

Toward a Methodology for Autobiographical Dramaturgy: The Case of Tolstoy's *The Light  
Shines in Darkness*

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## Abstract

According to Philippe Lejeune's "autobiographical pact," a text can only be considered an autobiography when the author, narrator, and character all share the same proper name. Any exceptions are thusly designated as works of fiction, regardless of whatever biographical resemblance may be detected between the author and character. This thesis aims not to challenge this useful generic distinction, but to develop an authoritative system for approaching the oft-neglected side of the equation: works of autobiographical fiction, and autobiographical dramas in particular. I propose to develop a reception-based methodology (the Biographical Grid) for assessing author-character resemblance with as much empiricism as possible. This is done by extracting the author's biographical material in relation to the chosen fictional character (often the play's protagonist) via their characterization within the text, and organizing this material within a specially-designed table. Each of these units is then assigned a numerical score based upon its correspondence with the author's publicly-known biographical data. The result is not only a qualitative value assigned to the degree of resemblance between the character and its author, but moreover indicates precisely which character traits enforce the autobiographical kinship, and which represent conscious deviations from the biographical record as part of the process of fictionalization. This information can then be applied to well-informed analyses of the text's use of its autobiographically-inspired content. Using Tolstoy's play, *The Light Shines in Darkness*, as a case study, I demonstrate the process of building, testing, and applying the grid to assess a work of autobiographical drama. My systematic approach to autobiographical dramas of this kind supports the development of further research into methods of biographical criticism while strengthening analytical readings of individual plays.

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### **Introduction: Theorizing the Autobiographical**

At the outset of his 1952 autobiography, *Arrow in the Blue*, Arthur Koestler provides a brief passage from Tolstoy's *The Cossacks* to serve as an epigraph: "And he went on talking about himself, not realising that this was not as interesting to the others as it was to him" (qtd in Koestler 13). It is not difficult to read this citation as Koestler meditating on the perceived self-indulgence of his own autobiographical endeavour. Later critics have accordingly commented on the selection, indicating that he "felt it necessary to apologize to the readers of his autobiography for the egocentric focus on himself" (Bjorklund 15).

As accurate as this assessment of Koestler's usage of the quotation may be, a sideways glance at its original context in Tolstoy's novel tells a rather different story. The variance lies in the pragmatic matter of fictionality. Koestler *quotes* Tolstoy *as himself*; he speaks as himself for the entirety of the book that follows, to which the epigraph can unabashedly reverberate as his own thoughts on the enterprise. Tolstoy's utterance of this phrase is, conversely, mediated by the fictionality afforded by its novelistic context. He speaks the line *not as himself*, but instead through an omniscient heterodiegetic narrator marked as a separate entity by the laws of narratology. Moreover, he does not speak the line *about himself* either, as the "he" being referenced in the passage is also not Tolstoy, instead gesturing toward a fictional character within the novel – i.e., its protagonist, Olenin.

However, despite Olenin not being Tolstoy – as evidenced by, if nothing else, the two having different proper names – it is a widely accepted truism within Tolstoy criticism that he is an autobiographical surrogate for the author. Awareness of this resemblance adds another dimension of meaning to the passage, one that allows it to oscillate between the two pre-established

poles of autobiography and fiction. Acknowledging this degree of autobiographicity<sup>1</sup> does not undo the character's inherent fictionality, but can allow for certain modes of interpretation wherein the passage may simultaneously inhabit both meanings. Tolstoy is at once *not* talking about himself, while also seeming as though he *might* be. It is this balancing act that makes works of autobiographical fiction different from pure autobiography and pure fiction.

This thesis aims to explore this generic grey area that works of autobiographical fiction occupy, particularly with regards to dramatic texts which belong within this hazy territory. In exploring the convergence between autobiographicity, fictionality, and dramaturgy, I hope to lay the groundwork for better ways of discussing the autobiographical resonances that are frequently found in works of dramatic literature. Although such resonances rarely go entirely unacknowledged whenever they are noticed – as can be seen in much of the criticism surrounding well-known autobiographical dramas, such as *The Glass Menagerie*, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, and *Krapp's Last Tape* – recognition of this kind rarely goes beyond that necessary acknowledgement before shifting the discussion toward other notable elements of its dramaturgical construction. When a play's autobiographicity is given more attention than simply pointing out the author-character resemblance, it seldom takes the form of anything other than a detailed exposition of that resemblance. As much as that may be helpful for further analyses of that particular text, character, or author, the insights provided from such a study offer little by way of theoretical tools for informing a discussion of autobiographicity in general.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this thesis, I will use the term “autobiographicity” in reference to the degree to which a fictional work or character is marked by a resemblance to the biographically constructed identity of its author. My favouring of it over the more commonly used label, “autobiographical material,” follows Beatrix Hesse, who finds the latter debatable, “since it presupposes the that the main quality of the autobiography is that it is based on fact. The term ‘autobiography’, however, also implies a certain comprehensiveness and sincere attempt at self-probing. Both of these qualities are necessarily absent if a single personal recollection of the author’s is embedded in a fictional context” (219 n30). My conscious use of this neologism, therefore, directly invokes “based on fact” as being the main quality of a given fictionalization.

While the maturation of Autobiography Studies as a thriving discipline since the 1970s<sup>2</sup> has led to the legitimization of autobiography as a valid genre of literature worthy of academic attention in its own right, a by-product of this development has been the widespread rejection of autobiographical fiction as a generic outlier. Using analytical tools that have been made available from the study of autobiography proper, I believe we can arrive at stronger interpretations of autobiographical fiction and drama. In response to this deficiency, I have developed my own methodology for approaching autobiographical plays (and fiction more generally).

### 0.1. A Theory of Autobiographical Fiction: Core Propositions

The functional distinction between autobiography and fiction has best been articulated by Philippe Lejeune, whose theory of the “autobiographical pact” remains the primary means of defining autobiography in generic terms. In an effort to combat the confusion of some critics who mistakenly refer to works of autobiographical fiction as being themselves autobiographies, Lejeune argued that the differentiating factor between these two forms lies in an implicit contractual agreement (or “pact”) established between author and reader. For autobiography proper, this agreement is signified by the text’s author, narrator, and character all sharing an identity of proper names; the name of the real-life author, which appears as a paratextual signature on the book’s title page, is found within the text to indicate its ontological unity with the protagonist who narrates their own story in the first-person.<sup>3</sup> In the absence of a cover page, it could theoretically be impossible to distinguish an autobiography from a novel written in pseudo-

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<sup>2</sup> For metacritical overviews of the field’s development, see Marcus (1994), Smith and Watson (2001), and Anderson (2010).

<sup>3</sup> With this premise as his guiding principle, Lejeune established the authoritative definition of autobiography that has been accepted by most scholars since: “Retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality” (Lejeune 4). I would like to draw attention to “a real person” as being key words in this definition, as the author’s signature attests to their reality as somebody who exists in the real-world outside of the text. By replicating that name within the text, the narrative recounted therein attains the ability to reach beyond itself into that real-world.

autobiographical form,<sup>4</sup> such as *David Copperfield*, *Jane Eyre*, or *Lolita*. In the event that the author's signature does not match the name of their narrator-protagonist, the work cannot belong to the genre of autobiography, and must instead be considered autobiographical fiction.

In opting to sever the identity between themselves and their subjects, authors of autobiographical fiction make no truth-claim about the veracity of the story being told, granting themselves the poetic licence to invent as much of the narrative as they see fit, even if that means fictionalizing aspects of events that have otherwise been drawn directly from their own life experiences. By contrast, the genuine autobiographer has staked their "good name" on the verity of the story being told, which is precisely what allows the reader to accept the author's testimony as being a reasonably honest account. This presumed honesty does not automatically guarantee that the text's contents will necessarily be factual, but what it does ensure that the author *believes* that it is factual, or at least intends for the reader to interpret it as such. As a result, the contentious matter of objective truth becomes an irrelevant factor with regards to understanding what does and

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<sup>4</sup> The term "pseudo-autobiography" is used by Andrew Wachtel while discussing the form of Tolstoy's first novel, *Childhood*. It is a hybrid genre that he defines as, "a first-person retrospective narrative based on autobiographical material in which the author and the protagonist are not the same person" (*Battle* 3). Describing it as such, he highlights the difference between it and Lejeune's definition of autobiography being rooted in the disunity between author and narrator-protagonist (see *Battle* 15-20 for a more detailed discussion). Wachtel notes that he borrows the term from Claudio Guillén, who proposes it as a requisite feature of the picaresque genre (Guillén 81); I find that assessment to be rather specious, considering that most early Spanish picaresque novels are of anonymous or unknown authorship, making it difficult (if not impossible) to adequately identify them as pseudo-autobiographies, as opposed to actual autobiographies. Given that the addition of the prefix "pseudo-" exists precisely for this purpose, its application in relation to classical examples of that genre (e.g. *Lazarillo de Tormes*) is spurious at best. Moreover, Wachtel notes that Guillén "uses the term to include any fictional narrative that looks like an autobiography, regardless of whether or not it is based on autobiographical material. I will try to show that, at least in the Russian context, one of the crucial identifying characteristics of the genre was the presence of a real (or at least suspected) autobiographical connection" (*Battle* 210 n5). Though I believe it is insightful of him to observe that Russian pseudo-autobiographies tend to be characterized by high degrees of autobiographicity in their content, attempting to posit this feature as a necessary component of the genre robs it of its formal significance. This form-content distinction has been better asserted by Dorrit Cohn, who says "what I mean by 'fictional autobiography' is a novel where the fictional narrator gives a retrospective account of his life, and not one thought to be based on the *author's* life. My criterion, in short, is based on narrative form, not narrative content. I would maintain that autobiographically inspired works are more appropriately labeled by the inversely compounded term 'autobiographical fiction' – the advantage being that the adjective can be more readily qualified than the noun. Most of us would probably agree that all fiction is autobiographical – some more, some less – whereas not all novels are cast in the form of autobiography – some are, some aren't" (30 n24, her emphasis). My frequent use of the term "autobiographical fiction" throughout this thesis follows her differentiation.

does not make a text an autobiography. Recognizing truthful content in a text that does not adhere to the pact does not make it *an autobiography*, however *autobiographical* it may appear; likewise, inaccurate content in a text that does satisfy the pact will not strip it of its generic status as an autobiography. Put another way, “An autobiographical work of fiction can be ‘exact,’ the protagonist resembling the author; an autobiography can be ‘inexact,’ the protagonist presented differing from the author. These are questions of fact [...] which have no bearing on questions of *right*, that is to say, the type of contract entered into between the author and the reader” (Lejeune 14, his emphasis).

The value of Lejeune’s contractual model lies not solely in its ability to exclude fictional texts from the discussion of autobiography proper, but also in how it implicitly underscores the difference between autobiography proper and autobiographical fiction. Understanding this distinction allows readers to recognize a work as being “autobiographical fiction” for both its autobiographical and its fictive features. Whereas Lejeune’s generic formulation of autobiography proper is characterized by the absence of gradation – “Autobiography does not include degrees: it is all or nothing” (Lejeune 13) – autobiographical fiction is, conversely, defined as such by the very presence of its degrees. Any given example of autobiographical fiction will be marked by the differing measures of its ratio of factual self-referentiality to fictive inventiveness, being identifiably autobiographical for its inclusion of the former, and likewise fictional for its dabbling in the latter. Negotiating these two elements establishes a potential site of analysis for understanding the work’s textual construction.

The presence of autobiographicity in works of fiction is, whether intentionally or not, the product of authorial transmission. Author are wholly accountable for what goes into their text, and if it contains elements that may be seen as evocative of their own life, they are therefore responsible for having invited the comparison from their audience. That said, as much as these

invitations are hinged on what the author transmits, the actual recognition of those comparisons rests entirely in the act of reception. Without the intentionality of the author-character identity being highlighted by an overt onomastic signifier, any subsequent articulation of that identity can only manifest in it being recognized by the audience. By this logic, we can say that autobiographical fiction is not itself a genre, in the same sense that autobiography proper is, but instead a qualifying label that arises entirely in the process of reception.

There are, of course, exceptional cases in which the author will openly admit to having made a fictional character autobiographical, either in an extratextual statement operating wholly apart from the text itself, or paratextually<sup>5</sup> in a preface or afterword. A valid first inclination would be to disregard both of these outright as being of no genuine pertinence to the autobiographicity of the text proper, as they rely too much on the evidential force of authorial intent. Just as a fictional work can prove to be autobiographical contrary to its author's wishes if the reader detects enough basis for the label, so too can authors wrongly identify their own fictional work as being autobiographical, if there exists no other evidence for such beyond the author's extratextual assertion. That said, it may not always be so unreasonable to find some relevance in these

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<sup>5</sup> I use the term "paratext" as Genette uses it, referring to the supplementary material that surrounds the text proper, being "what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers" (Genette 1). Despite being a popular neologism in literary theory for some time now, it has been slow to enter the critical lexicon of theatre and drama, likely due its popular alternative usage referring to stage directions – which I prefer to discuss under the blanket term "didascalia." This connotation seems to have originated in a 1984 essay by Jean-Marie Thomasseau. In it, she acknowledges her coinage's polysemy with Genette's, noting "Genette, in a lecture he made in Rabat in 1978, proposed using the term para-text in a very different sense from mine. In a conversation we had with him following his presentation, Genette agreed on the validity of using the term 'para-text' in the sense I propose while sharing the dissatisfaction that he had, for his part, to use the same term which, he said, only imperfectly covered the concept in question in his remarks. Without further ado, I believe I am therefore authorized to use the term para-text, which, moreover, I have used in my teaching for several years, without having the feeling of committing an abduction of neologism. I propose, on the other hand, to call peri-text text series caused by the impact of a work on the public: libels, articles, prefaces, postfaces, etc." (Thomasseau 79 n2, my translation). Though it may be argued that didascalia can be paratextual when written, not by the original playwright, but instead allographically by later editors, such designation only applies to certain cases, and thus cannot be the rule for discussing didascalia in general. My conceptualization of paratext here follows the specifics of Genette's book-centric model when referring to the dramatic text as something to be read, making the text (materialistically speaking, if not formally) no different than any other text when encountered on the pages of a book. As will be addressed momentarily, a dramatic text experienced as a theatrical performance has its own media-specific set of paratexts, which I consider under the same terminological banner due to their shared functional (if not ontological) qualities.

statements, particularly if they should enter into the reader's knowledge prior their encounter with the primary text itself. This may be especially relevant when these authorial comments are paratextually appended to the text as a preface, thereby being designed to sway the reader's "horizon of expectations" immediately before continuing to read further. In a theatrical context, the same paratextual function can be satisfied by program notes, lobby displays, and pre-show artist interviews revealing the same information to the spectator immediately before the performance begins.<sup>6</sup> The best means of compromise would be to avoid treating these statements as gospel, but rather as litmus tests to be compared against the evidence available in the actual text to be affirmed or disproved.

In allowing for this reception-based approach to place interpretive significance on the audience's recognition of autobiographical traces in a work of fiction, there are several questions that require immediate address. First and foremost, *what* does the audience – whether that be an individual reader or an auditorium full of spectators – know about the author, and perhaps more importantly, *how* do they know it? This can often be entirely subjective, but there are some constants which should not be ignored. For example, it is rare to encounter a text without at least knowing the name of its author.<sup>7</sup> Just as Lejeune permits using the author's proper name as evidence of autobiographical intent when it signals the pact, so too can its presence be plundered for some of the other information it heralds. More often than not, this informs the audience of the author's gender, and can sometimes also hint at ethnicity and/or geographic origins. For example, even if one has never heard of and knows nothing about Lev Nikolaievich Tolstoy, just seeing that

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<sup>6</sup> In either case, the same effect can be exerted by such paratextual comments made, allographically, by people other than the author stating the work to be autobiographical. The difference, however, is that their statement is the product of their own reception, and thus does not carry the baggage of the author's presumed authority.

<sup>7</sup> Obvious exceptions include anonymous and certain kinds of pseudonymous authorship, but – as noted in the above footnote on pseudo-autobiography and picaresque novels – such works must be excluded from autobiographical consideration when basing generic classification on the pragmatic grounds of the pact.

name on the cover of one of his books can immediately inform the reader that the author is male and likely Russian – and, for readers familiar with Russian naming conventions, it also reveals that his father was named Nikolai. Although this is not yet much to work with, it begins to create a mental image of the author which may, in turn, be compared to the characters populating their text. Another piece of biographical information that automatically enters the audience’s consciousness is that the author is, in fact, *an author*. Even if authorship is not the primary occupation of the individual who composed the text in question, by virtue of them having *written* said text, the receiver knows that having written fictional works is at least one aspect of their biography. If the character, then, is also an author, the receiver cannot help noticing a potential kinship.<sup>8</sup>

These minor points of authorial biography become unavoidably ripe for comparison, but they are, for the most part, purely cosmetic; they may establish a partial skeleton for the author’s identity, but that does not constitute a thorough glance into the author’s life that is traditionally associated with a full-fledged biography. It is here that audiences are typically forced to stop drawing links when the author is not particularly well-known, especially if contemporary and newly arrived on the literary scene. However, when the author in question is more famous, there exists a greater pool of information from which recognitions may arise. This is especially so when one or more biography has been written about the author, which can serve as a detailed frame of reference<sup>9</sup> for understanding the pertinent details of their life. However, because being communally accessible is not synonymous with ubiquity (let alone universality), the presence of such frames leads to a division between “cognizant” and “uncognizant” readers of the author’s

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<sup>8</sup> It is, for this reason, that having a writer protagonist is often been regarded as being transparently self-insertive, and is often discouraged by conventional wisdom among contemporary writers; for a discussion of the inherent autobiographicity of writer-characters in plays, see Innes (1992).

<sup>9</sup> “By frame of reference I here mean information that may with some confidence be called communal” (Bal 119); “there is information that is ‘always-already’ involved, that relates to the extra-textual situation, *in so far as the reader is acquainted with it*. As a matter of fact, the only moments that one realizes that some information is not ‘in’ the text are precisely, when one fails to make a connection by lack of information. I shall treat that section of ‘reality’ or ‘the outside world’ to which the information about the person refers as a frame of reference” (119, my emphasis).

work (Shen and Xu 48), separated by their degree of familiarity with the author's biographical data prior to their encounter with a given text.<sup>10</sup>

The receptional understanding of autobiographical fiction that I have described relies entirely on the pre-existence – at the time of reception, if not also at the time of composition – of a publicly known body of biographical data about the author to serve as that frame of reference. Precedent for this kind of readerly approach can be found in a 1923 essay by the Russian Formalist critic Boris Tomashevsky titled “Literature and Biography.” In discussing specific writers like Voltaire and Rousseau, who went to great lengths to make their inner-lives well-known to the reading publics of their times, Tomashevsky establishes the concept of the “biographical legend.” He uses this coinage in reference to the widely-circulated version of an author's life that would have been well-known to the contemporaneous reading public, and thus would have been at the forefront of their minds while reading said author's works. If an author is aware that this has become a component of the reading experience – or, as is often the case, if they are largely responsible for its presence – they may frequently write subsequent works with that receptional stance in mind, playfully exploiting the fact that they may naturally become equated with the characters they create (Tomaševskij 51-2).

Like the autobiographical pact, an author's biographical legend is distinguished from historical actuality by virtue of it subordinating “fact” to accentuate the significance of what the receiver *believes* to be true. To use Tomashevsky's own example,

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<sup>10</sup> Shen and Xu note the importance of cognizance as it pertains to proper autobiographies, in which lapses in factuality may be detected in spite of the pact's best efforts to foreground the autobiographer's honest intent; “very often, in reading memoirs or an autobiography, especially a contemporary one, a reader is consciously or half-consciously comparing the textual world with the extratextual reality (which he or she may have knowledge about or have been a witness to). This may be designated as the ‘cognizant’ reading position” (48). I suggest that this same premise can be applied to readings of a fictional work, whereby an author-character resemblance can only be detected by a cognizant reader.

When Puškin was writing *Mozart and Salieri*, what was important was not the actual historical relationship between these two composers (and here, their biographies, based on documents and investigations, would not help anyway), but the fact that there existed a legend about the poisoning of Mozart by Salieri [...] The question of whether these rumors and legends had any foundation in fact was irrelevant to their function (52).

Apart from this tenuous boundary between factual and fallacious knowledge, I detect another reason for the appropriateness of the word choice “legend” to describe the phenomena of communal preconditions dictating audience cognizance. Additional defining features of legends are their ubiquity and the agreed-upon set of signifiers which are associated with any given legendary figure. When legendary characters appear in a later narrative work, they “are expected to exhibit certain stereotypical behaviour and set attributes; if the story were to depart too far from these set characteristics, they would no longer be recognizable” (Bal 120). By the same logic that too much deviation from communal knowledge of a referential figure can impede recognition, it may likewise be observed that too much adherence to recognizable traits in constructing a nonreferential (i.e., fictionalized) figure can invoke a similar kind of referential frame. As Sean Latham has observed, in attempting to develop a poetics for the parallel genre of the *roman à clef*, works of this kind are defined by the fact that their “plot matters less than the most subtly nuanced details” (Latham 15) to signal to astute readers the true identity of the disguised model for the figure in question. It is upon this basis that autobiographical fiction is made possible. Although we know from Lejeune that such works are not autobiographies, the fact that such a necessary generic distinction must be drawn in the first place lends credence to the relevant similarities between the two types of works. Instead of dismissing these recognitions outright, it may be beneficial to assess the semi-referential essence they ascribe to fictional works, and how those works may be interpreted differently than those which do not invite them.

As much as I find Tomashevsky's basic premise to remain logically sound as it concerns historical criticism,<sup>11</sup> if the present concern is how contemporary audiences engage with their awareness of autobiographical resonances in fictional texts, some modifications are in order. What is most valuable in his view is that he positions biographical legends as being only pertinent when they operate as the audience's frame of reference for contextualizing a text's autobiographicity; moreover, that the verity of these legends is subordinate to their overbearing presence within that interpretive space. For that reason, it matters little if the emergence of some previously unknown piece of biographical information should happen to contradict a point of resemblance noticed by the receiver, because its recognition is founded upon the individual receiver's own frame of reference at the moment of reception. What Tomashevsky does not adequately address is the epistemic process by which the reader becomes acquainted with these legends. Part of his point rests on the assumption that these legends exist in the ether, and have thus become so engrained that their omnipresence can only be encountered through cultural osmosis. By rejecting documentary biographies for eliminating the legend in favour of a 'canonical' form, he loses sight of how these canonical versions of the narrative go on to replace ordinary legends to become the new frames of reference against which the author's works are received.

In our contemporary condition, it seems to be more valuable to seek out the conduits by which audiences acquire biographical knowledge of a given author – i.e., the nonfictional biographies that have been written about them. Although it may be the case that many semi-cognizant develop rougher knowledges of authors' lives without reading full biographies about them – perhaps by reading digested versions on Wikipedia, or those paratextually printed on the

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<sup>11</sup> Which is the orientation to which he anchors his premise, stating that “legends about poets were created, and it was extremely important for the literary historian to occupy himself with the restoration of these legends, i.e., with the removal of later layers and the reduction of the legend to its pure ‘canonical’ form” (Tomaševskij 51) and “only this biographical legend should be important to the literary historian in his attempt to reconstruct the psychological milieu surrounding a literary work” (52).

inside-covers of their works – these less-than-exhaustive sources have undeniably culled their own knowledge from more legitimate biographical resources. Unless of course one knows (or knew) the author personally,<sup>12</sup> such knowledge must derive from some kind of textual interface. As has long been a fairly common argument among deconstructionist critics of autobiography,

Every text is an articulation of the relations between texts, a product of intertextuality, a weaving together of what has already been produced elsewhere in discontinuous form; every subject, every author, every self is the articulation of an intersubjectivity structured within and around the discourses available to it at any moment in time. It is in the context of this critique of the subject that the investigation of autobiography as a particular species of writing can most fruitfully be undertaken (Sprinker 325).

Though Sprinker offers this point in an attempt to herald the impossibility of autobiography as a form of nonfictional self-representation – “for no autobiography can take place except within the boundaries of a writing where concepts of subject, self, and author collapse into the act of producing a text” (342), and thus precluding the autonomy of an extratextual referent – it is within this concept of textually transmitted knowledge, and the consequential dominance of intertextuality, that the missing ingredient for approaching autobiographical fiction may be found.

With this in mind, I make my final proposition on the nature of autobiographical fiction: the evidence upon which identifications between author and character are made is not strictly

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<sup>12</sup> In his critique of Sainte-Beuve’s biographical approach to literary criticism, Proust flippantly poses the rhetorical question, “In what way does the fact of having been a friend of Stendhal’s make one better fitted to judge him?” (51). Although I will not go so far as to say that knowing an author personally necessarily makes one a *better* judge of their work, what I believe Proust has missed is that such a friend or acquaintance may have access to rare insights that have not yet been made known within the communal body of available knowledge. While having this access in no way guarantees that the insights themselves will be useful, the potential that some *may* be useful is worthwhile enough to not dismiss the possibility outright. Appreciating the significance attached to this degree of firsthand knowledge is precisely what differentiates an authorized biography from an unauthorized one. Because, in this thesis, I will be analyzing a work by Tolstoy (who died in 1910), I have no illusions regarding the impossibility of attaining any non-textual knowledge concerning my subject. When I employ the authorized biographies of Biriukoff and Maude, I recognize that their insights largely derived from having known Tolstoy personally, but that my access to such insights have been mediated textually.

