feeling", Kreutzer sonata "belongs to one woman, a Slav who wrote me a comic-writing letter, but remarkable in content about the oppression of women by sexual demands".

In the "Kreutzer Sonata" L.N. Tolstoy innovatively develops the theme of family and marriage, raises the problem of sexual relations between a man and a woman, shows the flaws of Orthodox marriage, gives a "new" interpretation of Christian dogmas (through the lips of the hero of Pozdnyshev), which causes a lot of controversy. The main opponent of Tolstoy, Archbishop Nikanor called Tolstoy the discoverer of the topic of sexual relations, and in the article "Conversation on Christian Matrimony Against Gr. L. Tolstoy" compares the "Kreutzer Sonata" and the novel by N. G. Chernyshevsky "What to do?". Nikanor believed that the Kreutzer Sonata was harmful. "In our judgment, this new gospel is the word of a madman who decisively survives from the mind". M.I. Spassky admired the "Kreutzer Sonata", believing that Tolstoy was able to arouse highly moral feelings: even young men undergoing debauchery created circles in order to maintain physical purity before marriage. The writer expressed his view of the modern family in the words of his hero Vasily Pozdnyshev: "Our people get married without seeing anything other

than copulation in marriage, and either deception or violence comes out. When cheating, it is easier to tolerate. Husband and wife only deceive people that they are monogamous, but live in polygamy and polygamy. This is nasty, but still coming; but when, as it most often happens, the husband and wife made an external obligation to live together all their lives and from the second month they already hate each other, want to break up and still live, then that terrible hell comes out from which they get drunk and shoot kill and poison themselves and each other” (Nikanor, 1890).

Thoughts L.N. Tolstoy regarding the meaning and significance of marriage had a public outcry. Many modern researchers believed that the concept of “universal chastity” is connected with the mental state of the writer at that moment and his personal biography. The heroes of the “Kreutzer Sonata” touch upon many aspects of the sexually reproductive side of the marriage: taboo of sexual relations during pregnancy and lactation, contraception, the problem of love as the basis of marriage, divorce and marital fidelity. Through the lips of heroes, the writer conveys to his readers his views: “And fear must be the first thing in a woman”; “As she, Eve, the woman, was created from the rib of a husband, she will remain until the end of the age”; “We need to shorten the female gender ahead of time, otherwise everything will be lost”; “In our country, people marry without seeing anything other than copulation in marriage. And it’s either deception or violence”, etc. The debates that unfolded on the pages of the press prompted Tolstoy to justify his views and in 1890 the writer presented to the public an “Epilogue to the Kreutzer Sonata”, in which he summed up his thoughts on marriage: “There can never be a Christian marriage and never was”.

The ideal of a Christian is love of God and neighbor, is renunciation of oneself to serve God and neighbor; carnal love, marriage, is self-service and therefore, in any case, is an obstacle to the service of God and people, and therefore, from the Christian point of view, it is a fall, a sin”. Love for God and neighbor implies renunciation of oneself in their name. This is the ideal of a Christian. Marriage does not contribute to the service of God and people. The gospel reflects the ideal of complete chastity: a married man does not need to divorce his wife to marry another, a person (married and unmarried) has a sin to look at a woman as an object of pleasure, an unmarried man does not have to marry to be chaste. According to the writer, it is important to understand that “abstinence, which is a necessary condition for human dignity in an unmarried state, is even more necessary in marriage”. M.I. Spassky, having analyzed from the point of view of the Church the provisions cited by L.N. Tolstoy in the “Afterword” concludes: “Only he could, from the fact that Pozdnyshév’s marriage was a blasphemous insult to the sacrament of marriage, deduce that in general Christian marriage is a deception and a lie”. Thus, not understanding the essence of the subject of love and accusing the Church of deceit. According to Tolstoy, family ties do not justify sexual passion. Sexual (or carnal love) is the strongest, “because if passions are destroyed and the last, most powerful of them, carnal love, the prophecy will be fulfilled, people will unite together, the goal of humanity will be achieved, and there will be no need for him to live”. Awareness of one’s spirituality is necessary to combat “lust,” only in this case, sexual passion will appear to be “what it is: a humiliating animal property”. Children are atonement for sexual sin, and “a marriage consisting in giving birth and raising children is mediocre service to God through children” (see: L. Tolstoy About Women “This marriage, with its ensuing consequence – the birth of children – defines a new, more limited form of service to God and people for those who marry. Before marriage, a person directly in the most diverse forms could serve God and people; marriage, however, limits his area of activity and requires him to return and educate offspring descending from marriage, future ministers to God and people”.

However, marriage is not a means of having children. It is possible to educate ministers to God and society by adopting and adopting children: “it is much easier to maintain and save those millions of children’s lives that perish around us from lack of, not to mention spiritual, but material food”. According to V.A. Soloviev, using the example of the Pozdnyshév family, Tolstoy demonstrated what marriage should not be (Soloviev, 1893; Spassky, 2018). An even greater crime of morality is sexual intercourse, in which the possibility of having children is prevented, and the severity of the consequences is transferred to the woman. The writer concludes that abstinence is also necessary in marriage. In carnal relationships, the birth of children is perceived as a hindrance to the continuation of love relationships. Intemperance during pregnancy and lactation destroys the “mental strength of a woman”. Russian philosopher and theologian A.F. Gusev approached Tolstoy’s understanding of the family somewhat differently. He noted that Tolstoy acknowledged the fact of the existence of one percent of marriages: “those who” believe in the sacrament of marriage “and” go to church “do not look” as an empty formality “are happy in family life” (Gusev, 2012). L.N. Tolstoy condemned premarital sexual relations and opposed the widespread assertion in society that sexual intercourse could be good for health: “I heard that my struggles and pains subside after that, I heard it and read it, I heard from the elders that it would be good for health OK; I heard from my comrades that there is some merit in this, youth”. Parents, under public influence, “institute debauchery”. The author concludes: “So I wanted to say that this is not good, because it cannot be that for the health of some people it would be possible to destroy the bodies and souls of other people, just as it cannot be that for the health of some people it is necessary was to drink the blood of others. “When solving pedagogical problems, parents should “set other goals for themselves, except for a beautiful, well-groomed body”, in which sensuality is “kindled” early and “terrible sexual vices” are formed. The writer also opposes chanting in novels, songs and poems of carnal love. Men and women should “stop

thinking that carnal love is something especially elevated on the contrary, falling in love and connecting with the object of love (no matter how hard they try to prove the contrary in poetry and prose) never makes it easier to achieve a worthy person's goal" (Rumyantseva et al, 2918).

### Summary

Thus, L.N. Tolstoy in the "Kreutzer Sonata" raises the socio-ethical aspect of marriage and family relations. Numerous critical articles indicate that this story was perceived as a challenge to public opinion. The significance of the story lies in the fact that it caused a public outcry. Writers, poets, philosophers, clergymen and statesmen drew attention to the problems of family and marriage.

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