*extratextual*, but can be more accurately understood as *intertextual*. This may seem like somewhat of a negligible semantic distinction – after all, all *other texts* are technically extratextual by default due to them being external to the primary text in question – but it effectively uproots the perceived frivolity of extratextuality’s nebulous composition. Instead of operating under the assumption that *anything* external to the text can be used to inform a biographical interpretation, a more orderly approach can be based upon drawing these comparisons from a relatively small pool of other texts, comprised exclusively of nonfictional works on the subject of the author’s life. These should primarily be biographies written with the historiographic methods of other authors, but can also employ proper autobiographies written by the author (in the event that such texts exist).

The traditional division between intertextuality and extratextuality often mistakes “textuality” as being synonymous with “fictionality,” seeming to suggest that a connection is only intertextual when it alludes to another work of fiction, and conversely extratextual when related to matters in the real-world. What this argument ignores, is that readers’ engagements with real-world knowledge is almost always mediated by other texts. The difference lies in nonfictional texts referentially reaching beyond themselves into the real-world, but nevertheless represent fixed points of reference for intertextual resemblance. Occasionally, readers may notice potential resemblances between characters in multiple fictional works by the same author, and thus conclude that the repetition of certain character-types must be autobiographical.<sup>13</sup> However, this assumption fails to draw its reference from texts alluding instead merely to other fictional characters, who are equally unbound to referential truth-claims. These suspicions may sometimes be confirmed by additional reference to nonfictional sources, but therein lies the entirety of the autobiographical recognition. The fiction-to-fiction resemblance consequently becomes entirely incidental, and

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<sup>13</sup> “Many dramatists who have distinctive visions tend to repeat patterns in their plays – we think no less of their work for that. We keep bumping into patients in Strindberg, doctors in Chekhov, social misfits in Williams, guilty fathers in Ibsen, and guilty sons in O’Neill” (Hinden 151).

therefore secondary to the more authoritative fiction-to-nonfiction correspondence required to prove its autobiographicity.

To sum up my set of propositions: 1) Autobiographical fiction is defined as such by the degrees to which it balances autobiographically inspired and fictively imagined content. 2) The significance of this content rests wholly in the realm of reception, being mobilized by the extent to which the audience recognizes its author-character resemblances. 3) The basis for that resemblance can only be possible in relation to a pre-existing body of culturally circulated knowledge about the author's life and identity to serve as a frame of reference. 4) These seemingly extratextual comparisons actually operate within a network of intertextual relations between nonfictional biographies of the author and the autobiographical fiction they have produced.

## 0.2. The Biographical Grid: Toward an Empirical Methodology

When attempting to treat a fictional text as being autobiographical, two major obstacles tend to emerge. The first is the question of *how* a text can be identified as autobiographical, and upon what criteria, either semantic or pragmatic, can such an assessment be made? When faced with a text which properly adheres to the autobiographical pact, there is no ambiguity surrounding this, due to the proper name of the (narrator-)protagonist identically matching that of the author, as it appears as a signature on the cover page. If autobiographical content is fictionalized by the absence of this verbal signifier, via the author's conscious decision to designate the character a fictive name, what exactly makes the text worthy of the "autobiographical" label? Although the answer to this may seem obvious – a fictional character is understood to be autobiographical when readers recognize some form a resemblance between it and its author – this explanation itself is plagued with analytical insufficiency. Often requiring significantly more guesswork, inference,

and speculation, and lacking any concrete textual indicators, it has historically been believed to be safer to ignore any such recognitions as sub-critical.

The second obstacle is the matter of significance; in the event that a character is successfully identified as being sufficiently autobiographical, in what way can the reader's and audience's awareness of this fact aid in their interpretation of the text as a whole? In the aftermath of the tradition of twentieth-century criticism's rejection of biographical influences – i.e., the Russian Formalists, American New Critics, and French Poststructuralists – there is a great deal of scholarly unease at the prospect of treating fictional texts as being notably autobiographical. The frequent chorus of “but does it matter?” has been a constant stumbling block in the development of useful approaches to biographical criticism, with few theories going beyond acknowledging the natural curiosity of readers about the author's life as a source of validation. What has been lacking is a concrete basis upon which recognizing the author-character resemblance can lead to meaningful interpretations of the given text.

Both of these matters can be resolved by implementing a more systematic approach to the analysis of autobiographical content, through a methodology that I provisionally refer to as the Biographical Grid.<sup>14</sup> The goal is to develop a better understanding of the author-character kinship that governs works of autobiographically-inspired fiction, creating a clear constellation of the relationships that will draw attention to what is of interpretative importance therein. This is

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<sup>14</sup> Before going on, there is cause for a brief aside on the choice of terminology for this system. Throughout the majority of the research and writing processes, I had conceptualized this methodology as a “scorecard,” and referred to it as such. Prior to that, my earliest versions of it were conceived as a “checklist,” which seemed appropriate in early models that lacked the partial “0.5” score (discussed below, see 1.2.2.), and used a check-exe binary as the only two options a criterion could receive, along similar to what is known in econometrics as a “dummy-variable.” At no point in cultivating this model did I intend any athletic (or otherwise ludic) connotations that words like scorecard tend to elicit, nor is the score received by a text meant to be seen as a measure of the work's qualitative value. I have ultimately landed on “grid” as a loose translation of the commonly-used French term, *grille d'analyse*, as a means of avoiding these potential connotations altogether. Nevertheless, I have retained the use of derivatives such as “scoring” and “scores” to describe the process of assigning numerical values to the grid's criteria.

achieved by breaking down all of the information about the fictional character's life that is provided within the text into small units – which we may call their “biographemes,” to borrow a term from Barthes<sup>15</sup> – each of which can then be closely compared to corresponding biographemes of the author, as found in their nonfictional biographies. While this is the kind of exercise that is often done intuitively by cognizant receivers who approach the text with prior knowledge of the author's life, the framework of the grid itself provides a more structured approach to that process, divorcing the act of recognition from the idiosyncratic knowledge of the individual and translating it into a set of empirically observable qualities.<sup>16</sup> The majority of the present thesis will be spent illustrating how such a grid may be used; first providing general instructions for usage (Chapter 1), and then demonstrating its mode of usage to assess the supposedly-autobiographical protagonist of a little-known play (Chapter 2).

Employing such a tool directly addresses the above propositions about the nature of autobiographical fiction. First, if a fictional work's autobiographical status is defined by the degree of its author-character resemblance, this process assigns a precise numerical value (or “score”) to that gradient. In so doing, not only does it confirm that a given character is autobiographical, but also yields a breakdown of the exact ways in which that resemblance is constructed, as well as where the author has clearly departed from their self-inspired model in the process of fictionalization. Second, it goes without saying that this entire process is, itself, a mode

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<sup>15</sup> Barthes first uses the term in the preface of his *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, suggesting a process of writing biography that avoids sweeping life narratives in favour of an approach “to reduce itself to a few details, a few preferences, a few inflections” (9), which he goes on to put into practice for Sade and Fourier at the book's end (173-84). He describes this in relation to a form of textual criticism that he believes “also includes the amicable return of the author” (8), while remaining somewhat critical of biographical readings of an author's works (175). The term derives as a logical extension of structuralist thought: “As the morpheme is to the linguistic analysis, the mytheme to the myth, so the biographeme is the minimal unit of biographical discourse” (Burke 36), and is employed to “contrast biographical writing which uses causality and teleology to construct a coherent life story” (Österle 179).

<sup>16</sup> The system is heavily inspired by Vladimir Propp's pathbreaking *Morphology of the Folktale*, which employs a similar methodology to the classification of Russian fairy tales. He too based his approach in the act of dissecting texts into smaller structural units for the sake of drawing patterns among a complex web of intertextual relations. However, due to our vastly different goals and subject matter (more on that below, see 0.3.2.), the similarities do not extend throughout the entire procedure; what does persist, however, is the guiding spirit of structuralism.

of reception. Subjecting a character to the rigour of this examination is, quite literally, a process of determining their degree of autobiographicity on the receiving end. As much as this is predicated on the author's inclusion of these recognizable biographemes within the characterization, it is only by recognizing them as such that their meaning can be uncovered. Third, the scoring system is predicated on having available nonfictional biographies from which to conduct the evaluation. Lastly, the fourth has more or less been addressed by the third: the frame of reference, being encapsulated in biographies, comes to us in a textual form. In necessitating that these comparisons be intertextual, they can be easily cited for unquestionable authority that leaves nothing to intuition or guesswork.

### 0.3. *The Light Shines in Darkness* as a Dramatic Case Study

In order to test this grid method, the text that I have chosen to use as a case study is Tolstoy's late drama, *The Light Shines in Darkness*.<sup>17</sup> Written sporadically over the last two decades of Tolstoy's life,<sup>18</sup> and left unfinished at the time of his death, the play depicts an aristocratic Russian landowner (Nicholas Ivanovich Saryntsov) who has recently undergone a spiritual awakening that leads him to reject his previous way of life, putting him at odds with his family, the Church, and society at large (for a full plot synopsis, see 2.1.). It is the supposed

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<sup>17</sup> Translated from the Russian, *I svet vo t'me svetit*. For the sake of simplicity, I will henceforth be referring to the play simply as *Light*. In addition to being commonplace in criticism of this play, this abbreviation has been chosen specifically to limit any possible confusion with Tolstoy's more famous play, *The Power of Darkness*, with which it shares a keyword. Unless otherwise stated, all citations from the text refer to the 1919 translation by Aylmer and Louise Maude.

<sup>18</sup> Various sources make different (and often conflicting) claims regarding when the actual writing of it occurred. Using his diaries as a guide, I have determined that the idea first came to him in February of 1890, and was taken up again in July 1891, May 1893, October 1894, March and December 1895, never for more than one entry at a time. On January 23, 1896, he wrote, "for about two weeks now I've been writing a drama. I've written three acts very badly. I'm thinking of sketching it out in rough, to give it a *charpente* [framework]. Haven't much hope of success" (*Diaries*, 422). Twenty-one days later, he wrote, "Managed somehow to finish the *fifth act* of the drama" (423, my emphasis). This is puzzling, because he never completed the fifth act; one can assume that either he meant to say the "fourth," or this is an error in R. F. Christian's edition of the diaries. After this creative burst in early 1896, during which most of the writing would appear to have been done, he would go on to mention it with renewed interest in May and October 1896, January and July 1897, September and November 1900, November 1902, and finally September 1905; again, he would mention the play in only one entry per each of these months. After February 1896, it is unclear whether each mention indicates that he has returned to working on it, or rather that it has simply been on his mind.

autobiographical resemblance between Nicholas and Tolstoy that we will be using the grid to assess.

This particular text, being a late nineteenth/early twentieth-century European drama from the realist tradition, presents an opportunity to ruminate further on the specific nature of autobiographical playwriting as an extension of the above-discussed issues surrounding autobiographical fiction in general. In so doing, I aim to explore the oft-neglected ways in which autobiographical content functions differently when divorced from the formal properties of autobiography proper's retrospective first-person narration. Although significant strata of critical academic discourse has been devoted to theatrical presentations of autobiographical narratives (see 0.3.1.), there remains a dearth of research into traditional dramatic form's complex interplay within this paradigm.

There are a number of additional features about *Light* in particular, among the many other dramas from this period that could have been chosen, which heighten its efficacy in conducting this demonstration. The first of which is that all of the characters are completely earnest and straightforward; there is no deception, irony, or saying things that they do not really mean. This reduces the level of difficulty with regards to treating the characters' dialogue as evidential facts within their fictional-world, which would not so easily be the case if used to approach a play by more avant-garde dramatists, such as Ionesco or Pinter. Though more complex modes of analysis may be necessary for engaging with other types of plays in this way, the relative simplicity of *Light's* characters and discourse makes it ideal for the first demonstration of this system.

Another reason for choosing *Light* has much to do with the monolithic status of Tolstoy's fame, which makes him an especially conducive subject for comparison. Whereas more obscure authors can get away with (so to speak) modeling fictional characters upon themselves without

being recognized by their audiences, Tolstoy's biography has practically become just as omnipresent in the cultural imagination as much of his fiction, constituting an apotheosis of Tomashevsky's legend-based model of reference.<sup>19</sup> With a wide array of nonfictional biographies of Tolstoy at my disposal, I will have no difficulty finding sources for the testing phase of the grid.

A large part of what makes Tolstoy's work so conducive to this kind of analysis is the frequency with which he infused his writing with autobiographical resonances. From the young protagonist of his very first novel, Nikolai Irtenev in *Childhood*,<sup>20</sup> to Olenin in *The Cossacks*, Pierre in *War and Peace*, Levin in *Anna Karenina*, Nekhlyudov's revival from early stories to appear as the protagonist of *Resurrection*, and of course his *Confession* and reams of first-person nonfiction, it would seem that literary self-representation has been Tolstoy's lifelong obsession. Any autobiographicity we may detect in *Light* must therefore be understood not as an anomaly, but instead as the culmination of a long struggle to dramatize the self. This has in turn invited a strong tradition of biographical criticism surrounding his works. Many of the earliest critical gestures toward such analysis offered little insight beyond acknowledging the frequency to which Tolstoy's writing is characterized by high degrees of autobiographicity, often extending that

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<sup>19</sup> Though Tomashevsky does not refer to him by name in the essay, Tolstoy is invoked indirectly in one key point: "The biographies of such authors require a Ferney or a Jasnaja Poljana: they require pilgrimages by admirers and condemnations from Sorbonnes or Holy Synods" (Tomaševskij 49). These references to "Jasnaja Poljana" and "Holy Synods," as Tolstoy's well-known home and adversary respectively – said in the same breath as Voltaire's, whom Tomashevsky already used as a case study – draws Tolstoy into the orbit of the literary phenomenon that Tomashevsky describes. From a contemporary perspective, the perpetuity of Tolstoy's mythic status is perhaps best exemplified by the wide array of fictional depictions of his biography that have appeared in the century since his death. The best-known examples in the anglosphere are Jay Parini's novel *The Last Station* (1990) and its film adaptation of the same name (2009), directed by Michael Hoffman, and starring Christopher Plummer and Helen Mirren. Some prominent Russian examples include Yakov Protazanov's film *Departure of a Grand Old Man* (1912), Ion Druță's play *Return to the Circuits* (1978), and Sergei Gerasimov's film *Leo Tolstoy* (1984), to name only a few. Each of these examples depicts roughly the same period of Tolstoy's twilight years as appears to be fictively represented in *Light*.

<sup>20</sup> *Childhood*, along with its sequels, *Boyhood* and *Youth*, have been colloquially referred to as Tolstoy's "Autobiographical Trilogy." These texts' widely-acknowledged reputations for autobiographicity has resulted in some confusion as to how they should be generically categorized. On one occasion they have been mistakenly reprinted in a volume of digested autobiographies (Mallery 592-688); on others, they have been included in bibliographical lists of canonical autobiographies and memoirs (Pascal 199; Karr 226). In these authors' defenses, Pascal acknowledges elsewhere in his book that *Childhood* is "not strictly autobiographical" (85, 98) – struggling to clarify what he means by that, as so many authors did prior to Lejeune's succinct articulation of the distinction – and Karr titles her list "Mostly Memoirs and Some Hybrids" (221, my emphasis).

observation into grand assertions regarding self-representation as being a fundamental cornerstone of his literary craft.<sup>21</sup>

As simplistic and reductive as much of these early comments may be, their central claim is essentially accurate, demanding more substantive analyses. Among the most detailed of these early studies is an essay by Paul Biryukov on the “Autobiographical Elements in L. N. Tolstoi’s Works” (1923), which may be read as a critical supplement to his authorized biography of Tolstoy (1911). Having just undertaken a close examination of Tolstoy’s life story, Biryukov became hyper-aware of the noticeable comparisons between the author and his characters, which resulted in a text-by-text survey of every discernable instance wherein art resembled life. This brought him to the somewhat naive conclusion that, “Indeed, if we had no facts to draw upon, we could, by arranging Tolstoi’s works in chronological order, write his biography from them alone” (Biryukov 73). Such an approach to writing biography – as hypothetical as it may be – mistakenly inverts the causality whereby autobiographicity is recognized. Despite how clear the resemblances are to a cognizant reader like Biryukov, he seems to forget that he only developed this cognizance due to him having “facts to draw upon.”

Since then, there have been several fascinating studies that treat Tolstoy’s autobiographical impulse with greater complexity. Chief Formalist, Boris Eikhenbaum, despite his school’s characteristic resistance to biographically-rooted modes of interpretation, recounts the young Tolstoy’s intertextual method of transmogrifying diaries into fiction while writing *Childhood* (49). Gary Saul Morson, in a prelude to his detailed analysis of *War and Peace*, notes that “Tolstoy blurred the boundaries between living and telling with remarkable thoroughness” (22), which resulted in a literary strategy whereby, “some of Tolstoy’s most autobiographical writings –

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<sup>21</sup> See Urban (1918); Zweig (1928, trans. 1952); and Hamburger (1963, trans. 1967).

especially the *Confession* – aspire *not* to be autobiographical; that is, they avoid being a description of the man Tolstoy. Tolstoy strives to present only the pattern that his life embodies” (33, his emphasis). Andrew Wachtel reconciles this apparent tension between Tolstoy’s constant self-representation and his supposed desire to depersonalize himself from such representations quite effectively:

Two imperatives that govern Tolstoy’s writing [...] are: a desire for specificity (which he identifies with such non-fictional genres as autobiography, reportage, and history), and a striving for universality (that is, a need to disguise the presence of specifying material through various strategies of generalization). The finished literary work is meant to achieve balance between the two, a balance that Tolstoy defines as ‘truth.’ These imperatives tended to conflict: too much specificity could cut into generalization and vice versa. And the picture is even more complex because it appears to have been undergirded by a psychological quirk. Specificity was generally autobiographical for Tolstoy: hence the conflict of specific and general often took the form of a simultaneous attempt to reveal and conceal himself, (Wachtel “History” 176-7).

Justin Weir has recently taken these ideas further, by conceptualizing Tolstoy’s entire literary career in terms of what he calls the “narrative alibi,” describing how “Tolstoy developed a mode of authorship that embraces those contradictions and uses them as a source of evasion, accountability, and, most important, creative inspiration” (12). As we shall see, it is the balancing act between direct autobiographicity and bashful evasion strategies that gives so much of Tolstoy’s writing its unique flavour. The best means of isolating which of the two is being deployed in any given passage of his work will be to assign corresponding scores to his characters’ biographemes.

Tolstoy’s tendency to infuse his fiction with high degrees of autobiographicity has undoubtedly led to somewhat of a Tomashevskian feedback loop with regards to his audience’s

engagement with his biography. Readers who noticed similarities between multiple Tolstoy protagonists across texts might be inclined to suspect these figures of being autobiographical – which, as discussed above, is an insufficiently speculative fiction-to-fiction comparison that we must surpass, but is nevertheless significant for the comparisons it may begin to invite – thus leading them to read nonfictional biographies to confirm or deny their suspicions. On this point, I find Tomashevsky to be only half-right when he (twice) remarks that, “Puškin’s biography is no different from the biographies of generals and engineers” (Tomaševskij 42; 55) – i.e., that a nonfictional text about the life of an author is no different than the same about any other notable historical figure. It should not be seen as too bold to suggest that the primary reason why people read the biographies of authors is in an effort (whether consciously or not) to notice parallels between their lives and the characters they created. Unlike “generals and engineers,” the source of an author’s fame derives from the literary works they produce, which consist of fictional worlds and characters that have connected with their readers. After all, it is surely uncommon for people to bother reading the biographies of authors whose works they have never read.

Despite the widespread fame of its author, *Light*’s relative obscurity among Tolstoy’s oeuvre has served as a final motivation for its selection. While there are many more famous plays which are especially well known for being autobiographical – such as the Williams, O’Neill, and Beckett examples listed above – the foregone conclusion of those plays’ autobiographicity has become a significant element of their fame, thus making them decidedly less interesting as subjects for scrutiny in that regard.<sup>22</sup> Although *Light*’s autobiographicity is seen as just as much of a foregone conclusion among Tolstoy scholarship – due to Tolstoy specialists being quintessentially

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<sup>22</sup> In some cases, the presupposition of autobiographicity has even led *biographers* to mistakenly treat dramatic texts as nonfictional biographical documents. With regards to Eugene O’Neill’s late autobiographical plays, Doris Alexander (2005) has forcefully corrected the record of biographers who have made this error.

cognizant readers<sup>23</sup> – that forecast is not so commonly intuited in the broader study of dramatic literature as a whole. Furthermore, Tolstoy’s playwriting in general has long been eclipsed by his novels (and, to a lesser extent, his theological polemics) in scholarly criticism of his work, typically only given passing reference when addressed at all. It was not until the 1970s that a handful of studies were devoted entirely to close examination of his dramatic output, openly responding to past neglect.<sup>24</sup> However, even among these studies, *Light* has received considerably less attention than his other plays, namely *The Power of Darkness*, *The Fruits of Enlightenment*, and *The Living Corpse*. Only a select few critics devoted so much as a full chapter to *Light* (Kornman 215-34; Lane 77-98, 217-40; Cruise 127-53). Regardless of Tolstoy scholars’ abilities to easily recognize Tolstoy’s self-representation within the text, that subject has yet to be treated exhaustively even within their discipline. Examining the play via the thoroughness of a grid still has many insights to offer into the autobiographical construction of its dramaturgy.

### 0.3.1. Dramaturgical Principles

Given how seldom *Light* has been produced,<sup>25</sup> I am unable to base any part of this analysis upon theatrical stagings of the play, instead focusing only on the dramatic text. Regardless of what

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<sup>23</sup> In the spirit of full disclosure, I will admit my own position as an enthusiast of Tolstoy’s work – and my consequential cognizance of this biography – as a primary factor which has led to my interest in studying this particular play. Though it would be easy for me to offhandedly assert the play’s autobiographicity on the basis of my own prior knowledge and dismiss the need for any further inquiry, the primary purpose of the grid is to challenge these offhanded assumptions and take nothing for granted.

<sup>24</sup> The vast majority of these were confined to graduate theses and dissertations; see Freling (1971), Matual (1971), Kornman (1973), Lane (1980), and Cruise (1999). This corrective effort is also marked by the publication of Andrew Donskov’s collection, *Essays on L.N. Tolstoj’s Dramatic Art* (1988).

<sup>25</sup> Attempts to stage the play in Russia immediately following Tolstoy’s death were thwarted by the imperial censor (Kornman 222; Lane 280). After the Revolution, the Moscow Art Theatre provisionally added it to their 1917 repertoire, but nothing came of their plans (Lane 281; Cruise 136). The first Russian production took place at the People’s House in Petrograd in November of 1918, under the direction of N. N. Arbatov. There is some scholarly disagreement concerning its reception, with Lane describing it as “an unexpected success” (281) and Kornman saying that “it saw five performances and then was dropped” (222). A second Soviet production was realized in 1922 at the Karl Marx Theatre in Saratov (Cruise 136), and another false start was attempted with no avail by the Vakhtangov Theatre in 1934, intended for the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Tolstoy’s death (Lane 281). There evidently was also a production in Berlin, directed by Max Reinhardt (Lane 282), but in all of the scholarly criticism on Reinhardt’s career (at least in English), I could only find one other reference to his work on *Light*, buried in a chronology of his many productions (Styan 144). There is also a possible contradiction in the dates, with Lane dating

interesting avenues of inquiry may have been opened by engaging with the play in performance, I nevertheless believe this dramaturgical emphasis to be the most beneficial way of assessing the play's autobiographicity. This is because the dramatic text provides direct access to Tolstoy's own authorial output, without being mediated by the additional authorial contributions of a production's director, actors, designers, technicians, and other involved parties (Pfister 29; Pagnini 83). Considering that its autobiographicity is rooted in the referential kinship between Tolstoy and his fictional protagonist, the inclusion of these other figures is not only irrelevant to that correspondence, but can actively interfere with it.

It is on this subject that Sherrill Grace has argued that a theatre-specific formulation of the autobiographical pact should account for the contributions of these other figures as well (Grace 69). As much as this may be a fruitful way of analyzing particular autobiographical productions, and may even be a necessary first step toward expanding the formal parameters of the pact to better suit the uniquely collaborative authorship conditions of theatre, I believe that placing too much emphasis on these other agents typically diverts attention away from precisely what makes the work autobiographical in the first place. The function of Lejeune's contractual model lies not simply in identifying the authorial agent(s) responsible for the text's production – as her inclusion of actor and director certainly does – but rather in the self-referentiality of that agent as a figure within the text itself.

A work simply having multiple authors does not automatically mean that the audience will recognize the individual authorial contributions of each member of the team. This is especially

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Reinhardt's production as 1912, versus Styan recording it only in December of 1918. As of 1980, it is believed to have "never, it seems, been seen on the English stage" (Lane 304), and I have found no indication that this has changed in the intervening decades. To my knowledge, the most recent production took place in the summer of 2009, by a German company of actors under the direction of Volker Schlöndorff. It was presented first at the Schloss Neuhausen in Germany, and later at the Yasnaya Polyana Museum. For more information on this production, see the Museum's website (<http://ypmuseum.ru/en/2011-04-13-17-30-44/2011-04-16-08-24-06/139--l-r.html>) and an accompanying video published by the channel DW English ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zLvKRwg4\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zLvKRwg4_8)).

poignant when only one of those individual authors is being singled out by the text as an autobiographical subject; in such contexts, though the other authors do not cease performing their duties toward the composition of the production as a whole, all referential attention is directed toward the individual subject. When receivers talk about a play being “autobiographical,” they (more often than not) say so out of recognition of the playwright functioning as the autobiographical referent. This observation is not to negate the authorial contribution of the actors (being the *authors* of their own performances), but simply acknowledging that actors rarely play themselves, and when they do so in an autobiographical context, it is typically when they have also served as the playwright. In such cases, the fact that they appear onstage is secondary to the play’s autobiographicity in relation to the fact that the spoken discourse is their own. In the alternative cases, wherein the actor is not also the playwright, the authorial status of the actor does nothing but add a layer of distance to the work’s autobiographical nature. So too is the case with the director’s undeniable authorial dominance over the finished production. Like actors, directors rarely position themselves as autobiographical subjects, unless they, too, are the playwright and/or actor,<sup>26</sup> in which case their autobiographical involvement becomes more directly linked to these other authorial tasks.

I bring up these technicalities to dispel the oft-overblown importance that is assigned to theatre’s collaborative transmission in discussions of autobiographical playwriting. As far as the dramatic text is concerned, only the authorship of the playwright is relevant. There is no reason

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<sup>26</sup> Such is the case with a director like Robert Lepage, whose content is predominantly considered autobiographical more so for his role as playwright than for his additional involvement as actor or director. Grace even concedes that the director is “rarely a *character* on stage” (69, her emphasis), which seems to undercut the relevance of their authorship’s stake to the referential pact. Such is more often the case in auteur cinema, both when the director plays himself (Rugg 35-67) or has another actor portray his own autobiographical persona (99-138). The greater relevance of the actor as referent in film may be linked to the fact that the director appearing on screen indicates the improbability that they are also holding the camera, which functionally stands in for the narrator’s “I” in that medium (Bruss 297), as it concerns the Lejeunian equation of author, narrator, and character. In theatre, due to the absence of such a narratorial function – be it textual or cinematographic – the same sense of fractured authorship does not arise from the playwright or director appearing on stage.

to believe that Tolstoy had any intention of acting in or directing *Light* himself. It is highly unlikely that he had any particular performers, director, or venue in mind at all while writing it, making all of those potentials even farther removed from the play's conception. It is chiefly for this reason that I have no hesitation in treating *Light*'s dramatic text as worthy of being considered an end in itself (Pagnini 79), rather than as simply a blueprint for an intended theatrical production. It is here that I disagree with the totalizing applicability of what Eli Rozik calls drama's "literary fallacy," being "the assumption that a play-script is a self-sufficient verbal text, which includes all the necessary elements for the description of the fictional world, like a genuine literary text" (10). With Tolstoy being forever a novelist at heart, even while flirting with the idea of being a playwright, it stands to reason that his dramaturgy should be counted among "those ambivalent cases in which the author may have foreseen the two literary functions: literary and theatrical" (Pagnini 80).<sup>27</sup>

This is not to say that I will be treating the dramatic text no differently than I would treat any other work of readable literature in general, and autobiographical fiction in particular. Throughout this thesis I will be paying great attention to the fact that *Light* is a play, particularly as it relates to the text's structural presentation in dramatic form, but also to hypothetical considerations regarding its presumed intent to be staged theatrically.<sup>28</sup> However, I have noticed a tendency of scholars writing on the subject of autobiographical playwriting to focus their

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<sup>27</sup> Pagnini's examples for such cases are the English playwrights in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, responding to the rise of print culture offering a second media channel for their otherwise theatrical writings (80); Ben Jonson's use of acrostic poems in his plays, for example, presents a unique experience accessible only to the reader, and lost entirely on spectators. My inclusion of Tolstoy within this paradigm has less to do with his creative use of print media, as much as it is his comparative disinterest in the theatrical experience. It has been observed by George Gibian that Tolstoy viewed drama primarily as something to be read, noting that in Tolstoy's infamous essay on Shakespeare, he reveals his own "literary fallacy" by making references to "pages" and the "the reader," as opposed to "scenes" and "the spectator" (Gibian 33).

<sup>28</sup> I adopt a view along similar lines as Manfred Jahn's middle-ground approach between plays as literature-only and as theatre-only (Jahn 662).

attention predominantly on solo performances,<sup>29</sup> wherein a lone actor (who is usually also the playwright) simply re-counts an autobiographical narrative in front of an audience. While that can certainly be interesting as it relates to theatrical performance, what is missing is a sense of dramaturgical relevance. The texts presented by most solo performers, when read instead of seen live, can often be indistinguishable from proper autobiographies or fictionalized pseudo-autobiographies, being the first-person perspectives of single speakers talking about themselves. Comparatively little has been said about what becomes of autobiographical content when it is conveyed in dramatic form – by which I strictly refer to action conveyed to the audience via interpersonal dialogue between two or more freestanding characters (see Szondi 7-10). *Light* serves as a perfect example of this pure dramatic form, without the voice of any fourth-wall-breaking “I-narrator” focalizing the autobiographical image of the protagonist.

### 0.3.2. Two Disclaimers

Before moving on, I must pre-emptively address two areas of concern that might arise with regards to my choice of case study.

The first has to do with the number of case studies used, namely why I have limited the demonstrative scope of my inquiry to only a single dramatic text. If viewed in relation to the influence of Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale*, which assessed a sample group of “100 tales” (Propp 23) as the basis for a similar study, then the singularity of my own investigation may appear to be especially lacking.

The primary reason for this is due to the rigour that is required to treat a single play via the system in its current state. When limited to the confines of a Master’s thesis, attempting to add

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<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Geis (1993), Filewod (1997), Hauck (2003), Grace and Wasserman (2006), Langellier and Peterson (2006), Miller and Taylor (2006), Heddon (2008), and Stephenson (2010).

additional case studies would either increase the page count exponentially, or come at the cost of the necessary thoroughness required for each case study to allow room for any others. Future research into this area of study should certainly be devoted to testing additional (and preferably a diverse assortment of) plays. This is a crucial next step for optimizing the grid's analytical potential – i.e., adding or modifying features that have not been accounted for in approaching the specific conditions of Tolstoy's authorship<sup>30</sup> – and demonstrating how the process may differ in response to more complex dramaturgical styles beyond late nineteenth-century realism. Moreover, the application of the grid to other case studies will enrich the study of those other texts themselves, by way of exposing their autobiographicity in much the same manner as I will do with *Light* here. Future studies should be just as concerned with improving the analysis of specific autobiographical texts as improving the mechanics of the grid itself. For the present thesis, being the first attempt at implementing a system of this kind, and needing to devote considerable attention to explaining its key features and instructions for use, a single text must suffice.

However, in light of the comparison to Propp's work as an argument in favour of needing a large sample group, it is worth addressing that, despite our similar structural approaches to the chosen material, our goals and subject matter are so fundamentally different as to necessitate a departure from the specific features of Propp's endeavour. The aim of his *Morphology* is to devise a better system for categorizing groups of Russian fairy tales, not necessarily for analyzing individual tales in isolation. He achieved this by breaking down tales into their component parts, and observing the overlapping content between many of those parts with equivalents found in other tales. The aim of my grid, alternatively, is precisely to approach individual texts. The action of

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<sup>30</sup> In so doing, a valuable priority for these future developments should also be to improve the efficiency with which each text can be tested. As the length of this thesis being spent on a single text should indicate, the current state of this methodology is especially time (and space) consumptive, which is not exactly ideal for what is essentially a starting-point in the dramaturgical analysis as a whole.

breaking down and comparing parts that I have borrowed from Propp is done not in relation to other autobiographical plays, but instead to the biographies of the individual author responsible for producing the single text under scrutiny. Both rely on some form of intertextual relations, but mine does so for the sake of informing a single text, rather than linking disparate texts into shared generic groupings. Although I contend that testing additional case studies may help improve the quality of the grid, and should thus be retained as a priority for future developments, analyzing a single play is the ideal means of demonstrating this process at work, being consubstantial with its ultimate purpose. To quote the man himself, “What matters is not the amount of material but the methods of investigation” (Propp 4).

The second disclaimer concerns specifically my choice to use a Russian text as my sole case study, which due to my own unfortunate monolingualism, has necessitated that I work with my primary source entirely in English translation. Though I recognize my inability to assess the work in its original Russian form to be a shortcoming of my analysis, I have taken multiple precautions to limit its potential interference for the task at hand.

Primarily, I have avoided rooting any of my examination in features of the text’s language as a basis of its artistry, instead concentrating only on the elements of fabula – i.e., broad strokes of character and plot – which are easily replicable from one translation to the next. This tactic would likely have been the case regardless of the linguistic limitation, as it is precisely these elements which the grid has been designed to isolate. It is the fabula that “corresponds to the intuitive skill of users in processing stories: being able to re-tell them, to recognize variants of the same story, to identify the same story in another medium” (Rimmon-Kenan 7), an accurate approximation of how certain stories are re-told, recognized, and identified in the modes of biography and drama alike. The specifics of how a certain line of dialogue is phrased or

constructed seldom proves to be integral to these kinds of observations, but have nevertheless been avoided on the rare occasions wherein it might have provided some additional insight.

I have read every available translation of *Light* that I could find, and have consciously chosen to use the version translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude – as opposed to the more recent critical edition of Tolstoy’s *Plays* (1994), translated by Marvin Kantor and Tanya Tulchinsky, which has been typically preferred in contemporary scholarship (Weir 267 n6) – for two key reasons. First is that the Maudes knew Tolstoy personally, and conducted much of their translation work under his indirect supervision with frequent consultation. An endorsement from Tolstoy is paratextually printed at the outset of their volume, saying “Better translators, both for knowledge of the two languages and for penetration into the very meaning of the matter translated, could not be invented” (v), marking the translation with a stamp of authorial approval.

The other main reason pertains to the high volume of Tolstoy’s writings that the Maudes translated, the ubiquity of which has made it easy to seek out their versions of any other Tolstoyan text that I will be comparing to the text of *Light*. Committing to the Maudes’ versions of such texts whenever available has lent a degree of consistency between intertextual comparisons between *Light* and Tolstoy’s nonfictional works. In any case, whenever something in the translation seemed unclear or contestable, I made a point of comparing the passage against its rendering in all of the other English translations of the play (Dole, Wright,<sup>31</sup> and Kantor and Tulchinsky), which I have included in footnotes wherever appropriate. All page citations refer to the Maudes’ text – from their 1919 volume of Tolstoy’s *Plays* – unless otherwise specified.

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<sup>31</sup> What I refer to as the “Wright version” is of questionable origin. I have identified it as such for appearing in the volume *Father Sergius and Other Stories and Plays* (1970), which is edited by Hagberg Wright, but nowhere does he credit himself as its translator, nor is another translator’s name given. Furthermore, although the preface to the volume is written by Aylmer Maude, even the briefest of glances at the Wright and Maude texts side-by-side will reveal that Wright’s is not a reprint of the Maudes’ translation.

It should also go without saying that I have been unable to consult secondary sources that are not either written in English or available in English translation. However, despite whatever benefits I may have attained from a more thorough engagement with Russian criticism on Tolstoy and *Light*, I have certainly not struggled for lack of secondary sources. Being an author of global importance, Tolstoy criticism is widely available in virtually any linguistic context, with the anglosphere being no exception.

#### 0.4. Chapter Structure

The purpose of this thesis is twofold, with each of its aims feeding directly into the other in more or less equal measure. The first objective is to grapple with autobiography's knotty relations to fiction and drama, which the process of designing and testing the grid should aid in unraveling. It is my contention that the greatest obstacle to useful biographical criticism is the arbitrariness that so frequently accompanies its deployment, in both the shaky criteria by which such assessments are made, and the deficiency of useful critical insights that result from making them. The ultimate goal of the grid is to establish a standard by which fictional texts may be treated as sufficiently autobiographical for that fact to have genuine bearing on a proper critical analysis of them, and in so doing, establish a foundation for that analysis to unfold. Though this aim does not inherently address dramaturgy's relations to these dilemmas, my decision to test this method with a dramatic case study periodically forces the procedure to account for the specific conventions of playwriting. By the same token, I make additional detours throughout, wherever I find a general statement about the nature of autobiographical fiction to be significantly affected by that fiction being presented in dramatic form.

The second objective is to lay the foundation for dramaturgical analyses of *Light*, that centre their interest on the characterization of its central figure, Nicholas Saryntsov. To my

knowledge, there has yet to be an English-language monograph devoted entirely to the analysis of this text, and even those which have addressed it typically pay it little heed. It is my hope that the analysis of *Light* that derives from my using it for this maiden voyage of the grid may play a small part in filling this void of criticism, and invite further studies to pick up where I leave off.

The chapter sequence is considerably straightforward. Chapter 1 provides a detailed overview of the grid method of analysis. By explaining its rules through a general template without specific reference to any particular case study, aiming to provide readers with the required tools to re-create the model for the analysis of other texts by other authors. Chapter 2, then, illustrates the activity of conducting such an analysis, by doing so with the text of *Light*. Beginning by parsing the biographemes of the protagonist (Saryntsov), and then corresponding them with those of the author (Tolstoy), this process results in an organized breakdown of the areas in which the resemblance between the two figures is established and subverted. This is followed by a brief Conclusion reflecting on what has been achieved by applying this process.

It is frequently said that the major issue of studying autobiographical works is that “if the writer is always, in the broadest sense, implicated in the work, any writing may be judged to be autobiographical, depending on how one reads it” (Anderson 1). Though Lejeune’s criterion for distinction has proven to be effective in drawing the generic lines whereby autobiographical fiction may be discounted, doing so maybe be too hasty of a response to something that is evidently “always” the case and can be applied to “any writing” independent of its genre. Instead of dismissing the transhistorical and broadly applicable phenomenon of autobiographical fiction, we may be better served to study it more closely and attempt to understand how it functions. With the fulcrum of meaning being correctly located in the receptional stance (i.e., “how one reads it”), we may find the answers we are looking for within that side of the equation.

## **Chapter 1: Instructions for the Grid Methodology**

Before applying the grid to the text of *Light*, we must begin with an overview of the of how this method may be conducted. Attempting to be as neutral as possible, without being overly reliant on references to specific case studies, this chapter lays out all the general instructions for approaching the analysis of a fictional character via this system. Chapter 2 will then follow these instructions with *Light*'s protagonist to demonstrate how the process functions when put into its intended application.

### 1.1. Three Categories of Criteria

Plotting a character's biographemes into the grid framework requires extracting all of the information that is made known about them within the text and breaking it down into a list of individualized points contributing to the overall characterization. Each of these units will become one criterion against which the author's biography must be compared, to evaluate its resemblance between these two figures. This process essentially forms a set of points which collectively form an image of the character's biography; it tells us precisely who (or perhaps *what*) the character is, as well as we can know it, based upon what the author has chosen to include in the figure's dramaturgical construction.

Because not all of this biographical material is created equal, I have organized it into three distinct categories: Cosmetics, Events, and Beliefs.<sup>32</sup> *Cosmetics* refer to surface markers of the character's identity, the sort that would easily come to mind when asked to describe the individual without going into any great depth. *Events* are specific life experiences encountered by the character, consisting of what occurs during the course of the text's dramatic action, as well as those

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<sup>32</sup> Capitalizations will be retained when referring to these concepts as categories on the grid.

which are alluded to having taken place in the character's past. *Beliefs* refer to the character's views on various subjects, forming the basis for the convictions which guide their actions. The distinctions between the three can best be explained as follows: Cosmetics refer to what the character *is*, or how aspects of their identity may be easily summated; Events refer to what the character has *experienced*; Beliefs refer to what the character *thinks*, thus constituting the basis of their personality and psychology. (Each of these categories will be discussed in greater detail below, in relation to how they are used to both construct and test the grid.)

In many other critical attempts to identify and analyze the autobiographicity of certain texts and characters, it is rare to see any attempt to distinguish between these different groupings, a conceptual gap which may lead to shallow or mistaken readings of the author-character resemblance. In order for a character to be considered autobiographical, it must receive a comparably high score – i.e., fifty percent or higher, as that signals it being rooted more so in referentially biographical material than in fictionalization – in each of the three categories, for it is all three combined which define the whole of the character's biographical image. That said, there may still be interesting gradations of scores between the categories when a given character successfully meets one but not the others.

For example, a term which has already entered the critical lexicon – particularly in the realm of Russian literature, and even more narrowly surrounding Tolstoy – is “autopsychological.”<sup>33</sup> In its first usages by Lydia Ginzburg – twice indicating that she considers it a more accurate classification for most of Tolstoy's novels than “autobiographical” (Ginzburg 198, 244), and using the term to assess Proust within similar confines as well (306) – she does not offer anything resembling a clear definition for this neologism. Wachtel makes an attempt at a

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<sup>33</sup> See Ginzburg, 198, 244; Gustafson, 27-33, 88, 110, 159, 193-195, 201-202, 240, 324, 337; Wachtel *Battle*, 52, 219n64, *Plays*, ix, and “History and Autobiography,” 187; Toland, 16, 20.

definition by inferring from Ginzburg's usage that she distinguishes autopsychological characters as ones which "think and behave the way Tolstoy would or would have liked to in the given situations, but these situations differ significantly from Tolstoy's own" (Wachtel *Plays* ix). Reading this in relation to our separation of the three categories, what we see here is a means of describing characters who would receive high scores in Beliefs (how they "think and behave"), but not in Events ("situations"). Though Wachtel makes no mention of what I call Cosmetics, I will henceforth use the term "autopsychological" as shorthand for characters which only receive high scores in Beliefs, and relatively low scores in the other two categories. By this inclusion, we must account for the other potential forms of categorical asymmetry by adding two additional terms into our descriptive lexicon, which I hereby name "autocosmetic" (for cases which score high in Cosmetics, but not the other two) and "autoexperiential" (for cases which score high in Events, but not the other two).<sup>34</sup> Characters which receive high scores in only two out of three categories will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, assessed by the potential severity of their deficient category as a disqualifier from true autobiographical designation. These three terms may also be used to facilitate the discussion of any one category when viewed in isolation of the other two – e.g., to discuss a fictional character's "autopsychological resemblance" independent of other resemblances found in their Cosmetics and Events.

While on the subject of deficiencies and disqualification, it is important to stress that the author's failure to meet certain specific criteria from this list during the testing procedure does not automatically nullify their character's candidacy for autobiographical status. Unless the grid is

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<sup>34</sup> I highly recommend that each of these three terms only be used in their adjectival forms, and should not be grammatically extended into nouns which may connote their own parallel genres to autobiography – i.e. "autopsychology," "autocosmetics," and "autoexperience." An unspoken precedent toward this limitation has been set by Ginzburg and her followers, who have implicitly approached their uses of "autopsychological" in this way. At best, these terms may each constitute subcategories of autobiographical fiction. Attempting to extract any more from them would ultimately defeat their purposes as examples of categorical outliers.

being used to test the most thorough and honest of proper autobiographies, there will almost always be some incongruities simply by virtue of the text being framed as a work of fiction. What matters more than any individual trait(s) is the cumulative score earned by holding the author against the fictional character's complete grid. As we extend the object of view beyond the initial function of labelling, we will see how these lapses in direct resemblance form the basis of the analytical process.

With these three categories explained, we can begin to get a sense of what all of this will look like once rendered visually into the structure of a grid. A rough approximation of a neutral table, ready to be filled with the biographemes of virtually any character, looks as follows:

<b>COSMETICS</b>	
Proper Name:	
Species:	
Gender:	
Nationality:	
Race/Ethnicity:	
Religious Affiliation:	
Class Status:	
Occupation:	
Surroundings:	
Marital Status:	
Children:	
Physical appearance:	
<b>Cosmetics Subtotal:</b>	/
<b>EVENTS</b>	
➔ <u>Expositional:</u>	
➔ <u>Dramatized:</u>	
<b>Events Subtotal:</b>	/
<b>BELIEFS</b>	
<b>Beliefs Subtotal:</b>	/
<b>TOTAL:</b>	/

Table 1: Neutral Grid

From here, we must go into greater detail with regards to how the material which goes into the left-hand column should be selected, followed by how the process by which the author's biography is to be scored in the right-hand column.

### 1.1.1. Cosmetics

Of all three sections, Cosmetics is the one with the most standardized set of criteria to be accounted for, regardless of how these specific benchmarks are filled by the chosen character. It is for this reason that I have included a prescriptive list of suggestions for criteria which should be allocated into its cells. These suggestions should not be taken as totalizing; others can (and should) be added if character information is found to present a need for them, and the ones provided can be omitted if no such answer is given within the text. Several of the points that I have chosen to form the core list are as straightforward as gender, nationality, occupation, and marital status, which require little or no explanation. Others require further rationalization for their inclusion, addressing specifically what they contribute to the possible author-character resemblance as a whole.

The character's "Proper Name" may seem to be a redundant inclusion, given that the instigating factor for developing this grid came in response to the absence of the autobiographical pact. From this, it may seem as though this criterion has already been tested and settled, and thus not needing to be relitigated here. Nevertheless, it is a crucial site of cosmetic comparison between the character and author, so significant that positive identity between the two is typically considered the sole criterion for the identification of autobiography as a genre. As a result, the mere presence of a fictionalized character name is the first cosmetic discrepancy interfering with that identification, and points must be docked accordingly. On the other end of this onomastic spectrum are cases of what Serge Doubrovsky has termed "autofiction" – a text in which the

author, narrator, and protagonist all share the same name, but whose narrative is otherwise entirely fictional, intentionally disrupting the nonfictional sincerity usually implied by the pact.<sup>35</sup> This can be seen as an example of a purely autocosmetic genre, since it is its Cosmetic name which implies autobiography, while the absence of Events – and possibly Beliefs, which are seldom prefigured into discussions of autofiction – is what characterizes the narrative as fictional. The existence of the generic delinquency of autofiction presents us with a valid argument in favour of testing even seemingly proper autobiographies against a grid of this kind, to determine if some (like Doubrovsky’s novel, *Fils*) are in fact autobiographical in pact alone.<sup>36</sup>

Another seemingly redundant inclusion is “Species,” given that there will be no circumstance in which the author will be anything other than a human – since, as far as we have seen, no other species has developed adequate literary skills to fulfill that task. That said, species belongs among the criteria due to the possibility that a *fictional character* may be nonhuman. One need look no further than such authors as Anna Sewell, Jack London, George Orwell, and Richard Adams as prime examples of authors who have employed animal protagonists.<sup>37</sup> In these cases, species must be taken into account to easily disqualify animal-characters from being considered autobiographical, despite whatever autopsychological interpretations readers may glean from (or

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<sup>35</sup> On account of Doubrovsky’s writings (both theoretical and autofictional) being difficult to come by in English translation, I have based my knowledge of his invented subgenre on English-language commentary about him, most notably Jones (2010). Lejeune anticipates the possibility of works such as these in his original essay, asking rhetorically, “Can the hero of a novel declared as such have the same name as the author? Nothing would prevent such a thing from existing, and it is perhaps an internal contradiction from which some interesting effects could be drawn. But, in practice, no example of such a study comes to mind” (Lejeune 18). Doubrovsky’s offering of such an example – in direct response to Lejeune, no less – evidently becomes the exception that proves the rule.

<sup>36</sup> It is worth noting that the loss of those correspondences would not render such a text no longer technically an autobiography, so long as these lapses in accurate self-representation are either unintentional or knowingly meant to be received as unintentional. What makes an inaccurate or dishonest autobiography different from autofiction is that the latter makes no truth-claim, actively working to contradict the inherent truth-claim that Lejeune believes follows the onomastic signifier.

<sup>37</sup> Tolstoy in particular – being the author against whom this model will be tested in the following chapter – also ranks among them, for having written his novella, *Kholstomer*, from the perspective of a horse as its protagonist. With this in mind, every instance of him choosing to make his characters human is notable, simply by virtue of the fact that the alternative was not out of the question for him.

imposed upon) the nonhuman's personality. I would argue that the species parameter is only necessary in the cases of select authors who have employed nonhuman protagonists, and can easily be removed from grids in all other contexts.

“Surroundings” is among the more difficult criteria to define, primarily because of how circumstantial its relevance as a factor will be to whatever character is being analyzed. For some this will refer to specific geographic locations, especially in the event that these differ from the country that is invoked by “Nationality.” In other cases, this may refer to urban versus rural surroundings, or whether the character lives with their family or is estranged from them. Each of these can constitute different kinds of surroundings, the relevance of each will be dependent on the character in question. As a result, this criterion can potentially be omitted altogether, or can be divided into multiple cells to account for a multiplicity of surrounding contexts.

Lastly, “Physical appearance” is fairly self-explanatory, and should be included only insofar as specific aspects of it are made known in the text. I will note that, when a grid is being used to analyze a play, any physical description that appears on the page may be made mutable by the actor playing the role onstage and whatever costume or makeup is employed in the performance. However, as far as the dramatic text itself is concerned, the specific physical decisions made by the author remain fixed when employed and received in a textual state. This is one reason that, despite the multimedial potential of drama, grid investigations of this kind must be confined only to one of its two available media – in this case the text, as that form offers the best indication of the playwright's own authorial contribution and how that may reflect their own potential status an autobiographical referent (see 0.3.1. above, as well as 1.3. below).

### 1.1.2. Events

The remaining two categories are not nearly as clear-cut as Cosmetics, requiring greater specificity in relation to the unique conditions of the given character to indicate what should be included. In the neutral grid shown above (see Table 1), I have limited the number of empty rows presented for the sake of space, not to be taken as an indication that there should only be that many Event criteria. The exact number will be wholly contingent on what is available for the character under scrutiny. The more exhaustive the analyst can be in extracting these criteria, the more precise the final results will be.

As is also evident from looking at the neutral grid, Events is the only one of our three categories that functions best when its criteria are sorted into two separate subcategories. The first of these, what I am calling “Expositional Events,” consists of anything that is revealed about the character’s life experience prior to what is dramatized in the present plot of the text. These are, of course, communicated largely via exposition (thus the title), but have no less of an impact on the total characterization for this fact. They should be rendered in the past tense, due to their temporal positionality in relation to the present action of the plot. The second subcategory belongs to the “Dramatized Events,” which are those that occur during the present plot.<sup>38</sup> These are the primary Events that the author has chosen to convey through the text, and thusly deserve their own designation, even if this categorical separation does not equate to a hierarchical prioritization of one over the other, as it relates to the characterization as a whole. These should, conversely, be rendered in the present tense.

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<sup>38</sup> In cases wherein the text’s plot is structured nonlinearly, any Events that happen within that plot are still considered Dramatized, even if in the in-world time, they occur before the plot’s first scene/episode. Dramatized Events should be listed in their in-world chronology, with the Expositional Events accounting for anything alluded to prior to the first of that re-arranged sequence of Dramatized Events.

While plotting the Events along the left-hand column, an effort should be made to depersonalize them, wherever the specifics of the fictional-world may interfere with correspondence to the real-world. This is done by removing the exact names of fictional people, places, and things. For example, the Event of a character getting married should not be written as “Character X marries character Y”; a better formulation would simply be “Gets married.”<sup>39</sup> The nature of the grid has already established that all unqualified verbs (in this case “Gets”) refer simultaneously to the character being tested (i.e., “character X,” in left-hand column) and their author (i.e., *not* a character, in the right-hand column), rendering the specification of “X” insufficient for connoting both. By the same logic, whoever “character X” marries, unless sharing an identical proper name as the author’s real-world spouse – the presumption of which would skip a few steps in the grid procedure – cannot be adequately identified as “character Y.” In acknowledging the broken pact, we have already conceded that the names of any real-world referents have been changed. Given that this process of fictionalization is not exclusive to the author’s personal counterpart, the names of other characters should be treated the same way.

While already using marriage as an example, it should be noticed that some Events may directly mirror previously stated Cosmetics – such as “Married” (adjective/Cosmetic) and “Gets married” or “Marries” (verb/Event). It is this grammatical distinction which merits the inclusion of each in their respective categories, since “Married” is at once a way of cosmetically describing someone *and* of describing a biographical Event which they have experienced.

Beyond that, there is little more to say about the process of selecting the Events without using a case study for demonstration (see 2.2.2.). The best means of approaching this task is to

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<sup>39</sup> This need for depersonalizing the fragmentary biographemes is forecasted by Propp, who orders a similar tactic for his folkloric categories, stating that “definition should in no case depend on the personage who carries out the function” (Propp 21).

treat it – more so than in either of the other two categories – as if you are to write a biography of the character, and have the text in question as your only available source of data.

### 1.1.3. Beliefs

Like Events, Beliefs are difficult to lay out in advance of the specific character. For some characters who are highly-opinionated and vocal about their inner thoughts, an analysis of Beliefs will be a crucial component of the grid, which may result in a large number of cells. For others, few if any of their personal Beliefs are will be made prominent, and the entire category may conceivably be omitted altogether. There is little more that can be said on the matter at this time. It is my hope that the demonstration of constructing a grid for the character Nicholas Saryntsov in the following chapter will present a better elucidation of that process. The intensity of his Beliefs and the impact they have on the sum of his personality is a large part of what makes him such a good case study for this method, and it should be seen as no coincidence that the grid was initially devised to approach the play that he inhabits.

## 1.2. Testing with the Author's Biography

Once the character's biographical criteria have all been plotted along the left-hand column, the actual testing can commence. For this, it is required to have on hand a copy of one or more nonfictional text (whether that be biography or autobiography) detailing important information about the author's life. These being nonfictional is an essential component, as that is the only way for this intertextual comparison to serve as a mediating interface between the fictional-world of the text being tested, and the real-world of the author.

In ideal circumstances, this should be conducted using as many nonfictional sources as there are available, or at least enough to get a clear portrait of the author told from multiple

perspectives and historical vantage points. If only one such text is available, that will certainly suffice, and can even provide a more singularly focused image of what has become that author's biographical legend.

What is more directly important than the quantity of sources is the *types* of sources, namely whether they are biographies or autobiographies. When assessing the works of authors who never wrote a proper autobiography of their own, it is easy enough to restrict the scoring entirely to external biographies written about them by other authors. The inverse can be the case for recent or little-known authors who have not had biographies written about them, but who have written an autobiography of their own. However, in cases where both biographies and autobiographies exist, it may be wise to use both, and be cognizant of which finds came from which source. The detached perspective of biographers can offer a more empirical view of their subject's life, usually based upon whatever documentary evidence they could find. This is valuable for a reasonably objective analysis – or at least as objective as is possible within the textuality of a narrative medium, if pure objectivity is truly impossible. Autobiographies, on the other hand, provide an entirely subjective view of the author's life; if acknowledged and used as such, that is not necessarily a point to their detriment. Because the autobiographicity of the fictional text being tested would likely be marked by that same subjectivity, autobiographies can often make for a more direct basis of comparison. Both texts – the proper autobiography and the same author's autobiographical fiction – can be equally representative of what results from the author trying to share their own experiences through the medium of writing. So long as the analyst remains mindful of what kind of source is offering the evidence, it should not necessarily matter which of the two is being employed.<sup>40</sup> A possible

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<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, the useful knowledge acquired from reading autobiographies is often negligible compared to that received in biographies. Because the author's autobiography is very much an available document to be plundered for data by biographers, it is rare to have any findings that are unique to the autobiography alone. Moreover, depending on the degree of stock that the biographer puts in the evidential utility of the autobiographies they read, their

way of preserving this mindfulness would be to duplicate the grid's right-hand column, and have one for representing biographical sources and another for autobiographical sources.<sup>41</sup> For the sake of this first demonstration, however, I will keep matters simple by scoring all nonfictional sources together in a single column.

### 1.2.1. The Question of Age

Before moving on to the process of scoring, the analyst must pay heed to one particular biographeme that may seem to belong under the Cosmetics category, but has proven to be too complex to be treated within that sector as if it were no different from any other criterion: that of the character's age. For obvious reasons, age is one of the most variable characteristics in anyone's life, given that it never stays put for more than a year at a time. Interestingly, fictional characters may, at their author's discretion, have one exact age that adequately describes the entirety of their enclosed (i.e., dramatized) existence; if the character under scrutiny falls into that category, it stands to reason that this specific age can be counted among their Cosmetics. However, the complications arise when we find ourselves attempting to compare this trait with the author's age – who, being a real person, is not subject to the same temporal stasis as their characters. How could the fixed age of the character be compared to the entire lifetime lived by the author?

One possible solution could be to treat the author's age at the approximate time of writing the given text, as that would at least grant the author a reasonably fixed point of their own from

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supposedly-objective version of the narrative may prove to be just as rooted in the subjectivity as the documents they use. For a discussion of autobiographies being used as source documents by biographers, see Eakin, 54-70.

<sup>41</sup> This duplication could be taken even further, creating separate columns for each individual source used. In that case, if drawing from multiple biographies, each will receive its own column. In my mind, the only possible utilities of this would be either to compare the work of the biographers themselves, or to compare how the status of the biographical legend has adapted over time with the publication of each new biography. The latter may be a valuable way of diachronically investigating the different levels of audience cognizance at different periods of reception, but goes beyond the present-oriented scope of the task at hand. I encourage others to experiment with the various alternatives, if they so choose.

which the comparison could be drawn. The relevance of that point becomes amplified by it being most accurately representative of the author's life-stage while in the process of crafting their literary counterpart. However, what this reasoning misses is that autobiographical writing is seldom based upon the author's own reflection upon how they find themselves living their life in that present moment of writing; instead, the form is typically rooted in recollections of experiences from their past. Awareness of this factor ultimately nullifies the temporal identity between author and character as a valid measure of autobiographicity. Overall, it simply makes the most sense to omit age as a Cosmetic criterion altogether.

On the other hand, although age seems to have little utility when treated as a biographeme of its own, it is precisely the reasoning for this which reveals another way in which its presence elsewhere in this process may serve a more valid function. Before beginning the scoring process, the approximate age of the author at the time of writing the text should, in fact, be determined. Instead of using this information as a site of comparison along the same lines as the rest of the criteria, it should be kept hanging above the entire endeavour to be used for bracketing the scope of the author's whole life. This is particularly important for the Events category. For example, if an author is thirty-years-old while producing a text, then nothing that happened in their life after the age of thirty can be used as evidence of this or that resemblance. This is because all that they would go on to experience after completing this work was not available to them for autobiographical inspiration at the time of constructing the character. By this logic, any fictionalized representations of their own childhood are not off-limits, for having occurred before the time of writing, and thus may have been drawn from memory. Alternatively, characters who

are older than the author's age when writing give little reason to suspect autobiographicity, for their experiences have surely exceeded the author's own pool of available life memories.<sup>42</sup>

If ages are to be considered on these grounds, we must also consider characters whose ages are either indeterminate or change over the course of the plot. If the character's age is never stated explicitly in the text, then a demographic approximation – such as “youth,” “middle age,” “old age,” etc. – will suffice. If the character's aging stays within a single demographic, its labels can be used as the primary description of their age, in lieu of any specific numbers. If the character's dramatized aging traverses across one or more of these demographics, then only the (chronologically) last of them matters, as it represents the endpoint after which comparisons should be ceased.

### 1.2.2. Scoring System

The act of thoroughly perusing these nonfictional reference texts should be done with a close eye on the pre-established criteria in the grid's left-hand column, assigning a numerical value to each point in its adjacent right-hand cell, based upon whether or not a comparable biographeme is found in the author's life.

If presented with direct confirmation of a criterion overlapping between the character's and author's lives, it receives 1 point. If presented with direct evidence to the contrary of the point, or no available evidence altogether,<sup>43</sup> it receives a 0. If presented with evidence of some aspect of

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<sup>42</sup> That said, from the perspective of a receiver who is cognizant of the author's entire biography (from birth to death), there may be some fascinating instances in which the author seems to accurately predict events from their life that had not yet happened when writing. Some ways of looking at such occurrences could be to see them as the author re-enacting their own fictions in the real-world, or perhaps used their fiction as a trial-run for something that they intended to do in real life. The significance of these should be taken on a case-by-case basis – as we will do when considering aspects of Tolstoy's departure and death (see 2.3.2 below) – but should typically be considered coincidental until given sufficient evidence to the contrary.

<sup>43</sup> My initial impulse was that there should be two different possible scores depending upon whether it is contradictory evidence (zero, 0) or an absence of evidence (blank, --). The logic of this was that it is certainly possible that the author has included something from their life in their fiction that has not been adequately documented and recounted

the author's life that is similar enough to form a partial resemblance, but not exact in its replication of the criterion, then a discretionary score of 0.5 may be given.<sup>44</sup>

Once each of the criteria has been assigned a score, the section subtotals and grand total may be calculated. These numbers will reveal the extent to which the character may be considered autobiographical. Despite the author not providing a direct indicator of autobiographical intent, vis-à-vis the pact, the autobiographicity latent in their fiction can nevertheless be uncovered beyond conjecture. This is the most effective way of answering the question of how we know if a fictional work deserves to be called autobiographical.

### 1.2.3. Utilizing the Results

It should here be stated that making a grid of this kind is not an end in and of itself; it works best when used as an analytical tool, but should not be mistaken for the actual analysis of the text and its character that it may prompt. Once all of the testing and scoring is completed, we can begin to answer the second of our initial obstacles: how does knowing that the character contains autobiographical elements contribute to an analytical interpretation of that character, and by extension the text as a whole? It is here that the true value of undergoing the thoroughness of the grid process derives. Regardless of whether or not the character receives a fifty percent or higher score in each category, regardless of whether they are revealed to be more autoexperiential than truly autobiographical, the more significant outcome from evaluating each individual point of the

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by their biographers. That said, because I have based my concept of receptional cognizance upon the available nonfictional sources serving as the audience's frame of reference for recognizing autobiographicity, the possible existence of additional undocumented biographemes is less important to the process of reception than those biographemes which have been made publicly known in these nonfictional texts. Individual criteria receiving a score of 0, therefore, does not necessarily indicate that a criterion has no potential counterpart in the real-world life of the author, but rather that readers and spectators have no valid basis for believing such a relation to be the case.

<sup>44</sup> For now, these are the only three options that seem appropriate, but I do encourage others experimenting with this kind of model to consider devising alternative scoring systems to better calibrate the grid for optimal results.

character's life against author's biography is that it provides a concrete illustration of precisely what makes the character autobiographical, and precisely where that connection is broken.

A close consideration of whichever criteria receive points (full or partial) indicates the author's self-representation. Examining these points will illuminate the author-character kinship, and directly illustrate the author's own attempt at self-exploration within the safe or veiled domain of fictional discourse. This should then be viewed in relation to whichever criteria loses points (again, full or partial), a fact which is perhaps the more telling of the two. These provide a sense of where the author actively breaks from direct self-representation, likely for the sake of adding fictionalizing distance between themselves and the character. Using Tolstoy's play to demonstrate this process in the following chapter will hopefully clarify how this process may lead to new informed readings of the text.

### 1.3. Dramaturgical Specifications

Before moving on to the demonstration, a final word must be said about the genre and form of the types of fictional texts being tested. I do not hesitate to admit that this grid method need not be limited only to dramatic texts, but can be applied to any and all forms of autobiographical fiction, be they in the genres of the novel, short story, poetry, or film. However, the specific nature of the present thesis is to offer the grid as an approach specifically to dramatic texts, which requires the process of assessing the text to adhere specifically to the unique conventions and conditions of dramaturgical analysis. If novels (and other forms of epic or diegetic narrative) can rely on the presence of the narrator's focalizing "I" to guide the characterization of its autobiographical protagonist, and the filmic medium utilizes the technical elements of cinematography and editing to do the same, what makes drama special is the absence of any such unitary source of perspectival focalization. As a result, dramatic characterization is limited to only what can be conveyed about

the character via the dialogue and didascalia. As much as these two discursive modes remain entirely within the author's purview, they are severed from the directness of autobiography's traditional author-narrator-character communication channel.

The multimedial applicability of the grid is largely due to the fact that it operates by reducing a character to pure fabula, which is not medium dependent, but which is made manifest through the formal conventions of the given media or genre. Though the specific biographemes that populate the left-hand column are essentially no different in drama than if the text had been written as a novel about the same character, the process of locating these character traits within a dramatic text is different from doing the same for a novel. A dramaturgical reading, therefore, requires constant awareness of the features that make dramatic form different from all other types of literature generally, and autobiography proper and/or autobiographical novels in particular.

With these distinguishing factors in mind, Manfred Pfister provides a useful template for analyzing the characterization of dramatic figures, which can be applied as a framework for testing the components of a character within the grid. Dramatic characterization techniques are limited to those that are either figural (communicated by the speech and actions of the characters) or authorial (communicated directly by the author in didascalia or extratextual statements), and each of these can be either explicit or implicit.<sup>45</sup> In most cases, only the explicit variety make for concrete criteria, but implicit can also be used, so long as the evidence for them makes their presence as relevant details sufficiently tangible.

The explicit-figural evidence consists of any information spoken directly by the characters, either about themselves, by others in dialogue with them, or by others in dialogue without them. Dialogue is the primary locus of communication in dramatic form, and the basis upon which the

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<sup>45</sup> For the complete discussion of characterization, see Pfister, 183-195.

relational structure of autobiographical drama differs, narratologically speaking, from the single-focalization of a traditional autobiographical narrator. As for explicit-authorial evidence, for the purposes of this method's desire to avoid treating extratextual statements of intent as evidence – which is separate from its comparison of intertextual material as a basis for comparison – I will accept didascalia<sup>46</sup> as a valid source of authorial characterization, only when it exists as part of the dramatic proper. Paratextual information found within printed editions of the play (i.e., allographic peritexts, provided by later editors or translators) may be invoked to partially inform certain decisions, but cannot be the sole factor upon which a criterion is included or excluded.

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<sup>46</sup> My use of the term “didascalia” is not limited not only to stage directions, but also speech prefixes, dramatis personae lists, and any notes provided in-text by the author.

## **Chapter 2: Designing and Testing Nicholas Saryntsov's Grid**

The best means of illustrating the analytical potential of a biographical grid is to demonstrate it being used to approach a text. As has already been stated, the text that has been chosen for this demonstration is Tolstoy's *The Light Shines in Darkness*. The goal of this chapter – and, by extension, the grid as a whole – is to establish a more systematic basis upon which the resemblance between the play's protagonist (Nicholas Saryntsov) and its author (Lev Tolstoy) may be scrutinized, which may then establish the foundation for treating our recognition of autobiographical content as a springboard for further analysis.

This process is threefold. First, an examination of the fictional biographical construction of Nicholas' life – as it is manifested within the text of the play – must be undertaken, which is done by thoroughly probing the text in search for the items that comprise his biographemes. The aim here is to reduce the vast entirety of their characterization into a set of manageable units for use as criteria for comparison, which will be plotted within the left-hand column of the grid, each under the appropriate subheadings. Once this is complete, the second phase is to closely read Tolstoy's biographies alongside what has already been plotted. Whenever a piece of information about Tolstoy's life that either corresponds with or contradicts one of the pre-established criteria is found, a score will be assigned to that criteria in the right-hand column. This will be done until each of the biographemes are accounted for, when every one of the right-hand cells filled by a numerical score of either 1, 0.5, or 0. The third phase occurs in tandem with the second, as it is here that the dramaturgical implications of these correspondences begin to be interpreted. This functions as a germinal stage of analyzing a text from the perspective of its autobiographicity, assessing the total percentages of resemblance between author and character, asking what elements of characterization can be inferred from the criteria which earn points, and the same for those which lose points.

To avoid overwhelming this chapter's subsections with a punishingly thorough list of the textual evidence that is required to support each criterion, I have relocated the lion's share of this auxiliary material to an Appendix following the thesis' Conclusion. Therein, I have rendered the evidence in point-form lists for easy referencing, and divided it into three subsections that directly parallel their counterparts in section 2.2. Doing so has left more room in the present chapter to forgo detailed explanations of each point as it pertains to the analysis at hand, trusting that the reader can glance down at the Appendix wherever necessary to confirm the textual basis for any given claim. However, before we begin constructing the grid, it may be useful to provide a plot synopsis of the entire play.<sup>47</sup>

### 2.1. Scene-by-Scene Synopsis of the Plot

**Act I:** The play begins with Mary Saryntsova having a conversation with her sister (Alexandra) and brother-in-law (Peter); they discuss the recent changes to her husband's (Nicholas Saryntsov's) outlook on life, and its consequential ramifications on life in their household. Mary explains how the once religiously-ambivalent Nicholas became morose following the death of his sister, an event which sent him spiraling into a fervent search for life's meaning, ultimately resulting in the conclusion that the Church has perverted the true teachings of the Gospels. On a more tangible level, his newfound interest in the Scriptures has led him to disavow private property, urging his family to reject their aristocratic way of life in order to live like the peasants. Alexandra responds with contempt for Nicholas' ideas, urging Mary to resist them at all cost; Peter responds with more of a disengaged confusion. When Mary exits to tend to her newborn son, a young priest (Father Vasily, referenced in the didascalia simply as "Priest") arrives to return a

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<sup>47</sup> I have made this as detailed as possible in a scene-by-scene outline, so that it may also be easily referenced during the process of mining the play for biographemes. Those already familiar with the play may skip this and continue reading at section 2.2.

book that Nicholas had lent him (Ernest Renan's *Life of Jesus*), only to be scolded by Alexandra for indulging Nicholas' antics. Some of Nicholas and Mary's children enter the scene incrementally, each providing brief glimpses into how Nicholas' conversion has impacted the family unit at large – seen most vividly with the eldest son (Styopa) who has recently finished his university studies and cannot go on to a government or military career without his father's consent. This succession culminates with the arrival of the younger son, Vanya, who informs the group that they will be receiving a visit from Princess Cheremshanov and her two children (Boris and Tonya), hinting at potential romantic prospects with the Saryntsov children (Lyuba and Styopa, respectively).

Finally, after all of this largely expositional preamble, Nicholas arrives on the scene, having returned from attempting to settle a legal issue, wherein a peasant has been arrested for stealing a tree from the Saryntsovs' estate. Alexandra and Styopa begin arguing with him for condoning thievery, which affords him the first opportunity to expound his views on property ownership – which, thus far, the audience has only heard about second-hand, from characters who disagree with his position. Upon exhausting the debate, Nicholas and Father Vasily engage in a discussion of Renan, during which Nicholas slowly begins to persuade the Vasily of the Church's corruption. Alexandra begins arguing with Nicholas again, with the key point of discussion being Mary's inability to embrace Nicholas' new lifestyle. This prompts Nicholas to decide to finally explain his whole outlook to Mary – which he apparently had not yet attempted to do. He attempts to do just this when Mary returns, resulting in a quarrel between husband and wife when she does not see things his way. They are interrupted by the arrival of the Cheremshanovs, and the scene ends with Alexandra mocking Nicholas for his inability to persuade Mary.

**Act II, scene 1:** One week later, Mary, Peter, and the Princess discuss Nicholas' situation, in a scene mirroring the play's opening. The Princess at first finds Nicholas' philanthropy to be

admirable, until Mary explains the full extent of his anti-property views.<sup>48</sup> Nicholas enters, appalled by the news that the tree-thief has been sentenced to three months imprisonment, and immediately heads out to the peasant village to see how he can remedy the situation. On his way out, he runs into Lyuba and Boris. Boris does not understand the extremes that Nicholas is taking, but expresses his own interests in helping the poor. He decides to follow Nicholas to the village.

**Act II, scene 2:** Nicholas arrives at the peasant village, allowing the audience to see the lower class' destitute circumstances first hand, and retroactively providing a context to what has previously only been discussed in theory. He is able to offer little help to improve their situation. Boris arrives shortly after, witnessing the sheer magnitude of the peasants' suffering for himself. Nicholas explains to him how this has been the consequences of their own luxurious lifestyles. A policeman arrives to arrest the tree-thief. Nicholas is unable to stop the arrest, and promises to write a petition on the peasant's behalf.

**Act II, scene 3:** The younger generation of the household and guests sit around the house, listening to Tonya play the piano. They all praise Tonya's playing and discuss the merits of Schumann versus Chopin; Boris is shown to have little patience for the frivolity of the subject after what he has just seen in the village. Nicholas enters, having returned from the village again, and preaches a monologue to the group about the stark contrast between the misery of the peasants and the lavish idleness of the aristocratic youth whose leisure is built upon the exploitation of their labour. Alexandra arrives with a notary and a high-ranking priest (Father Gerasim). She hopes that Gerasim will be able to set Nicholas straight, and the notary will allow him to sign the estate over to Mary. Nicholas and Gerasim debate the nature of the Church's relationship to the law of God,

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<sup>48</sup> In the previous scene it is established that the Cheremshanovs have become impoverished, as the Princess has just left her alcoholic husband after he squandered their fortune (338). She therefore enters hoping for a handsome dowry in Boris' betrothal to Lyuba. Understanding this is crucial to following her perspective on Nicholas' actions, and the deep-seated economic motives which govern much of her actions throughout the play.

which ends in a stalemate when Gerasim is unable to respond to Nicholas' retorts. Upon Gerasim's departure, the onlooking member of the household deliberate on the argument, which has strengthened Boris and Father Vasily's convictions that Nicholas is correct in his denial of Church doctrine. Once alone together, Nicholas and Mary attempt reconciliation, but devolve into argument about the matter of property ownership. Nicholas threatens to run away from home, prompting Mary to lash out at him for his cruel treatment of her and the family. The scene ends with him reluctantly signing away the estate to her.

**Act III, scene 1:** The act begins in Moscow, at another one of the Saryntsovs' properties. Nicholas is working with a carpenter, trying to learn the trade. Lyuba enters the work-room to inform Nicholas that Boris has gone to his military regiment, and that she fears that he may get himself into trouble due to what he has learned from Nicholas. Mary enters for a brief exchange to establish that the current state of their marriage has not improved since the last act, and to announce that Father Vasily has come to see Nicholas. Vasily enters to proclaim that he is resigning from the Church, and that he fears for how this decision will harmfully impact his family. Lastly, the Princess enters and confirms that Boris has refused to continue serving in the military, and has been arrested for it. As this has been is in response to Nicholas' influence, she demands that he attempt to persuade Boris to return to service.

**Act III, scene 2:** In a government office, several nameless military officials (General, Clerk, Adjutant, and Colonel) discuss the bizarre circumstances of Boris' refusal, before bringing him in to be interrogated. Boris obstinately stands by his decision on moral grounds, but is unsuccessful at explaining himself to his interrogators, nor in persuading the soldiers guarding him that they have been deceived by this evil system. A Gendarme Officer enters for a more pointed interview, asking Boris questions concerning revolutionary sympathies and associations with known radicals. He leaves upon determining that Boris poses no major threat to the state. Next comes a priest,

who tries to convince Boris of the Christian morality upheld by the Tsar's army, but does not persuade him. For Boris' insubordination, he is ultimately sent to a mental hospital.

**Act III, scene 3:** The scene opens in the hospital, with a short exchange between the Doctors and a formerly-alcoholic Patient to demonstrate how the beleaguered conditions of the institutions only make people's issues worse. The Adjutant brings Boris to the Doctors, who conclude from a brief discussion and a laughably minimal physical examination that he must stay in the ward indefinitely. Nicholas and Lyuba arrive to visit Boris. Lyuba laments the situation, and says that she does not understand why Boris is putting himself through this. Nicholas advises Boris to only continue down this path if it is wholly in line with his convictions, not out of pride or vanity for committing to the path of martyrdom – he adds that he would not think any less of him if he were to withdraw. Boris remains steadfast. The Princess follows close behind to try to convince Boris to end this madness, to no avail. The visitors leave, as Boris is made to change into a hospital gown while the weight of his decision begins to sink in.

**Act IV, scene 1:** One year later, at the Saryntsov's Moscow estate, Mary is making preparations for a party that she is hosting that evening, which she discusses with Alexandra. The occasion is set to mark Lyuba's engagement to a young gentleman (Starkovsky), who is supposedly the embodiment of all that Nicholas despises – to say nothing of him being Boris' replacement as suitor. Mary and Alexandra discuss Boris' circumstances, as he continues to deteriorate in the hospital. Starkovsky arrives early and has a conversation with Lyuba about officially announcing their betrothal; Lyuba requests they wait so as to not upset Nicholas. As the rest of the guests begin to arrive, Alexandra informs Mary that she has noticed Nicholas' displeasure at them hosting a party and suspects that he will be attempting to run away from home.

**Act IV, scene 2:** Nicholas is in his room with a (previously unseen and unmentioned) friend (Alexander Petrovich), who is helping him plan his departure. They are interrupted by Mary, who asks Alexander to leave her and Nicholas alone. Nicholas and Mary argue about the extent to which this situation has become unlivable for them both. During the quarrel, Mary informs him that aside from Boris, most of Nicholas' so-called followers, including Father Vasily, have backslid into their old ways. Just as Nicholas is about to leave, Mary threatens that she may commit suicide, which convinces Nicholas to reluctantly stay. After Mary exits, their niece (Lisa, who has been quietly in the background of much for the play) enters to read a letter from Vasily, confirming that he has returned to the Church. Lastly, the Princess enters to scold Nicholas for the part he played in Boris' ruin, with the young disciple now being moved to a Disciplinary Battalion. She implores Nicholas to petition on Boris' behalf for his release. Once left alone, Nicholas has a moment to ruminate on his failings.

**Act V, fragment 1:** This unfinished final act survives only in a series of three short scene fragments, each consisting mostly of descriptive didascalia. The first depicts Boris in the Disciplinary Battalion, reading the Gospels and preaching to his fellow prisoners. One of the inmates is brought in after being flogged. The Princess tries to intervene and is turned away. Boris is sent to a Penitentiary cell to be flogged.

**Act V, fragment 2:** The Princess attempts to visit the Tsar's Cabinet, but is made to wait, while rabbleroising is presumed to be going on inside. Her request is ultimately denied.

**Act V, fragment 3:** At the Saryntsovs house, a Doctor speaks with Mary about an illness that Nicholas has acquired since the events of Act IV. Nicholas does not want to be treated, but agrees for Mary's sake. The younger generation has a conversation about land, in which Nicholas does

not partake so as not to offend them. Alone with Lisa, Nicholas restates his failings<sup>49</sup> and accepts that God does not wish him to be His servant. While Nicholas prays alone, the Princess rushes into the room and shoots Nicholas. As everybody enters to see what happened, he tells them that he did it to himself by accident and writes a petition to the Tsar.<sup>50</sup> Vasily enters with a group of Doukhobors. Nicholas dies, “rejoicing that the fraud of the Church is exposed, and that he has understood the meaning of his life” (413).<sup>51</sup> End of play.

## 2.2. Plotting Saryntsov on the Left-Hand Column

We begin by breaking down Nicholas’ characterization into biographemes to be used as criteria in the next phase. This is done category-by-category.

However, we must first determine his age during the play’s action (see 1.2.1. above), so that we may later accurately align the segment of life being represented with the corresponding period in Tolstoy’s life. Nicholas’ age happens never to be stated outright anywhere in the text, and whatever hints are given tend to be riddled with inconsistencies. Most of these hints come in

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<sup>49</sup> Listed among these failings is the observation that, “Boris has perished” (412); this has led to some discrepancies between commentators. Some have taken it to mean that Boris has died (e.g. Freling 18; Lane 88) while others have not come to that conclusion (e.g. Kornman 229). All three of the other available English translations have rendered the line as “I have ruined Boris” (Dole 427; Wright 282; Kantor and Tulchinsky 104). Apart from this line, there is no other indication to suggest that Boris is dead, which may have been expanded upon had these scenes been written in their entirety.

<sup>50</sup> This line suggests that Boris is still alive at this point, because this is presumably the petition that the Princess had requested Nicholas to make for Boris in the previous act. It is, however, unclear why he does not do so sooner, especially if the redemption implied by it now being his final act suggests that it may be successful.

<sup>51</sup> Much like the fate of Boris, commentators are split with regards to the identity of the “he” and “his” in this final sentence. Though a small sampling of them believe them to be in reference to Nicholas himself (e.g. Balmforth 33), most others have suggested that it is in reference to Vasily (e.g. Kornman 223; Lane 97; Cruise 138). The latter, in my mind, makes more logical sense for a variety of reasons. First among them being the otherwise insignificant detail of Vasily entering with the Doukhobors. Vasily’s discipleship functionally serves the plot as a barometer of Nicholas’ success as a preacher. With this in mind, the implication that he has left the Church again in favour of a salt-of-the-earth sectarian movement like the Doukhobors allows Nicholas to die knowing that he has not been a complete failure in recruiting others to his cause. Nicholas is therefore rejoicing that Vasily has become aware of the fraud of the Church, as evidenced by this newfound Doukhobor beliefs bringing true meaning to his life. The alternative, that Nicholas dies having found the meaning to his own life, may also be extrapolated from his success in having converted Vasily, but strays further from the present action. It would seem that the temptation to ascribe these actions to Nicholas himself derives either from the commentators not appreciating the significance of Vasily’s conversion to quasi-Tolstoyan theology, or out of an impression that the hero’s dying words should be a comment on his own development. The ambiguity of the phrasing makes either interpretation plausible.

relation to Mary, who is revealed to be forty in the play's opening stage direction (325), but later says things like "I am no longer young or strong" (356) and "We have not much longer to live" (409), which seem to run counter to Nicholas speaking of old age in the future tense in the line, "Old age will come" (350). She also tells Father Gerasim in Act II scene 3 that, "When we were married he was quite indifferent to religion, and lived so, happily, during our best years – the first twenty years" (369), but then says in Act IV scene 2 – which is identified as being only one year later (398) – she says "Don't let us spoil everything after twenty-eight years together" (409).<sup>52</sup> We could attempt to explain away these discrepancies by asserting that Nicholas and Mary knew each other for eight years prior to marriage, or that the seemingly recent end to their "best years" actually ended eight years prior to the beginning of the play, but neither of them provide any concrete answers. What seems most likely is that these temporal issues are the result of the play being unfinished; it is not unreasonable to suspect that Tolstoy might have ironed out these inconsistencies if he had been committed to finishing the play and editing a definitive final version of it. Based on the information we have, particularly Nicholas' "Old age will come" line, it is safest to describe his age broadly as "Middle age, or higher." We shall keep this in mind while going through all of the more tangible biographemes, and come back to it before we begin scoring (see 2.3. below).

### 2.2.1. Cosmetics

Most of Nicholas' Cosmetics are established early on in the first Act, even before he arrives onto the scene. Much of the time prior to his first entrance is spent with various other characters – first Alexandra and Peter with Mary (325-330), then Alexandra with Vasily (330-333), followed

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<sup>52</sup> On a side note, if this line is to suggest that they have been married for twenty-eight years, spoken while she is forty-one, that implies that she was thirteen-years-old when they married. Regardless of how old Nicholas was at the time, which we are unable to calculate, that is uncomfortably young. For context, Sofya Tolstaya was eighteen when she married the thirty-four-year-old Lev Tolstoy.

by the children (333-338) – conversing about him, demonstrating a range of responses to his recent demeanour and activities. Though the source of this exposition may be somewhat suspect, as it relies entirely on the testimony of others – in other words, explicit-figural characterization, via commentary by others, through dialogue, in absentia, before first appearance (Pfister 185) – the Cosmetic category offers little room for ambiguity or differing opinions. A basic list of Nicholas’ Cosmetic criteria is as follows:

- Proper Name: Nicholas Ivanovich Saryntsov
- Species: Human
- Gender: Male
- Nationality: Russian
- Ethnicity: Caucasian/Ethnic Russian
- Religious Affiliation 1: Born into Russian Orthodoxy
- Religious Affiliation 2: Non-Orthodox Christian Spiritualism
- Class Status: Aristocratic
- Occupation: Landowner
- Surrounding 1: Lives intermittently in country estate and in Moscow
- Surroundings 2: Lives with family
- Marital Status: Married
- Children: Has children (minimum six)

Many of these points are made fairly self-evident by the text, but still require basic explication here for the sake of completeness. His Species (Human), Gender (Male), Nationality (Russian), and Ethnicity (Caucasian/Ethnic Russian) are more or less implicit from the context, and do not need to be signalled outright. If more evidence were required, we could easily point to such minutiae as the other characters referring to him with male pronouns, as well the Russian setting and the absence of any allusions to his status as an outsider therein.<sup>53</sup> Other traits may seem equally obvious, but their means of being revealed are of greater dramaturgical interest.

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<sup>53</sup> As for Species, because literature exists primarily for the consumption by humans to experience stories about other humans, humanity is the natural default setting for all characters, making it only requisite for the exceptions to directly

His Proper Name, for example, is established even prior to the play's beginning as it appears didascalically at the top of the *dramatis personae* list (323). However, for a theatre audience who does not have access to this list – assuming that it is not provided paratextually in a program – he is mentioned by name (first name and patronymic) in the very first line of dialogue, spoken by Alexandra to Mary (325). The surname is not said aloud until a little while later, after the arrival of a telegram announcing the forthcoming visit of the Cheremshanovs, when Peter mentions to Alexandra, “I did not know they [the Cheremshanovs] were so intimate with the Saryntsovs” (337), thus allowing the context to link this name with Nicholas' family unit. Also, the name is immediately associated with the physical presence of the actor playing him, because right before his entrance, Alexandra says, “Ah! here comes Nicholas” (338). The audience, therefore, has no need for guesswork upon his arrival to determine whether or not this is the man they have already heard so much about.

Religious Affiliation is a little more complicated, but easy enough to discern, due to its centrality in the plot of the drama. It is stated outright by Nicholas himself, in conversation with Father Vasily, that he was born and raised into the Orthodox tradition: “why should I believe you rather than I would believe the Buddhist Lama? Only because I happened to be born in your faith?” (344). However, one of the defining features of his religiosity is its opposition to the Orthodox doctrine, meaning that his religious origins alone cannot fulfill this criterion. Though the finer points of his replacement religion will be outlined in the Beliefs section (see 2.2.3. below), we may tentatively describe it as “Non-Orthodox Christian Spiritualism.”<sup>54</sup> I include both of these

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signal their difference in that regard. If we take Tolstoy's *Kholstomer* as the logical counterpoint, it is established early on in that story, under no uncertain terms, that its protagonist is a horse.

<sup>54</sup> Though we may recognize much of its core principles as being reminiscent of the Tolstoyan faith that gained a following during Tolstoy's later years and after his death – regardless of whether or not we begin reading Nicholas as an author-insert at this time, there is no denying the resemblance of his beliefs to that real-world religious sect – I am reluctant to describe Nicholas' Religious Affiliation as “Tolstoyan” simply due to the fact that no such religion as Tolstoyism exists within the world of the play. This is obviously due to the supra-fact of there being no such individual as Lev Tolstoy existing within this fictional-world. Though we may be inclined to speculate that the aftermath of

religions as discrete criteria for Nicholas' Religious Affiliation (separated on the grid as 1 and 2, respectively) because they both constitute a portion of his religious identity.

Nicholas' Class Status is made more or less self-evident by the context, but like his Religious Affiliation, its importance to the plot demands that it be given more attention; being wealthy is not merely a character trait, but the focal point of much of the play's central conflict, as it concerns the morality of owning property. Though it is a given that the Saryntsovs belong to the Aristocratic class, this fact is best communicated by their wealth. A subtle demonstration of this is established in the opening stage direction: "The scene represents the verandah of a fine country-house, in front to which a croquet-lawn and tennis court are shown, also a flower-bed. The children are playing croquet with their governess" (325). By emphasizing the "fineness" of their house, the leisure activities and non-utilitarian foliage that take up space on their land, and their ability to employ servants ("their governess"), the reader learns very early on that the family must be wealthy. For this to be realized in a theatrical production, the communication of this lavish imagery is beholden to the set design's ability to translate that description into physical space.<sup>55</sup> The first instance of their wealth being referenced aloud in dialogue comes soon enough, with Peter's first spoken line being "Come! Beggared indeed! Not with an income like theirs" (326) in response to Alexandra forecasting that Nicholas' behaviour will lead to the family's financial ruin.

Nicholas' Occupation is a little more difficult to pin down, largely because he does not appear to do anything throughout the course of the play.<sup>56</sup> Alexandra even says, "[he] has no

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Nicholas' death in the final scene may bring subsequent rise to a sect called "Saryntsovism," there is no textual evidence upon which we may uphold that conjecture.

<sup>55</sup> Considering that such features as the tennis court are later referenced as existing in the offstage space – as the children exit the stage to play tennis (337), and interrupt the onstage dialogue with shouts about their game on the sidelines (344; 347) – the extent to which this wealth will be made visible to an audience upon the opening tableau may not be as neatly conveyed as it is to the reader.

<sup>56</sup> Expository references are made to several past occupations in which he partook, such as the military (335; 369) and "music, then shooting, then the school" (328), but these points are better served as Events than Cosmetics, as they play no direct role on the present construction of his surface identity.

occupation” (326), which seems as though it should be enough to leave the criterion void. However, the source of the aforementioned income that sustains his family is the agricultural output of the estate. Because Nicholas does not, himself, exert the manual labour in this enterprise that would be required to call him a farmer, his Occupation can perhaps be best described as “Landowner” – albeit much to his own chagrin, prompting him to spend much of the plot attempting to correct this Cosmetic feature of his personal identity with no avail. Significantly, there is nothing in the text to suggest that Nicholas has ever had a career as an author; however, to speculate that that might have been the case is to get ahead of ourselves in the grid procedure.

His Surroundings take two forms in this case: both the geographical location and the more intimate setting of Nicholas’ family life. Beginning with his geographical surroundings, his living arrangements appear to be split between an unnamed country setting in Acts I and II, and Moscow in Acts III and IV – and presumably V as well, though this not stated in the available fragments. Aside from these being identified in the opening stage directions of each act, the specific locations are never explicitly identified in dialogue, and can thus easily be missed by a theatre audience. As for his intimate surroundings, he lives with his family for the entirety of the play. On the subject of his family, his Marital Status is very clearly established by his union with Mary. They have multiple children together, but the exact number is not so easy to determine. I am not the first to notice that the number of the Saryntsovs’ children changes from scene-to-scene (Kantor and Tulchinsky 252 n5, 252 n17), with a possible maximum of nine (356) and a minimum of six.<sup>57</sup> Though some of this discrepancy may be explained away simply as an error, the overstatement of

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<sup>57</sup> In Kantor and Tulchinsky’s translation, Mary tells Father Gerasim, “I have six children” (59), the inconsistency of which they comment upon in an endnote (252 n17); the same line is rendered in the Maude translation as “I have seven children” (369), with no editorial note appended. Both of the other translations are identical to the Maude version insofar as they say here, “I have seven children” (Dole 378; Wright 200). It is unclear whether it was the Maudes or Kantor and Tulchinsky who made the error. It may be possible that the Maudes (and company) altered the line to uphold greater consistency with the other references to quantity of children, though it is suspicious that they would do so without explaining themselves in a translator’s note.

nine children in Act II scene 1 may be a subtle indication that two of them died young. The Princess comments that the Saryntsovs have “seven children” (356) only three lines prior to Mary’s statement that “Think what it has meant to *bear and nurse* nine children” (356, my emphasis). The immediacy of this foregrounding could have been used to delicately express the melancholy of having lost children without calling overt attention to it. To account for the uncertainty of the specifics, I simply answer the Children criterion with “Has children (minimum six)” as the base requirement to be met for a full point.

One final note may be made about Physical Description, which is presently absent from the grid. This is because no description of Nicholas’ physical appearance is given at any point throughout the play, in neither dialogue nor didascalia. None of the characters are given any kind of description in the dramatis personae list, apart from their relations to other characters and sometimes their occupations. Furthermore, the stage direction heralding Nicholas’ first entrance says only “Enter Nicholas Ivanovich” (338) without any of the physical description that one would expect from reading the other realist playwrights, such as Ibsen, Chekhov, or Shaw.<sup>58</sup> However, because Tolstoy’s intent was (supposedly) to eventually have the play performed by actors – with no indication that the non-actor Tolstoy had any intention of playing the lead role himself – he may have been content to allow any male actor to inhabit the part without needing to retain authorial control over such physical features. That said, it has been noted as early as the 1920s

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<sup>58</sup> It is worth noting that, within the play, Nicholas is not particularly an exception in this respect, as no other character receives a detailed physical description upon their first entrance. However, several of the other characters do receive some oddly specific descriptions while still being kept fairly minimal, such as Mary “a handsome elegant woman of forty” (325); Alexandra “a stupid, determined woman of forty-five” (325); Peter “a fat flabby man, dressed in a summer suit, with a pince-nez” (325); Lyuba “a handsome energetic girl of twenty”, and she and Lisa “Both have kerchiefs on their heads and are carrying baskets” (333); Vanya “he wears a red shirt” (336); Father Gerasim “a priest with a cross around his neck” (368); etc. Tolstoy seems to be strangely indiscriminate as to which characters received basic physical details – even if only their choice of clothing – and which do not.

that “every actor who plays the title-role makes himself up as an impersonation of the author” (Zweig 254).

### 2.2.2. Events

Each of the Expository Events are, for the most part, brought up in one or two isolated lines of dialogue. Like the lion’s share of the Cosmetics, most of them are established in dialogue between the other characters before Nicholas makes his first entrance, and many are repeated to different characters later in the play. (Much of what Mary initially explains to Alexandra and Peter in Act I gets reiterated to the previously-absent Father Gerasim upon his arrival in Act II scene 3.) They therefore do not require much by way of explanatory detail. Instead, I simply list them below in what I believe to be the presumed chronological order of their place in Nicholas’ life trajectory, as opposed to the order in which they are mentioned. For the evidential lines of dialogue attached to each, see A.2.

- Served in the army
- Got married
- Had children
- Had a past interest in music
- Had a past interest in shooting
- Had a past interest in education
- Spent many years disinterested in religion
- Recently lost his sister
- Became morose and/or death-obsessed
- Briefly fell ill with typhus
- Began studying the Gospels intensely
- Briefly had a renewed interest in the Church
- Consulted bishops and hermits about religion
- Took the sacrament in a monastery
- Came to deny the Church and its doctrines

These Events exist by and large for the sake of catching the audience up to the important aspects of Nicholas' past that are useful for understanding his conduct in the remainder of the play that follows. It is notable that what seems to be the defining Event of Nicholas' life – his spiritual crisis and subsequent conversion – happens before the play begins, with the entirety of the dramatic plot built around the aftermath. The Events which are actually dramatized in the play proper may seem to have far less of an impact on the composition of his identity. Although these Dramatized Events are not as confined to individual lines in the same sense as the Expository. They are as follows:

- The tree-thief incident
- Attempts to persuade his wife of his new worldview
- Writes letters to his own wife while at home with her
- Visits peasants in their village
- Debates with a high-ranking Church official
- Signs over his property to his wife
- Runs away from home, and returns
- Moves to Moscow
- Tries to learn carpentry
- Visits "Boris" [prospective son-in-law and/or conscientious objector] in a mental ward
- Visits Rzhanov's lodging-house
- Plans to run away (again), but decides against it
- Develops another illness
- Dies by gunshot

Most of these points are self-evident in relation to the plot. Two of them, however, must be given further explanation here. "The tree-thief incident" is a somewhat vague way of describing the events occurring predominantly in the background of the family conflict in Acts I and II, surrounding a peasant being arrested for stealing trees from the Saryntsov estate. This plot point is difficult to summarize in a single sentence, but is also too singular to necessitate being split up into multiple Events. I have thus opted to let the entire series of exchanges regarding this incident

be enclosed by the phrase “The tree-thief incident,” with the understanding that the reader will henceforth know what is meant by it.

Second is the “Visits ‘Boris’ in a mental ward” criterion, which is perhaps the most unconventional Event on the list. Due to the need to depersonalize specific Events for the sake of allowing for comparisons, I was unsure as to how this particular Event in the character’s life should be rendered. Because *Boris qua Boris* is inherently a fictional character – regardless of whatever referential basis he may possess to one or more people Tolstoy knew in real-life, which is not yet of any concern to us at this stage in the process – there are essentially two possible ways of rendering a depersonalized version of his relationship to the equally-fictional Nicholas: either as a prospective son-in-law or as a conscientious objector for whom Nicholas shows support. Considering how this information will be used in the next stage, choosing only one of these two options as the basis of the Event may disregard the scoring potential of the other one, and thus potentially skew the results. As a compromise, I retain Boris’ name within the criterion, but enclose it with quotation marks to indicate that the kinship does not rest on Tolstoy having visited an actual person named Boris, but that “Boris” is here used as a cipher for the dual meanings that he signifies within the play. When we come to score this criterion (see 2.3.2.), Tolstoy will only be entitled to a full point only if he had visited someone who possesses both of these traits. If he visited someone who possessed only one – i.e., a prospective son-in-law who was not a conscientious objector, or vice versa – then he will only receive a 0.5. This seems to be fairest way to negotiate the dense significance of Boris’ character, and the possibility of him having real-world counterparts.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> The same attention to detail was not required for some of the other depersonalized criteria, particularly those to do with Mary, because the alternative cipher, “his wife,” makes her more easily translatable between worlds. If Tolstoy wrote a letter to his accountant, it is not an equivalent Event to him having written a letter to his wife. The same analogous dismissal cannot be said if Tolstoy visited a conscientious objector who happens not to be his prospective son-in-law, as it would still retain much of the dramatic resonances functionally evoked in Act III scene 3.

The cumulative force of these Events that I listed are all that is offered by what Tolstoy has written about Nicholas in the play, and would be the foundation upon which we could write his biography. Dissected into this series of biographemes, they stand for easy comparison with a similar rendering Tolstoy's own biographemes.

### 2.2.3. Beliefs

Trying to reproduce a concise list of what Nicholas believes is no easy task, not because much of his personal thoughts and feelings are concealed, but rather because he spends nearly the entirety of the play being vocal about an overwhelming number of them. Most of his dialogue is spent arguing with various interlocutors about his firmly-held Beliefs, often getting repetitive. I have managed to reduce them to a list of eleven, which I reproduce here in a similar manner as I have done above with the Expository Events – i.e., large bullets with the main criteria, each followed by straightforward passages from the text in which they are referenced to serve as evidence. The key difference here, however, is that each point comes with a much larger onslaught of evidence available for the individual criteria of this category (see A.3.). They are as follows:

- The fundamentals of Christianity can be found in the Gospels, and particularly the Sermon on the Mount
- All men are equal, and in a brotherhood with one another
- The Church has corrupted the true teachings of Christ
- One must follow only one's own reason and conscience
- Nobody should own property
- All property should be given away to those who need it more
- One should live off one's own manual labour
- The government is at best ineffectual, and at worst evil
- Institutional law and the law of God are incongruous
- One should not serve in the military
- The educational system deceives the children and perpetuates society's ills

Given the wealth of Nicholas' direct references to his own Beliefs, several related topics have been omitted from the main list, due to them receiving minimal attention compared to the others, or for being somewhat encapsulated by one or more of the more crucial points chosen. Some of these lesser-Belief topics include violence,<sup>60</sup> oathtaking,<sup>61</sup> bodily temptation,<sup>62</sup> and Ernest Renan's historiographical critique of Christianity.<sup>63</sup> Alternatively, some of the criteria which have been chosen may seem virtually identical to one another – such as “Nobody should own property” and “All property should be given away to those who need it more” – making it redundant to include both separately. However, one is a philosophical Belief concerning the ethics of ownership, and the other the practical Belief concerning what should be done with the ill-gotten property one has already accrued. As the Appendix illustrates, different lines of dialogue can be used as evidence of each with minimal overlap, justifying treating the two independently.

Though there is a running-thread early on in the play that suggests that the expositional allusions to Nicholas' Beliefs made by other characters when he is offstage may be misrepresentative of his actual views, there is little to no evidence pointing to any significant differences. This point is indicated before Nicholas' entrance in Act I, when Styopa misquotes his

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<sup>60</sup> In his argument with Father Gerasim, Nicholas criticizes the Church's view of morality by saying, “I have found that the Church blesses oaths, murders, and executions” (371), which appears to be the only direct reference to violence that he makes. This disdain for “murders and executions” can be encapsulated in the pre-established military and law-related criteria respectively. Earlier, he makes a more metaphorical reference to violence, when he says to Styopa, “this matter cannot be proved to anyone who does not feel ashamed when he strikes another man”, to which Styopa (rightly, in a literal sense) replies that “no one is striking anybody!” (340).

<sup>61</sup> The only reference to oathtaking comes in his listing it among “murders, and executions” in that same line to Father Gerasim, indicating his disapproval at the concept by its inclusion therein. This point is technically addressed already in his adoption of the Sermon on the Mount as a moral guide (Matt. 5:34-35), and with the logic of dogmatic thought standing in opposition to his views of always following one's reason and conscience.

<sup>62</sup> Nicholas' only comment on this is found in Act I in conversation with Father Vasily, when he says, “But the fact is that man is not solely a spirit, but a spirit within a body; and the flesh draws him to live for itself, while the spirit of light draws him to live for God and for others” (342).

<sup>63</sup> This is referenced only in Act I, as it concerns Nicholas lending Vasily a copy of Renan's *Life of Jesus* (331), and their ensuing discussion that is prompted by it (342-6). This dialogue quickly stops being about Renan specifically, with the book being used only as a springboard into the subject of the Church more generally, which already has its own Belief criterion. For a useful study on the points of convergence and divergence between Tolstoy's and Renan's views, including its appearance in *Light*, see Bailey, 92-145.

father by telling Alexandra that “He says military service is the basest kind of employment, and that therefore one should not serve, and so he won’t give me any money” (335). This is followed immediately by Lisa correcting Styopa, saying “No! Styopa! He did not say that! You know I was present. He says that if you cannot avoid serving, you should go when called; but that to volunteer is to choose that kind of service of your own free will. [...] he does not exactly say that he will not give you the money; but that he cannot take part in an affair that is contrary to his convictions” (335). The function of this correction – apart from foreshadowing Boris’ refusal to serve *even when called*, further cementing Styopa as a direct foil to Boris – is to indicate that the opinions of others are not necessarily representative of Nicholas’ own perspective, and that the truth of the matter must be taken from his own mouth. However, Styopa’s statement is not exactly an inaccurate paraphrase of the actual Belief, as Nicholas later synthesizes Styopa’s and Lisa’s lines by telling Mary, “To enter military service of my own free will, I consider either stupid, insensate action, suitable for a savage if a man does not understand the evil of his action, or despicable if he does it from an interested motive” (349). The main differences between what others say about Nicholas’ Beliefs is the attitude they have toward them, and the rhetoric they use to describe them, but not the content of the Beliefs themselves.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Another passage which seems to be indicating that others have misrepresented Nicholas’ Beliefs in Act IV scene 2, when Mary says to him “It was impossible to let the children grow up illiterate, as you wished them to do, and for me to do the washing and the cooking” (404), to which Nicholas retorts, “I never wanted that!” (405). Mary then retreats by saying “Well, anyhow it was something of that kind” (405). In this case, Nicholas can be mildly defended by quoting his letter from Act II scene 1, wherein he says, “We will try to work ourselves, but will not force one another nor the children” (356), which indicates that he would not force Mary to perform manual labour, but would certainly “wish” it. Regarding the children’s illiteracy, the most decisive point on this comes, not directly from Nicholas, but Mary quoting him when speaking to Alexandra and Peter in Act I. She says: “Yesterday I told him that Vanya is not studying properly, and will not pass his exam., and he replied that it would by far be the best thing for him to leave school altogether” (329). The closest confirmation of this same view to be spoken by Nicholas comes in Act III scene 1, when he says “Mary, you know I am out of sympathy with the whole manner of life you are all leading, and with the education you are giving to the children” (380).

### 2.3. Scoring Tolstoy on the Right-Hand Column

The process of assigning scores to the criteria that we have just outlined begins with deciding which nonfictional reference sources will be used to constitute Tolstoy's biographical image. With such a famous author who has been entrenched in the canon for well over a century, there is a great wealth of resources to choose from. Because so much is available, and because it has all collectively contributed to the current state of Tolstoy's biographical legend, the more sources we use, the more precise our scoring will be. If only one source were available, that alone would be the more accurate frame of reference, but Tolstoy demands that we engage with the multiplicity of perspectives, so as to not miss crucial details out of negligence.

Beginning with his biographies, I have narrowed the list down to the six which I believe to have had the most significant impact, at least for English readers; they are Paul Biriukoff's *The Life of Tolstoy* (1911), Aylmer Maude's *Leo Tolstoy* (1918), Ernest J. Simmons' two-volume *Leo Tolstoy* (1960), Henri Troyat's *Tolstoy* (1965), A. N. Wilson's *Tolstoy* (1988), and Rosamund Bartlett's *Tolstoy: A Russian Life* (2010).<sup>65</sup> Biriukoff and Maude were both friends of Tolstoy in life, and possessed a significant personal investment in the perpetuation of his cause and its legacy. Biriukoff based his historiographic method predominantly on personal interviews and a series of autobiographical *Recollections* written by Tolstoy at the biographer's request. Due to Tolstoy's near total authorial control over these sources, it may be argued that Biriukoff's text is more autobiographical than biographical; if so, that would be a description only of its content, as the final form remained within Biriukoff's control.<sup>66</sup> Maude's approach is quite similar, but the

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<sup>65</sup> Due to the similarities of the titles, I will henceforth be referring to each of these texts by their respective author's surname.

<sup>66</sup> Biryukov's supplementary essay on Tolstoy's autobiographicity has a telling passage in this regard: "During one of my visits at Yasnaya Polyana in the last year of his life, Leo Tolstoi met me one morning in the garden, beckoned to me, and began asking about my work on the *Biography*, and, after a few questions, said to me in a calm, grave voice which penetrated the soul: 'Now you are only writing pleasant things about me; that is untrue and incomplete. One must mention the bad things too. In my youth I led a very bad life, and two events of that time are a special torment

physical and temporal distance from Tolstoy – being written predominantly in England, and continued well after Tolstoy’s death – forced him to rely more on empirical documentation than direct access to his subject.

Simmons represents the first major departure from his predecessors, no longer writing as a friend, acquaintance, or disciple of Tolstoy’s, instead taking the position as an American scholar of Russian literature. This type of detached, scholarly perspective goes on to characterize the approaches taken by practically all future biographers. Troyat, a French Slavist historian, is notable for offering more of a critical perspective on Tolstoy’s life and thought, a departure from the hagiographic tendencies of his peers.<sup>67</sup> Wilson enters the scene as a prolific biographer, with Tolstoy being only one of the many subjects he has treated, most of which are united by their religious or spiritual prominence. Lastly, Bartlett’s is the most recent and is illustrative of new insights into Tolstoy’s life can continuing to be made well into the twenty-first century.

We also find ourselves in the fortunate position wherein Tolstoy has written several nonfictional texts of his own that may be described as autobiography proper. Irina Paperno centers her impressive study, *“Who, What Am I?”: Tolstoy Struggles to Narrate the Self* (2014), around such texts, describing them as “Tolstoy’s experimentation with the narration and exploration of ‘self’ in his nonfiction: in various writings in which he says ‘I’ in relation to his own self, Leo Tolstoy” (5). However, what differentiates these texts for those of other novelist-turned-autobiographers – such as Stendhal, Anthony Trollope, Henry James, and Vladimir Nabokov – is

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to me even now. And I say this to you as my biographer, and I ask you to put it in my biography. Those events were: a liaison with a peasant woman from our village, before my marriage. There is an allusion to this in my story *Devil*. The second is a crime which I committed against Masha, the parlour-maid who lived in my aunt’s house. She was innocent, I seduced her, she was dismissed and was ruined” (Biryukov 121-2). Although this seems to Tolstoy using his authority to make the biography more honest (and less hagiographic), the content remains predominantly under his own control.

<sup>67</sup> It has been said that, “The ‘life’ narrated by Aylmer Maude was Tolstoy’s decoy, by Troyat his taunt” (Morson 277 n14) and “Troyat’s biography would doubtless have pleased Sonya more than Maude’s or Simmons’s” (278 n22).

that Tolstoy seldom wrote nonfiction with explicitly (auto)biographical intent. Instead, he focuses his attention on expounding his positions on various social, political, or religious issues with designs on persuading the reader, which he consistently casts in the autobiographical first-person. This factor makes these sources especially conducive to evaluating the Beliefs category, as they provide a direct window into exactly what Tolstoy believed – sometimes explicitly, in the case of his *What I Believe*. These texts may also be used in assessing the Cosmetics and Events, but such references appear relatively sparingly, as he was seldom interested in using these works to recount his experiences or achievements.

Because Tolstoy wrote so many of these nonfictional works, on a vast array of subjects,<sup>68</sup> I have had to be selective. The major texts that I have chosen are *Confession* (Tolstoy's Augustinian account of his existential crisis and subsequent religious conversion, the closest he comes to partaking in autobiography proper<sup>69</sup>); *What I Believe* (as the title suggests, a detailing of his major religion and political positions); *What then Must We Do?* (the product of his involvement in the 1882 Moscow census, reflecting on the rampant poverty in the city and attempting to suggest tangible solutions); and *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (an interrogation of the government practices that Tolstoy found to be immoral). Select other minor texts are invoked when certain criteria demand it.

I have deliberately excluded Tolstoy's diaries and private correspondences in this selection. The main reason for this is that these differ from Tolstoy's autobiographical essays and otherwise

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<sup>68</sup> “To give the reader a rough idea of the scope of Tolstoy's nonfiction writings, fewer than one third of the volumes in the 90-volume edition of his works are occupied by fiction (including manuscript variants)” (Paperno 1n).

<sup>69</sup> Paperno argues that *Confession's* designation as a conversion narrative makes it something generically distinct from traditional autobiography (61), and notes Tolstoy's rejection of Rousseau's secularization of the genre in favour of Augustine's model (73-4; see also Wachtel “History” 187). Paperno cites Patrick Riley (2004) for her own basis of the separation (Paperno 210 n9; Riley 16). The best source I have found for a generic distinction between secular and spiritual autobiographies is Hawkins (1985), who places the focus less on content and more on the liturgical and pedagogical stances taken toward the implied reader (24-8).

nonfictional polemics by being published only posthumously, not intended for widespread circulation. The key value of employing autobiographical sources, in addition to the strictly biographical, is that they offer a glimpse into an author's own deliberate construction of a public self-image, which can only be done via the act of publication. It can be argued that these posthumous sources remain relevant to the contemporary state of Tolstoy's biographical legend by the same logic that the equally posthumous biographies are – i.e., because contemporary readers have access to them, making them part of the cumulative whole that may frame their reference when encountering *Light*. In any case, Tolstoy's diaries and letters have been extensively plundered by his biographers, meaning that all of the useful content contained within these texts is already accessible in the biographies without needing to be cited directly.

Lastly, before moving on to the scoring, we should re-visit the “age” parameter that we began discussing above (see 2.2.). When the subject was last addressed, we had determined that Nicholas' age can be best described with the ambiguous label of “Middle age, or higher”; what we must do now is determine how old Tolstoy was while writing the play. Doing so will help quantify the temporal distance being traversed in the potential act of self-representation, and establish a parameter after which Tolstoy's biographical data will lose its relevance as potential inspiration for the play's content.

This is complicated by the fact that the text was not published or performed until after his death, robbing us of an exact date after which he could have no longer made edits. Using the references that he made to the play in his diary as a guide (see footnote 18 above), we can estimate that he worked on it sporadically between February of 1890 (age sixty-one) and September 1905 (age seventy-seven), and seems to have done most of the actual writing in January 1896 (age sixty-eight). Each of these three dates can be useful in their own way. The most reliable answer would be to treat 1905 as our ceiling, since that seems to be the last instance in which he may have made

edits, if at all – which reasonably places him in an “old age” demographic. That said, there is little evidence in the diary to suggest that he made any substantial edits after 1895, which seems to make that the most pertinent date for understanding his own comparison between self and character. Equally so, if the idea for the play first came to him in 1890 – which, of the three, places him closest to “middle age” – that may be the closest point to the period he was hoping to replicate. Each of them has its merits, and although 1905 will be used as the latest possible date, the other two should be taken into consideration where appropriate.

### 2.3.1. Cosmetics

The scoring of the Cosmetics category looks as follows:

<b>COSMETICS</b>	
Proper Name: Name: Nicholas Ivanovich Saryntsov	0
Species: Human	1
Gender: Male	1
Nationality: Russian	1
Race/Ethnicity: Caucasian/Ethnic Russian	1
Religious Affiliation 1: Born into Russian Orthodoxy	1
Religious Affiliation 2: Non-Orthodox Christian Spiritualism	1
Class Status: Aristocratic	1
Occupation: Landowner	0.5
Surroundings 1: Lives intermittently in country estate and in Moscow	1
Surroundings 2: Lives with family	1
Marital Status: Married	1
Children: Has children (minimum six)	1
<b>Cosmetics Subtotal:</b>	<b>11.5/13</b>

Table 2: Nicholas Saryntsov’s Cosmetic Scoring

Nicholas receives a Cosmetic score of 11.5 out of a possible 13, resulting in an 88.46% resemblance in this category, which is quite high. Being well above 50%, this tells us that there can be no doubt that he is characteristically autocosmetic, if not wholly autobiographical (other two categories pending). Of the three, this is the category that typically conveys the least pertinent information, but it nevertheless has a few key insights to offer. We begin with the two criteria in

which points are lost, as these departures from the facts of Tolstoy's own life represent his process of fictionalization.

The 0 received for "Proper Name" appears to be the only unequivocal Cosmetic distinction between character and author. The proper name is a straightforward alteration, one that forms the basis of the character's fictional status. If the dramatic figure had been named "Lev Tolstoy," the appearance of that autobiographical pact would have had profound ramifications on the perception of the character, and the play as a whole. There would, consequently, be no need for this close reading for the resemblances, because Tolstoy's autobiographical intent would be made abundantly clear; it could then still fall into the autofictional designation, since several remaining signposts of fictionality would remain intact by virtue of its dramatic dialogue (see Cohn 116-23), but the fictionalized name typically circumvents the need to make those finer distinctions. The distance established by the proper name is thus a defining feature of the play's design.

The only other loss is the 0.5 received for "Occupation," which is itself debatable. Tolstoy was, like Nicholas, a landowner; however, I have treated this as only half of a resemblance with respect to "Occupation," due to Tolstoy being so much more than that. In particular, it is that Tolstoy's lifelong primary career as an author is not at all present as a feature of Nicholas' characterization – neither a prior life as a novelist, nor a post-conversion vocation as a religious polemicist. Although there is no direct indication in the play that contradicts his having once been an author,<sup>70</sup> the omission may seem rather telling. Alexandra's line, "[he] has no occupation"

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<sup>70</sup> As far as I have been able to detect, there is only one line in the entire play that may potentially draw attention to his own authorship – that being Tolstoy's authorship, *not* Nicholas'. In Act IV scene 2, when Nicholas informs Mary of his intention to leave his family, she responds, "If you go, I will go with you. Or if not with you, I will throw myself under the train you leave by" (408). It is obvious that this may be read an allusion to the climactic death of Anna Karenina, but the inclusion of such a fiction-to-fiction intertextual reference presents more questions than answers, mainly: Did Nicholas Saryntsov write *Anna Karenina* (or some equivalent with a similar ending) in the fictional-world of the play? If yes, then Mary is drawing his attention to the irony of how similar their lives have become to the situation in which Anna and Vronsky found themselves by the novel's end. If no, then this line exists solely for the benefit of the audience, briefly shattering the fourth wall by invoking Tolstoy's own novel, and by extension, himself

(326), lessens the likelihood of a noteworthy previous occupation that he is now forgoing for the sake of his recent religious fixation. Similar hinting can be drawn from Mary's line, "Yes, of course, he gets carried away, as he always used to. At one time it was music, then shooting, then the school" (328), with "writing" being absent from this list of part interests.

As has already been observed, most professional authors, when writing autobiographically, have a tendency to make writing (or some comparable creative domain) a central element of the story, to adequately reflect its centrality in their own life – with the act of doing so establishing a blunt Cosmetic resemblance even when no other frame of reference exists, since even uncognizant readers know that the author *is an author*. Tolstoy can be seen as somewhat of an anomaly in this respect, not simply because his personal life was dramatic enough that it could be replicated without any reference to his authorial career, but also because he appears to have actively avoided the subject altogether. This omission can be credited to a sense of insecurity that post-conversion Tolstoy notes about his pre-conversion career, given that he includes the misguided self-righteousness of his authorship among his transgressions in *Confession* (8-11). The absence of an authorial career can thus be seen within the context of Weir's description of Tolstoy's fiction as being characterized by an anti-confessional "narrative alibi," which includes Tolstoy's efforts to "minimize his early literary career by telescoping the author's progress toward eventual religious conversion" (Weir 1).

The rest of the Cosmetics are all worthy of full points. Tolstoy was a human, male, ethnic Russian aristocrat, who lived intermittently in the country (Tula province) and Moscow, with his

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as its author. Without any textual evidence indicating the former, we are forced instead to follow the latter. Something similar can be found in Michael Hoffman's 2009 biographical film, *The Last Station*. In one scene in which Tolstoy and Sofya find themselves in a heated quarrel, she blurts out, "Fine, I'll go down to the station and throw myself under a train. 'Madam Tolstoy becomes Anna Karenina,' see how the press likes that" (34:05) – a line noticeably absent from Jay Parini's 1990 novel from which the film is adapted. The allusion is more explicable in this biographic context than the wholly fictional one of *Light*, since Tolstoy *is* the author of *Anna Karenina* (both in the world of the film and in the real-world), whereas Nicholas is not (neither in the world of the play nor the real-world).

wife and children, while attempting to conduct himself in a way that could reconcile his guilt at being an exploitative landowner with his set of newfound spiritual principles that contradict those of his Orthodox upbringing. Though these features do not individually bring with them implications to be interrogated for their position in relation to the authorial referent, their cumulative contributions to the author-character resemblance are what is most important in the whole of the Cosmetic category. Because much of these surface-level biographemes, with their largely self-evidential status, do not require the play's audience to have done extraneous supplementary reading of Tolstoy's biographies and his own nonfictional writings for the recognition to be plausible, their greatest contribution is planting the initial seeds in the audience's mind to suspect that Nicholas *may* be autobiographical. The confirmation of that speculation then rests on what may be recognized in the other two categories.

### 2.3.2. Events

The scoring of both types of Events looks as follows:

<b>EVENTS</b>	
<b>→ <u>Expositional:</u></b>	
Served in the army	1
Got married	1
Had children	1
Had a past interest in music	1
Had a past interest in shooting	1
Had a past interest in education	1
Spent many years disinterested in religion	1
Recently lost his sister	0.5
Became morose and/or death-obsessed	1
Briefly fell ill with typhus	1
Began studying the Gospels intensely	1
Briefly had a renewed interest in the Church	1
Consulted bishops and hermits about religion	1
Took the sacrament in a monastery	1
Came to deny the Church and its doctrines	1
<b>→ <u>Dramatized:</u></b>	
The tree-thief incident	0.5

Attempts to persuade his wife of his new worldview	0.5
Writes letters to his own wife while at home with her	0.5
Visits peasants in their village	1
Debates with a high-ranking Church official	0.5
Signs over his property to his wife	1
Runs away from home, and returns	0.5
Moves to Moscow	1
Tries to learn carpentry	0.5
Visits “Boris” [prospective son-in-law and/or conscientious objector] in a mental ward	0.5
Visits Rzhanov’s lodging-house	1
Plans to run away (again), but decides against it	0.5
Develops another illness	1
Dies by gunshot	0
<b>Events Subtotal:</b>	<b>23.5/29</b>

Table 3: Nicholas Saryntsov’s Event Scoring

Nicholas receives an Event score of 23.5 out of a possible 29, resulting in an 81.03% resemblance in this category. This is quite high, but slightly less than what we found in Cosmetics, due in large part to several criteria being diluted by ambiguity. Being well above 50%, this subtotal tells us that there can be no doubt that Nicholas is characteristically autoexperiential, if not wholly autobiographical; however, when paired with the already established autocosmetic confirmation from the previous section, we find us inching closer to full autobiographicity.

This category in particular, being separated into Expository and Dramatized subcategories, allows us to parse this score a little further. What is most notable here is that, when the Expository category is taken on its own, Nicholas receives a 96.66% score (14.5 out of 15), meaning that the entire backstory created for the character can almost be seen as wholly reflexive of aspects of Tolstoy’s own pre-conversion life. The only fraction of a point lost within this subcategory is the 0.5 received for “Recently lost his sister”; the partial loss is a result of it having been Tolstoy’s *brother* (Nikolai) whose death spurred his own existential crisis. Considering how exact so many of the other Events are in their autoexperiential correspondence, it is unclear why Tolstoy felt the need to ever-so-slightly fictionalize this Event by inverting the gender of this

offstage figure. However, despite whatever marginal fictionalizing impact this alteration contains, isolating it as we have done here reveals that even the sole aspect of Tolstoy's own biographical legend that he decided to edit when designing Nicholas' backstory nevertheless has a perceptible counterpart whereby some resemblance (0.5, to be precise) can be recognized.

What is especially significant about this Expository score is that most of these biographemes are first brought up, not only in the first act before Nicholas' arrival onstage, but in fact in the play's first exchange of dialogue – between Mary, Alexandra, and Peter (325-30). The plot of *Light*, therefore, begins by immediately inviting autoexperiential recognition among cognizant receivers. As the exposition concludes to make way for the dramatized action, the seed of that initial recognition has already been planted, upon which the continuity of author-character correspondence may already be accepted as a frame of understanding for the remainder of the drama.

What is also interesting about this near-perfect score is that, although practically all of Nicholas' biographemes have a perceptible counterpart in Tolstoy's biographical legend, that is not the same thing as all of *Tolstoy's* biographemes having a perceptible counterpart in *Nicholas'* characterization. Just as easily as cognizant receivers can recognize the similarities, so too can they notice several significant omissions, particularly of certain Events from Tolstoy's past that he found shameful. These points do not even require extensive research to be detected, only a familiarity with what may be the most famous passage from Tolstoy's own *Confession*:

I cannot think of those years without horror, loathing and heartache. I killed men in war and challenged them to duels in order to kill them. I lost at cards, consumed the labour of the peasants, sentenced them to punishments, lived loosely, and deceived people. Lying, robbery, adultery of all kinds, drunkenness, violence, murder – there was no crime that I did not commit,

and in spite of that people praised my conduct and my contemporaries considered and consider me to be a comparatively moral man (*Confession* 8).

By withholding each of these moral transgressions – apart from “consumed the labour of the peasants,” which the play devotes considerable attention to correcting, and “killed men in war” which is only implied by the “Served in the army” criterion – from Nicholas’ characterization, the character has the potential to become an idealized version of Tolstoy. This should not be taken to mean that Nicholas is in any way “perfect,” but rather that he is constructed to be a version closer to what Tolstoy would have preferred himself to be. This is a further extension of the “anti-confessional” posture that Tolstoy honed while developing his narrative alibi, wherein “What has happened [...] is not nearly as important as what has not happened” (Weir 13).

It is the score for Dramatized Events which, when isolated from the whole, presents some of the more interesting deviations from Tolstoy’s biographical legend. Here he receives only 9 out of a potential 14, resulting in a 64.29% resemblance. Though far from impeding the total level of autobiographicity – both because it is still well above 50%, and because Dramatized Events are representative of only a portion of the whole Events category – this is the lowest scoring segment of the grid by a considerable margin. However, the fact that so many of these losses derive from the criteria receiving scores of 0.5 rather than full 0s is telling. This is because the partial loss that characterizes each of these half-points is due to some form of inexactness or omission found in the biographies about something that may have very well occurred in some capacity. Recall, in Latham’s poetics of the *roman à clef*, that the “plot matters less than the most subtly nuanced details” (15), we may notice that the minutiae of what is dramatized in the play evades typical codification for seeming too inconsequential to receive significant attention in a biography. Whether that is the result of these nuances lacking the narrative potential to neatly fit into the structure expected of biography, or simply a matter of the biographers lacking reliable

documentation upon which to substantiate them, is too difficult to say with much authority. Regardless, what is important about this factor is that these biographemes fall predominantly outside the referential frame of Tolstoy's biographical legend as reproduced by his biographies.

The only Event to receive a full 0, "Dies by gunshot," consequentially becomes the most fascinating, as it represents the most blatant departure from autoexperiential dramatization. Regardless of whether or not the audience is cognizant of the author's precise cause of death, or even whether or not the author is still alive at the time of their own present engagement with the text, the one certainty is that the author must have been alive at the time of writing. By that logic, any literary representation of one's own death cannot be the product of autobiographical memory, but must instead resort to the fictional machinations of speculation. Dorrit Cohn has asserted that "No instant of life (if one can call it that) highlights more dramatically than death and dying the difference in kind between biography and fiction, between the biographer's constraint and the novelist's freedom" (Cohn 22; see also Lee 209), an observation that becomes more pronouncedly relevant when the biographer is an *autobiographer*.

In recent times, the term "autothanatography" – widely believed to have been coined by Nancy K. Miller (12) and used by Derrida as well (55) – has been used to connote such instances in which autobiographers have written about their own deaths. Scholarly writing on this subject has tended to focus on works about the Holocaust, or on authors with terminal illnesses (usually cancer or AIDS),<sup>71</sup> whose impending demise can be described without being *too* speculative. In

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<sup>71</sup> On the subject of illness narratives, Susanna Egan has boldly stated that "autothanatography cannot be read as some bizarre offshoot of autobiography studies but is, I suggest, quite central to the larger genre. I suggest that 'writing toward one's own death' is neither separate from autobiography nor a new kind of writing that we should all be exploring in place of the old. Rather, this one form of 'single-experience autobiography' is crucially, centrally, quintessentially autobiographical – every bit as autobiographical as writing by a woman, for example, or a gay person, or a person of color, all genres based on particular life experiences and all becoming incorporated into the canon since the 1970s" (Egan 199-200). The validity of this claim seems contingent on the autothanatographer considering their illness as a Cosmetic biographeme – as a marker of their personal identity, along the lines of gender, race, or sexual orientation – as opposed to an Event – be it one that has overwhelmed the final portion of their life. As much as the

cases of autobiographical fiction, the author's ability to kill their fictionalized counterpart is certainly made acceptable by the poetic license granted by the absent pact; however, in light of the rest of the author-character recognition that has been noticed by the cognizant receiver, this act instantly complicates any equivalence between the two figures.

The death of Nicholas Saryntsov might strike many as a bizarre conclusion to the drama, even when divorced from its autothanatographical implications. It seems to come almost out of nowhere, and does little to bring satisfying closure to his struggle. Being shot – by a character who, despite being understandably angry at Nicholas, has hardly been depicted as having violent tendencies, to say nothing of her even owning a gun prior to this moment – does not resolve anything: 1) having already contracted a seemingly fatal illness, murdering Nicholas only accelerates something that was bound to happen soon anyway; 2) although being seems to spur Nicholas into writing a petition to the Tsar on behalf of Boris, there was no clear reason why he had not done so already, being an action that he appears to have already wanted to do<sup>72</sup>; 3) because the Princess warned him “you must save him! If you do not – beware!” (411) in the previous Act, and because, as mentioned, there is no logical reason presented for why he does not do so, this senseless act of violence could have easily been avoided; 4) on a thematic level, his death likewise has no perceptible bearing on the success or failure of his cause, as demonstrated by Vasily's entrance with the Doukhobors implying that the small changes that Nicholas set in motion in life

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former may be an accurate description of some cases, I believe it would be unwise to treat that as a rule. With regards to fictional cases, like *Light*, the use of autothanatography may be rightly characterized as a “bizarre offshoot.” In this case, the reason being that the text is autothanatographical but not characterized by illness.

<sup>72</sup> Nicholas' failure to write a petition prior to his last moment is one of the more confusing by-products of the play's unfinished fifth act. In Act IV scene 2, when the Princess says to Nicholas “I have come to you – it is my last attempt to tell you that you have ruined him and that it is for you to save him. Go and prevail on them to set him free. Go and see the Governor-General, the Emperor, or whom you please. It is your duty to do it”, he replies “Teach me what to do. I am ready to do anything” (411) – keeping it ambiguous as to whether he is speaking to the Princess or to God. In light of his readiness “to do anything,” it is never explained why he does not do anything until after being shot. There is no reason presented for his reluctance, which might have justified his hesitancy until the imminence of death becomes apparent. One could try to explain this in relation to his hatred of government and bureaucratic process souring him on seeking out tangible change within that system. However, he was willing to take a similar action in Act II scene 2, when he says to the tree-thief “I will go and write a petition for you” (363).

have already begun to operate independently of his direct influence. All of these peculiarities beg the question why Tolstoy felt it important enough to inform posterity that the play was to end this way, even after he himself lost interest in writing an official ending.

As a possible theory, I posit that the autothanatographical conclusion, however bizarre or unnecessary it may be, does not arise completely unprompted – or, rather, at least not as much as it may seem upon a first reading. In fact, a surprising amount of foreshadowing has led up to the big moment. I have counted a total of eighteen individual lines scattered throughout the play in which Nicholas says something to the effect of “I cannot go on living like this,”<sup>73</sup> which incidentally take on whole new meaning upon the realization that the play ends with him ceasing to do so in very literal sense. If there is a thematic proposition being put forward by the frequent repetition of this sentiment, it could be that death is an acceptable alternative to living in an unjust social system. With much of the plot clearly dramatizing the futility of attempting to re-shape the world in accordance with his morality, death is thus presented as the best option. This can explain why Nicholas “Dies rejoicing” (413), first because Vasily’s Doukhorbor conversion has become another light in the darkness, but also because he no longer has to “go on living like this.”

Another interesting element of the play’s conclusion is the sense of symmetry it lends to Nicholas’ spiritual journey. It is useful here to revisit one of the Expository Events that Tolstoy inserted into Nicholas’ characterization, that he “Recently lost his sister,” which is noted for having

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<sup>73</sup> Those lines are as follows: “it should be impossible to live the way we do!” (341); “That [to give away everything and die] would be splendid” (342); “Isn’t it true that at any moment we may die” (347); “Old age will come, and death, and I shall ask myself: ‘Why have I lived?’” (350); “we cannot go on living as we are doing” (351); “consider one thing – that we have only one life, and can live it well, or can waste it” (351); “I cannot continue to live as we have been doing” (356); “I can’t continue to live in such a way” (363); “How can one go on living like this?” (363); “Consider, is it possible to go on living this way?” (366); “Every one of us must die – if not to-day, then to-morrow. How can I live without suffering from this internal discord?” (367); “I cannot continue to live under these conditions” (376); “I shall not be able to go on living like this” (376); “Think it over with God’s help, and as if you knew you were to die to-morrow. Only so will you decide rightly” (397); “He has made up his mind that it is impossible for him to live so” (403); “Why? Because I cannot continue living like this. I cannot endure this terrible, depraved life” (403-4); “Well, let them say I am mad; but I can’t live like this” (405); “I cannot live so. Have pity, I am worried to death” (408).

been partially responsible for sparking his existential crisis. We have already discussed the seemingly arbitrary gender-flipping of this criterion, but perhaps the important point to note is that the impact of experiencing a sibling's death is represented. The result is a subtle shadow of grief and mourning that is cast over all that follows. This adds a further layer of significance to our understanding of the play as an autobiographical endeavour, because,

In order for an autobiographical subject to confront her life as a totality, she must first come to terms with the death of the other. An understanding or a witnessing of the other's death makes the premonition of one's own death possible: it is only through the act of witnessing that the writer of an autobiography or memoir can begin to approach her own life. The death of the other is the claim that underlies all claims to both totality and interpretation (Baker 220).

Tolstoy's readers have seen this kind of autoexperiential engagement with the death of the other come into play at least once before in his fiction, when Levin responds to his brother's death in *Anna Karenina*. Like Tolstoy (and Nicholas), this sends Levin down the path of existential dread<sup>74</sup> only to come out of the other side with a new spiritual outlook. Levin's suicidal contemplation is assuaged by the adoption of a new guiding maxim: "To live not for one's needs but for God" (*Anna Karenina* 789), allowing the novel to end soon after his arrival at this conclusion. The plot of *Light* could almost be interpreted as a pseudo-sequel<sup>75</sup> to *Anna Karenina*, illustrating how enlightenment is not the end of the struggle. Picking up in the near aftermath of a similar epiphany, the hero is unable to arrive at any real sense of closure until death. While the fiction-to-fiction

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<sup>74</sup> One of the most common intertextual resemblances to be observed among Tolstoy's literary corpus is the overlapping passage between Book VIII of *Anna Karenina* – describing Levin's suicidal caution – and its strikingly similar counterpart in Chapter IV of *Confession*. Because the latter text is written within the confines of the autobiographical pact, and the former under the guise of a fictional character who already shared a considerable degree of resemblance with Tolstoy, it is not unreasonable to justify Levin's autobiographicity in relation to this recurrence (see Wachtel "History" 184).

<sup>75</sup> Obviously, it cannot be an actual sequel, because just as Nicholas Saryntsov and Lev Tolstoy are signified as being different people due to their separate proper names, so too is the case with Nicholas Saryntsov and Constantine Levin.

resemblance between Levin and Nicholas is not, as we have discussed, itself evidence of either's autobiographicity, their mutual resemblance to Tolstoy allows both to be read in this mindset.

### 2.3.3. Beliefs

Lastly, the scoring for the Beliefs category looks as follows:

<b>BELIEFS</b>	
The fundamentals of Christianity can be found in the Gospels, and particularly the Sermon on the Mount	1
All men are equal, and in a brotherhood with one another	1
The Church has corrupted the true teachings of Christ	1
One must follow only one's own reason and conscience	1
Nobody should own property	1
All property should be given away to those who need it more	1
One should live off one's own manual labour	1
The government is at best ineffectual, and at worst evil	1
Institutional law and the law of God are incongruous	1
One should not serve in the military	1
The educational system deceives the children and perpetuates society's ills	1
<b>Beliefs Subtotal:</b>	<b>11/11</b>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>46/53</b>

Table 4: Nicholas Saryntsov's Belief Scoring, with Total

As we can see, every single one of Nicholas' Beliefs, as evidenced by his dialogue within the closed parameters of the play, has a direct counterpart in Tolstoy's own belief-system. This results in a score of 11 out of 11, or 100%. As with the Events, we could find some meaning in the fact that many subjects that Tolstoy held dearly as cornerstones of his own Beliefs – such as vegetarianism, hatred of tobacco and alcohol,<sup>76</sup> aesthetics, celibacy, and the single-tax economic

<sup>76</sup> While Nicholas, himself, never makes direct reference to tobacco and alcohol, the subject is broached elsewhere in the play. Most of the references to tobacco consumption, interestingly, come from Alexandra, ironically one of the primary antagonists interfering with Nicholas' cause. When Father Vasily lights a cigarette, Alexandra in her interrogation of him says, "why don't you renounce worldly advantages, and not go about smoking a cigarette?" (331) and "If only I were your Bishop; I'd teach you to read Renan and smoke cigarettes" (333). The irony here is that her husband, Peter, has been smoking throughout the entire scene (325), and departs saying "I must first fetch some cigarettes" (334) without any reaction from Alexandra. The only other character to discuss smoking is Boris, who also looks upon it with derision. After his arrest, he recounts to Nicholas the details surrounding his resistance: "I did not think I should refuse to serve; but when I saw all this fraud, those Mirrors of Justice, those Documents, the Police and Officers smoking, I could not help saying what I did" (394-5). The "Officers smoking" is noted as an important part of his disgust with the military. Though no indication of Nicholas' own position is provided, it may be implied

philosophy of Henry George – that are not at all present in Nicholas’ characterization. However, unlike Events, wherein the omission of certain unsavoury actions suggests deliberate editing in the procession of textual self-fashioning, the absence of these supplementary Tolstoyan Beliefs could easily be explained in terms of dramatic economy. There simply is not enough room to touch on everything that may have been on Tolstoy’s mind, leading to selective prioritization. Nicholas’ failure to address the morality of eating meat hardly frames him as being any more or less sympathetic than if he had mentioned it; that said, if he had made a point of stating how much he enjoys killing animals for food, then we could have ranked this outspoken preference toward carnivory among his Beliefs as a deflationary 0 in that criterion when compared against Tolstoy’s vegetarianism.

The overwhelming resemblance featured in this category should come as no great surprise. It would be somewhat illogical for a didactic writer like Tolstoy to make the hero of his drama disagree with his own positions, especially when this figure is framed more or less righteously throughout the plot. *Light* would be quite a different play if Nicholas’ Beliefs ran counter to Tolstoy’s own. If he were to undergo moral change or development over the course of the drama – whether from disagreeing with characteristically Tolstoyan views to agreeing with them by the end, or vice versa – he could be an exemplar of the conversion process, but that transition evades

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by his influence over Boris that they share this view; although this interpretation is obscured by Alexandra, who exists in the play only to disagree with Nicholas, also seeming to share this view. Alcohol is a similar case, but at least Nicholas does make one mention of it, albeit rather indirect. When in the peasant village, he explains to Boris, “How can one help? Suppose I hire a labourer; who will he be? Just another such man: one who has given up his farming, from drink or from want” (362). This, despite implying disapproval, does not outright condemn the act of drinking. Boris takes a much firmer stance against alcohol, in one instance describing vodka as the “the chief cause of evil” (393). Alexandra also appears to be against drinking as much as smoking, first asking Vasily, “what creed is it that bids us to shake hands with every peasant and let them cut down the trees, and give them money for vodka, and abandon our own families” (332), and later berating Nicholas for his charity toward an alcoholic peasant (346). Mary also treats the alcoholism of her husband’s cohorts as grounds for scorn, saying of his pilgrimage accomplice, “You love everyone else – the whole world, including that drunken Alexander Petrovich” (405). Furthermore, there is the Patient from the opening Act III, scene 3, who says to the Head Doctor, “You think I should take to drink again? No, I have had my lesson, but every extra day done here only does me harm” (391). Despite the clear stance that the play as a whole takes against alcohol, there is not enough textual evidence to truly know where Nicholas stands.

the scope of *Light's* dramatization. The only other possible outcome of disagreement between author and character would be if the disagreeing character's folly is meant to be taken as a cautionary tale. This is the case with many of Tolstoy's later works, such as *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, *Master and Man*, and *The Power of Darkness*, all of which are ultimately resolved by their protagonists' redemptions upon shifting their Beliefs. This possibility, however, opens up a number of questions concerning Nicholas' autopsychological makeup.

Throughout the plot, his attempts at social reform consistently lead to negative results. He is unable to rectify the lapse in justice that has incarcerated the tree-thief; his desire to reconfigure his family's aristocratic lifestyle ends with him signing his property over to Mary, who goes on to uphold their extravagant standard of living; his persuasion of Father Vasily jeopardizes the disciple's family, leading him to eventually return to the Church<sup>77</sup>; his persuasion of Boris results in the disciple being imprisoned, driven to insanity, and flogged (possibly to death). One of Nicholas' final lines is spent lamenting his failures,<sup>78</sup> leaving the audience with a sorrowful note that may, in fact, seem more cautionary than inspirational.

This tonal incongruity has led to one of the few significant debates among critics that the plays has incited: is the audience meant to sympathize with Nicholas? Is he a commendable model

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<sup>77</sup> The fragmentary Act V suggests – via the line “Enter Vasily Nikonorovich with Doukhobors” (413) – that Vasily ultimately leaves the Church again to live among the sectarian Doukhobors, making this a partial victory for Nicholas. However, there is no mention of Vasily's family in this line, making it unclear what fate befalls them in response to his second recantation. Without the complete scene available, it is unclear to what extent all of this has actually been resolved. One could conjecture, from the absence of reference to his family in this final scene, that his new Doukhor lifestyle has been the result of him breaking away from his familial obligations, thus making Vasily's salvation a microcosm for what Nicholas was unable to do in his own life.

<sup>78</sup> This is the case regardless of whether or not we treat the fragmentary Act V as part of the play proper. His final line in Act IV is “Can it be that I have been mistaken? Mistaken in believing in Thee? No! Father help me!” (411). His only line to appear within quotation marks in the Act V fragment – thus implying that it likely would have been replicated exactly in the dialogue of the fully-realized scene – is “I am always in doubt whether I have done right. I have accomplished nothing. [...] I set an example of weakness. Evidently God does not wish me to be his servant. He has many other servants – and can accomplish his will without me, and he who realises this is at peace” (412-3). This, quite likely, would have been the last thing he utters before being shot; after which, however, there would have been additional lines dramatizing such actions as “He says he did it to himself by accident” and “rejoicing that the fraud of the Church is exposed” (413).

for replication, or Tolstoy's exercise in overblown self-parody? In the same breath that George Bernard Shaw praises *Light* as Tolstoy's "masterpiece," he describes it as, "the transfiguration of the great prophet into a clumsy mischievous cruel fool" (265). Troyat adds that, "Tolstoy unconsciously exaggerated his hero to the point of caricature" (514), and Steiner says that the play "shows the man's blindness, his egotism, and the ruthlessness which can inspire a prophet who believes himself entrusted with revelation" (129-30). Yet perhaps one of the most scathing indictments comes from Simmons, who says,

The play reveals him in an unpleasant light [...] he passes through the world and everything he touches blights. One cannot blame the 'darkness' in the play for not comprehending, for the spiritual light that shines is hardly a blazing beacon but at best a dull flickering candle that sputters and goes out at the end. Though a dramatic failure, the play is a tribute to Tolstoy, for only a morally great man would employ the sincerity of his art to depict himself so unmercifully. He could not sympathetically dramatize his heroic spiritual struggle on those who surrounded him, to whom he often appeared in the play as a most aggravating husband and father (*II*, 332).

The most forceful rebuttal to Simmons' argument has come from Kornman, who retorts by asking, "Does Simmons mean [...] that Tolstoj questioned the validity of Saryncev's actions? or that he had second thoughts about the end if the means were so 'harmful'? If the answer to these questions is yes, then it seems to me Simmons has basically misunderstood the drama" and goes on to add, "he [Simmons] does not distinguish between the play as such from Tolstoj's personal life. Whether or not there is closest correspondence between the two is incidental and irrelevant in viewing the play as a play or the idea(s) it sets forth on their own merits" (Kornman 231).

Though I mostly agree with Kornman's refutation of Simmons' assertion, I come to that conclusion not *in spite of* the author-character correspondence – which I certainly do not perceived

to be “incidental and irrelevant,” given how closely the play’s merits are linked to its autobiographicity – but instead *because of* this kinship. What Kornman seems to miss about his own analysis – in its inclination toward New Criticism, which remained commonplace in American universities at the time – is that he implicitly argues against Simmons on the grounds of Tolstoy’s Beliefs being consistent with Nicholas’. As a result, he bases his position on whether or not Tolstoy agrees with his creation’s moral logic, which necessitates some relevance latent in the character’s autopsychological resemblance to its author. By dissecting and comparing the character’s Beliefs in relation to the author’s as we have done, we arrive at the core of what is being contested; Tolstoy could not have disagreed with Nicholas, because the two believed the exact same things.

#### 2.4. Final Score

Despite it being the individual details within the separate categories where we typically find some of the more meaningful correspondences and discrepancies, we must not lose sight of whole. The total score (see the bottom of Table 4) received by Nicholas Saryntsov when all three categories are combined is 46 out of a potential 53, meaning that his characterization contains an 86.79% resemblance to Tolstoy’s biographical legend.

Being well over 50% – and paired with all three subtotals likewise exceeding that same minimum threshold – there can be no denying that Nicholas is an autobiographical figure. Being an impressive 37.74% over that minimum is cause for notice, and retroactively justifies cognizant receivers’ easy recognition of what has always been (to them) an obvious connection. As for the 12.62% accrued in losses, they exist not to diminish or negate the transparent kinship, but to add just enough distance between Nicholas and Tolstoy – as permitted by the poetic licence that is made acceptable by the play’s fictional status – so as to inhibit one from being made culpable for

the others' actions (be they real or fictive). Moreover, as has been demonstrated above, it is within those conscious alterations that we can see Tolstoy's creative process at work. This is not to suggest that there is no creativity involved in accurately representing all aspects of one's own life to the best of one's abilities. However, if that endeavor is taken as the starting-point, then lapses in such directness become all the more conspicuous for their incongruity.

## Conclusion

The chief purpose of the preceding two chapters has been to provide all of the necessary information for constructing and testing the grid methodology. Although the demonstration has been confined largely to the unique conditions of Tolstoy's life and authorship, all of the tools have been offered to be used for applying the same analytical method to virtually any other play or otherwise autobiographical work of fiction. The process of doing so has turned out to be a strange mixture of simplicity and complexity: simplicity because it employs fairly straightforward tactics of recognition that should be familiar to anyone who has undertaken a less structured approach to the same basic objective, and consequently yields relatively unsurprising results; complexity because it certainly goes the long way around to arrive at those unsurprising results.

I anticipate a possible critique of this approach to be that it emphasizes process over product. Regardless of whether or not that is an accurate description of the grid itself, I will not argue that my explication of it has done so out of necessity. Chapter 2 spends over thirty pages (nearly fifty, if counting the Appendix) essentially trying to "prove" a piece of trivia about *Light* that Tolstoy scholars have always been able to intuit effortlessly, and that lay-readers may very well be able to guess without the need for such extraneous effort. However, what I find such a critique neglects is that the so-called "intuition" of the hyper-cognizant Tolstoy scholars simply derives from their ability to conduct this same sort of analysis in their heads (an informal grid, so to speak), due to their possession of a firmly established frame of reference. Likewise, the speculations of the lay-reader are a far cry from being a sufficient basis for making critical assertions, and can only be made so if they go on to comparatively research the matter to confirm their suspicion, resulting in another informal variation on the grid approach.

As I stated at the outset, my undertaking here has been less about what makes *Light* autobiographical (i.e., product) and more to do with the means by which receivers determine this to be the case while reading it (i.e., process). Even with the considerably small pool of previous criticism devoted to *Light* there is no dispute surrounding the former, but what has been lacking is an acknowledgement of how these commentators came to draw that conclusion. If we desire to legitimize treating autobiographical fiction (and, by extension, drama) as its own unique category of literature, it is imperative that we come to terms with the process by which we identify works as such. I offer the grid as a blunt-force instrument for covering the major bases of that need.

That is not to say that we have learned nothing interesting about *Light* from this exercise beyond properly designating its autobiographical label. Several key insights about the play's dramaturgical construction have arisen from subjecting it to the grid process. First, the high scores in each of the three categories illustrate that the figure of Nicholas Saryntsov shares a recognizable affinity with Tolstoy. The perfect Beliefs score in particular negates any reason to suspect that Nicholas' views differ from the author's, making it clear that Tolstoy's own views are identical to those being endorsed by the drama, regardless of whether or not the other characters (and the audience) find them to be sympathetic. As much as we may interpret this as Tolstoy's brutal honesty toward his own faults, we cannot ignore that the text's ideological and thematic positions are fixed to Nicholas' moral and socioeconomic philosophies.

It is then from within that stark resemblance that the lapses in factual self-representation become all the more conspicuous. It is in Nicholas' Events that we find this to be most common, wherein a series of minor alterations to otherwise true (or at least plausible) actions add a layer of interference between autobiographicity and fictionality. That numerous life experiences that Tolstoy found to be morally questionable are pointedly absent from Nicholas' characterization illustrates that the latter can be seen not only as a clone of the author, but could also be taken to be

an idealized version thereof. This factor heavily impacts how we might interpret Nicholas' constant string of failures that make up so much of the plot. These disappointments are not – as so many commentators have perceived them – indicative of Tolstoy's anagnorisis that his own seemingly quixotic turn as a religious prophet was a mistake; instead, they function as markers of a heroic figure's tragic defeat. The intended autothanatographical conclusion – being one of the most prominent deviations from the biographical record – attests to this logic, subverting typical hagiographic martyrdom in favour of a bittersweet release from the anguish of a no-win situation. As what is arguably the final instalment of Tolstoy's lifelong autobiographical project, *Light* brings overt self-representation to a crashing end like no other text had to that point.

As mentioned, although the grid has been designed to be applicable to testing works of autobiographical fiction of any form or media, it has been particularly fruitful to begin with a dramatic case study. Works of autobiographical drama are not so easily recognized as their novelistic counterparts, largely due to the absence of a first-person narrator to mimic the formal conventions of the pseudo-autobiographical mode. Instead, it fractures that perspective between a series of freestanding characters whose interpersonal dynamics collectively construct the identity of the central figure. Despite our knowing that all of *Light*'s dialogue has been written by Tolstoy alone, Nicholas hardly describes himself at all. The majority of his biographemes are conveyed expositionally by other characters before his first entrance, making way for him to dramatize that identity upon arrival. The audience is treated to an outside view of the scenarios that place him in conflict with his family and society, orienting their sympathies with much greater freedom than autobiographical discourse typically allows. Given the play's thematic emphases on free-thought and making up one's own mind, the formal devices of drama are especially conducive to the play's message.

It should be apparent that I have proposed this exercise to be a purely academic endeavour. It is a means for scholarly critics to strengthen their understanding of a text they mean to analyze in greater detail – chiefly to align their cognizance within an easily referenced framework. That said, I also see the potential for some applicability and relevance of the grid to the work of theatre practitioners. Directors staging a text that they suspect to be autobiographical can use a grid for their own benefit, as a means of drawing their attention to the intricacies of the playwright’s craft and the decisions that went into giving fictional shape to an otherwise autobiographical story. So too is the same with actors, who can use a detailed-understanding of their role to add nuances to key moments of the performance that they know to be either referential or invented.

However, I believe the most significant practical value of this system is for playwrights. There is a pair of duelling perspectives on creative writing that seemingly all authors must grapple with: first, is the belief that all fiction is autobiographical to some extent, which is the partial basis for the popular adage to “write what you know”; second, is the view that writing autobiographically is trite, narcissistic, and by default interferes with creativity. It is the inherent antagonism of the latter that frequently leads authors to deny the presence of autobiographicity in their fiction, or to over-emphasize the select instances of lapses in direct self-representation as being indicative that they have not fallen into the trap of hackneyed narcissism. Alternatively, authors who have consciously adopted the former may tend to over-emphasize the truth-value of what nevertheless remains a work of fiction, attempting to diminish (or even outright deny) any fictionalizing deviations from their own recounted experiences. In order to combat the dogmatism of either of these two extremes, I believe it would be beneficial for playwrights to evaluate their own characters with a grid while constructing them. Doing so would force authors to confront exactly how much of their creation’s characterization is actually based upon self-representation, negotiating the conscious deviations with greater precision, and (perhaps most importantly) taking into

consideration how much of the details about their lives would be known by prospective audiences. In that same spirit, dramaturgs may also employ the grid as part of their toolkit for working with playwrights developing new works. Although the appeal of such a system will certainly vary from artist to artist, the applications are available nonetheless to those who are so inclined.

The grid, in its current state, is a heuristic effort to solidify the ways in which cognizant receivers engage with texts that they recognize to be autobiographical. I acknowledge that it is not yet a flawless system, and have already addressed some directions in which future developments should be experimented. The first step would simply be to test more and more texts, treating a greater diversity of writing styles, literary forms, and types of authors. The best way to determine what needs adjustment is to find the limitations of the system, and then fix them accordingly. As much as I find this temporary solution to be sufficiently functional, I would not protest the creation of a more elegant model.

Part of what I find most valuable about the grid is its ability to effectively parse the fictive content from the referential with regards to how each biographeme contributes to the overall characterization. Recognizing the immensity of referential content – when the author is not honour-bound by the autobiographical pact to include any – fundamentally alters the receiver's capacity to perceive the character as being autonomously apart from the author's identity. As well-trained as one may be in applying critical distance while reading, the resemblance itself is responsible for conflating the two. Judging the actions of the character becomes synonymous with judging those of the author; not because “the character *is* the author” but because their actions (when understood as Events) are revealed to be identical. Once that resemblance is recognized, any fictionalized deviation from the biographical template, for good or for ill, becomes a deliberate artistic choice. Appreciating the distinctiveness between fictive and the referential content lays the necessary groundwork for assessing the text as a whole.

## Appendix: Textual Evidence for Saryntsov's Criteria

### A.1. Cosmetics

- Proper Name: Nicholas Ivanovich Saryntsov
  - Listed with dramatis personae (323)
  - Christian name and patronymic mentioned in first line of dialogue, spoken by Alexandra to Mary: “If I were not your sister, but a stranger, and Nicholas Ivanovich not your husband, but merely an acquaintance [...]” (325)
  - Surname first mentioned later in Act I, by Peter to Alexandra: “I did not know they [the Cheremshanovs] were so intimate with the Saryntsovs” (337)
  - The name is immediately associated to the physical presence of the actor playing him, because right before his entrance, Alexandra says, “Ah! here comes Nicholas” (338)
- Species: Human
  - Self-evident
- Gender: Male
  - Self-evident
- Nationality: Russian
  - Self-evident
- Ethnicity: Caucasian/Ethnic Russian
  - Self-evident
- Religious Affiliation 1: Born into Russian Orthodoxy
  - Nicholas to Father Vasily: “why should I believe you rather than I would believe the Buddhist Lama? Only because I happened to be born in your faith?” (344)
- Religious Affiliation 2: Non-Orthodox Christian Spiritualism
  - See Beliefs section (2.2.3. and A.3.)
- Class Status: Aristocratic
  - Wealth demonstrated in the opening stage direction: “The scene represents the verandah of a fine country-house, in front to which a croquet-lawn and tennis court are shown, also a flower-bed. The children are playing croquet with their governess” (325)
  - Wealth first addressed aloud by Peter to Alexandra: “Come! Beggared indeed! Not with an income like theirs” (326)
- Occupation: Landowner
  - Alexandra to Mary: “A husband, head of his family, has no occupation” (326)
  - Nicholas to Alexandra: “because they cut down ten trees in a forest that is considered mine” (340)
- Surrounding 1: Lives intermittently in country estate and in Moscow
  - Act I scene description: “a fine country-house” (325)

- Act II scene description: “In the same country-house” (354)
- Act III scene description: “The scene is laid in Moscow” (377)
- Act IV scene description: “In Moscow a year later” (398)
- Surroundings 2: Lives with family
  - Self-evident
- Marital Status: Married
  - Self-evident
- Children: Has children (minimum six)
  - Mary to Father Gerasim: “I have six children”

## A.2. Events

### Expositional Events:

- Served in the army
  - Styopa to Lisa: “But it is I, not he, who is going to serve. He himself was in the army!” (335).
  - The Princess to Father Gerasim: “His rank is not high. Only that of a cavalry captain, I believe. He was once in the army” (369).
- Got married
  - See Marital Status criterion of Cosmetics section (2.2.1) above.
- Had children
  - See Children criterion of Cosmetics section (2.2.1) above.
- Had a past interest in music
  - Mary to Alexandra and Peter: “Yes, of course, he gets carried away, as he always used to. At one time it was music, then shooting, then the school” (328).
  - His subsequent loss of interest in music is dramatized via his monologue against the younger generation for frivolously discussing Schumann and Chopin in the idle comforts of their fine country-house, while peasant suffer out in the village (366).
- Had a past interest in shooting
  - Mary to Alexandra and Peter: “Yes, of course, he gets carried away, as he always used to. At one time it was music, then shooting, then the school” (328).
- Had a past interest in education
  - Mary to Alexandra and Peter: “Yes, of course, he gets carried away, as he always used to. At one time it was music, then shooting, then the school” (328).
- Spent many years disinterested in religion
  - Mary to Alexandra and Peter: “From the time of our marriage – that’s twenty years ago – till then he had never fasted nor taken the sacrament” (327).
  - Mary to Father Gerasim: “When we married he was quite indifferent to religion, and lived so, happily, during our best years – the first twenty years” (369).
- Recently lost his sister

- Mary to Alexandra and Peter: “It began last year, after his sister died” (327).
- Mary to Father Gerasim: “Perhaps he was influenced by his sister, or what he read” (369).
- Became morose and/or death-obsessed
  - Mary to Alexandra and Peter: “He was very fond of her, and her death had a very great effect of him. He became quite morose, and was always talking about death” (327).
- Briefly fell ill with typhus
  - Mary to Alexandra and Peter: “and then, you know, he fell ill himself with typhus. When he recovered, he was quite a changed man” (327).
- Began studying the Gospels intensely
  - Mary to Alexandra and Peter: “He read the Gospels for days on end, and did not sleep. He used to get up at night to read, made notes and extracts” (327).
  - Mary to Father Gerasim: “Anyhow, he began thinking and reading the Gospels” (369).
- Briefly had a renewed interest in the Church
  - Mary to Alexandra and Peter: “a month before, he would not miss a single service, and kept every fast day” (328).
  - Mary to Father Gerasim: “and then suddenly he grew extremely religious, began going to church and visiting monks” (369).
- Consulted bishops and hermits about religion
  - Mary to Alexandra and Peter: “and then began going to see bishops and hermits – consulting them about religion” (327).
  - Mary to Father Gerasim: “began going to church and visiting monks” (369).
- Took the sacrament in a monastery
  - Mary to Alexandra and Peter: “but at that time he did once take the sacrament in a monastery” (327).
- Came to deny the Church and its doctrines
  - Mary to Alexandra and Peter: “and then immediately afterwards decided that one should neither take communion nor go to church” (327).

#### Dramatized Events:

- The tree-thief incident
  - The first source of conflict in the play to not be communicated solely in exposition; it is introduced by Mary to Alexandra and Peter in Act I: “I know it is about some trees that have been felled. The peasants have been cutting trees in our woods. [...] Yes, they will probably be sent to prison and ordered to pay for the trees” (328)
  - Upon Nicholas’ entrance later in the same Act, he argues with Alexandra and Styopa about the thief’s culpability, saying “I can’t agree with those people being shut up in prison, and being totally ruined, because they cut down ten trees in a

forest which is considered to be mine” (340) and “I cannot condemn him, but do what I can to save him” (341).

- In Act II scene 1, Nicholas enters reading a notice that the thief “is to be imprisoned on account of some wretched pine-trees of ours. [...] He cut it down, and they informed the Justice of the Peace, and he has sentenced him to three months’ imprisonment” (358). This prompts Nicholas to return to the village, where scene 2 is then set, where the audience can see the Policeman taking the thief away (363). Nicholas hopes to remedy the situation by writing a petition.
- In Act II scene 3, Nicholas alludes to the thief in his tirade against the younger generation’s idleness when listening to music, saying, “At this very moment, one of them, the only breadwinner of a family, is being dragged to prison because he has cut down one of a hundred thousand pine trees that grow in a forest that is called *mine*” (366). This is the last time anything to do with the incident is mentioned.
- Attempts to persuade his wife of his new worldview
  - Although this is arguably a thread that carries through the entirety of the play – carried out in a series of isolated exchanges whenever Nicholas and Mary find themselves alone onstage together, at the ends of Acts I (348-52), II (374-6) and IV (403-9), with one considerably shorter exchange near the beginning of Act III (380) – the Act I argument is specifically framed as him trying to explain his worldview to her for the first time, as established in his preceding conversation with Alexandra in which he says, “I am even glad you have spoken out and given me the opportunity – challenged me – to explain to Mary my whole outlook on life. On my way home to-day I was thinking of doing so, and I will speak to her at once” (347).
- Writes letters to his own wife while at home with her
  - Less of a major Event, but demonstrated as an aspect of their intramarital communication in Act II scene 1, when Mary reads a letter that Nicholas wrote to her aloud to the Princess. Mary says, “He wrote me this letter yesterday. I will read it to you”; when the Princess asks, “What? He lives in the same house with you, and writes you letters? How strange!” Mary replies saying, “No, understand him there. He gets so excited when he speaks” (355). Although he is never shown to be writing one such letter onstage, the reading of a letter during the plot nevertheless dramatizes this correspondence.
- Visits peasants in their village
  - Each of the three scenes in Act II allude to their own separate instance in which Nicholas visits the peasant village. Upon his entrance in scene 1, he tells Lyuba, “I have just returned from the village and am going back again” (358). The entirety of scene 2 dramatizes the second visit referenced within that statement (360-3). Then, when he enters in scene 3, he proclaims that he has just returned from the village (366), which appears to be a separate visit, given that Boris was with Nicholas in the village during scene 2, and is already with his younger cohorts at the house at the beginning of scene 3 when Nicholas returns alone from the village.

Regardless of the specific number of visits, the overt dramatization of scene 2 is enough to establish this Event as its own criterion.

- Debates with a high-ranking Church official
  - This Event is dramatized in Act II scene 3, when Nicholas argues with Father Gerasim (370-4).
- Signs over his property to his wife
  - He does so at the end of Act II, saying, “Very well then – I will sign” (376), which is followed by the stage direction, “Goes to writing-table and signs” (376). The repercussions of this reluctant decision quietly unfold over the course of Acts III and IV.
- Runs away from home, and returns
  - Right before agreeing to sign over the estate, Nicholas says to Mary, “If I give it to you, I cannot go on living with you; I shall have to go away. I cannot continue living under these conditions” (375-6).
  - Later, near the beginning of Act III, he says to Lyuba (in the presence of the Carpenter), “Now I, for instance, wished to act according to Christ’s injunction: to leave father, wife and children and to follow Him, and I left home, but how did it end? It ended by my coming back and living with you in luxury in town. Because I was trying to do more than I had strength for” (379). The entirety of the departure and his subsequent return evidently occurred offstage between the two acts.
  - He makes another attempt to run away in Act IV, which will be treated below as a separate Event in its own right.
- Moves to Moscow
  - Acts III and IV are set in Moscow – i.e., the “town” alluded to in the previous quotation – in a house that seems to be owned by the Saryntsovs.
- Tries to learn carpentry
  - Act III scene 1 is spent at “a carpenter’s bench” (377) and opens with the Carpenter and Nicholas “wearing a carpenter’s apron are working at the bench, planing” (377).
  - When Nicholas struggles to grasp the technique, the Carpenter asks him, “But why should your honour trouble to learn to be a carpenter?”, Nicholas replies, “I am ashamed to lead an idle life” (377).
- Visits “Boris” [prospective son-in-law and/or conscientious objector] in a mental ward
  - Nicholas and Lyuba visit Boris in the mental ward of the hospital in Act III scene 3 (394-7), following the request made by the Princess for them to do so earlier in the act (382).
  - In Act IV scene 1, which is set one year after the events of Act III, Alexandra tells Mary that “he has gone to see Boris” (403). Nicholas himself confirms this in the following scene (407).
- Visits Rzhanov’s lodging-house

- In Act IV scene 2, during their final quarrel, Nicholas tells Mary, “I spent this morning at Rzhanov’s lodging-house, among the outcasts there” (407), and proceeds to describe the horrors of poverty that he witnessed there.
- If this were a fictional locale, I would surely have felt the need to generalize its name, for the same reasoning by which several of the above Events have been depersonalized. However, the Rzhanov hospice actually was a real place, being “a home for the destitute in Moscow” (Kantor and Tulchinsky 254 n42). Its specificity can thus be retained, in much the same way that the above “Moves to Moscow” Event connotes a location that exists in both the real and the fictional worlds.
- Plans to run away (again), but decides against it
  - At the end of Act IV scene 1, Alexandra informs Mary that, “He has made up his mind that it is impossible for him to live so, and he is going away” (403). This is confirmed in the following scene, first with Nicholas saying to Alexander Petrovich (his travelling-partner friend), “We will go by rail as far as Tula, and from thence on foot. Well, I’m ready” (403). When Mary tries to stop him shortly after, he says to her, “Let me go! Good-bye”, to which she responds with the evocatively intertextual line, “If you go, I will go with you. Or if not with you, I will throw myself under the train you leave by” (408). This prompts Nicholas to say, “Alexander Petrovich, go home! I am not going” (408-9) and stay at home.
  - This is differentiated from the similar Event above by their dissimilar outcomes, one being temporally successful, and the other thwarted prior to a departure. Though these could, theoretically be combined to into a single Event, their repetition within the plot is worthy of consideration for the potential multiplicity of real-world counterparts.
- Develops another illness
  - The specifics are unclear, as this Event is not brought up until Act V fragment 3, whose didascalia reads, “Mary Ivanovna talks about illness with doctor. [...] Enter Nicholas Ivanovich and speaks to Doctor about the uselessness of treatment. But for his wife’s sake, agrees to it” (412).
- Dies by gunshot
  - Also confined to Act V fragment 3, Nicholas meets his end when, “The Princess rushes in and shoots him” upon which he “Dies rejoicing the fraud of the Church is exposed” (413).

### A.3. Beliefs

- The fundamentals of Christianity can be found in the Gospels, and particularly the Sermon on the Mount
  - Peter to Mary: “I confess I did not understand. The Gospels, the Sermon on the Mount – and that churches are unnecessary!” (327)
  - Mary to Peter and Alexandra: “Well, so that we should live according to the Gospels and the Sermon on the Mount, and give everything away” (328)

- Nicholas to Alexandra and Styopa: “Therein lies the whole teaching of Christ. One must strive with one’s whole strength to give oneself away” (341)
- Nicholas to Vasily: “Yes, Christ united; but we have divide: because we have understood him the wrong way round” (344)
- Nicholas to Mary: “And in the Gospels I found the answer, that we certainly should not live for our own sake. That was revealed to me very clearly once, when I was pondering over the parable of the labourers in the vineyard” (351)
- Nicholas to Father Gerasim: “God and His law, given to us in the Gospels” (370)
- Nicholas to Father Gerasim: “I have already told you that I do not accept that. I do not accept it because, as it says in the Gospels, ‘By their deeds shall ye know them, by their fruits ye shall know them’” (371)
- Nicholas to Father Gerasim: “I do try to understand, and all that is said in the Sermon on the Mount is plain and comprehensible” (373)
- Nicholas to Boris: “And in this matter you should do as it is said in the Gospels, and do not think beforehand” (394)
- All men are equal, and in a brotherhood with one another
  - Alexandra to Mary: “And where has he found in the Sermon on the Mount that we must shake hands with footmen? It says ‘Blessed are the meek,’ but it says nothing about shaking hands!” (328)<sup>79</sup>
  - Nicholas to Alexandra: “And my conscience – God – requires everybody as equal, love everybody, serve everybody” (347)
  - Nicholas to Boris: “I did not realise that I am a son of God and that we are all sons of God – and all brothers. But as soon as I realised it – realised that we have all an equal right to live – my whole life was turned upside down” (363)
  - Nicholas to Father Gerasim: “But who is proud? I, who consider myself a man like the rest of mankind, and one who therefore must live like the rest by his own labour and as poorly as his brother men, or those who consider themselves to be specially selected sacred people, knowing the whole truth an incapable of error” (373)
  - Nicholas to Carpenter: “I don’t believe that God gave it, but that some of us have taken it, and taken it from our brother men” (377)
  - Nicholas to Mary: “But *I* can’t do it. Since I realised that we are all brothers, I cannot see it without suffering” (407)
- The Church has corrupted the true teachings of Christ
  - Peter to Mary: “I confess I did not understand. The Gospels, the Sermon on the Mount – and that churches are unnecessary!” (327)
  - Mary to Alexandra and Peter: “and then, immediately afterwards decided that one should neither take communion nor go to church” (327)

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<sup>79</sup> Later, in Act II scene 3, when Nicholas shakes hands with a Man-servant, the Maudes add a footnote informing their English readers that, “People shake hands much more often in Russia than in England, but it is quite unusual to shake hands with a servant, and Nicholas Ivanovich does it in consequence of his belief that all men are brothers” (365 n1). Although the allographic status of this editorial note cannot, as discussed, be treated as textual evidence in its own right, it explains the cultural implications of the action, amplifying the irony of Alexandra’s earlier line.

- Vasily to Alexandra: “Everyone, in fact, has his own views on these matters, and Nicholas Ivanovich really maintains much that is quite true, only he goes astray, in fact, on the main point, the Church” (331)
- Nicholas to Vasily: “The main question for you is not Christ’s divinity, or the history of Christianity, but the Church” (339)
- Nicholas to Vasily: “Of course, it would be excellent if there existed a set of infallible people to confide in. It would be very desirable; but desirability does not prove that they exist!” (342-3)
- Nicholas to Vasily: “Very well; but we first tried to prove the truth itself, and now we are trying to prove the reliability of the guardian of the truth” (343)
- Nicholas to Vasily: “We can’t do without faith. Now, however, faith in what other people tell us, but faith in what we arrive at by ourselves, by our own thought, our own reason” (343)
- Nicholas to Vasily: “Where are the contradictions? That twice two are four; and that one should not do to others what one would not like oneself; and that everything has a cause? Truths of that kind we all acknowledge because they accord with our reason. But that God appeared on Mount Sinai to Moses, or that Buddha flew up on a sunbeam, or that Mahomet went up into the sky, and that Christ flew there also – on matters of that kind we are all at variance” (343)
- Nicholas to Vasily: “so why should I believe you rather than I would the Buddhist Lama? Only because I happened to be born in your faith?” (344)
- Nicholas to Vasily: “You say the Church unites. But on the contrary, the worst dissensions have always been caused by the Church” (344)
- Nicholas to Vasily: “Yes, Christ united; but we have divided: because we have understood him the wrong way round. He destroyed all Churches” (344)
- Nicholas to Vasily: “Besides those words don’t refer to what we call ‘Church.’ It is the spirit of the teaching that matters. Christ’s teaching is universal, and includes all religions, and does not admit of anything exclusive; neither of the Resurrection nor the Divinity of Christ, nor the Sacraments – nor of anything that divides” (344)
- Nicholas to Vasily: “That’s what is so dreadful about the Churches. They divide by declaring that they possess the full indubitable and infallible truth” (344)
- Nicholas to Vasily: “And what do we teach them? We teach them now, at the end of the nineteenth century, that God created the world in six days, then caused a flood, and put all the animals in an ark, and all the rest of the horrors and nonsense of the Old Testament. And then that Christ ordered everyone to be baptized with water; and we make them believe in all the absurdity and meanness of an Atonement essential to salvation; and then that he rose up into the heavens which do not really exist, and there sat down at the right hand of the Father. We have got used to all this, but really it is dreadful. [...] It is as great a crime as man can commit. And we – you and your Church – do this!” (345)

- Nicholas to Father Gerasim: “I do not deny that I disagree with the teaching of the Church. I used to agree with it, but then left off doing so. But with my whole heart I wish to be in the truth and will at once accept it if you show it to me” (370)
- Nicholas to Father Gerasim: “If it did so, I should believe in the Church, but unfortunately it teaches the contrary” (371)
- Nicholas to Father Gerasim: “But even if we were to admit that Christ established the Church, how do I know that was *your* Church?” (371)
- Nicholas to Father Gerasim: “I did not deny the Church until I found it supported everything that is contrary to Christianity” (371)
- Nicholas to Father Gerasim: “I have found that the Church blesses oaths, murders and executions” (371)
- Nicholas to Father Gerasim: “Yes! Do not kill me, do not steal from me my stolen goods. We have all robbed the people, we have stolen their land and made a law forbidding them to steal it back; and the Church sanctions all these things” (372)
- Nicholas to Father Gerasim: “But who is proud? I, who consider myself a man like the rest of mankind, and one who therefore must live like the rest by his own labour and as poorly as his brother men, or those who consider themselves to be specially selected sacred people, knowing the whole truth and incapable of error; and who interpret Christ’s words in their own way?” (373)
- Act V Didascalia Fragment: “Dies rejoicing the fraud of the Church is exposed” (413)
- One must follow only one’s own reason and conscience
  - Nicholas to Styopa and Alexandra: “Well, I can’t help it, and it can’t be explained by argument” (342)
  - Nicholas to Vasily: “We can’t do without faith. Now, however, faith in what other people tell us, but faith in what we arrive at by ourselves, by our own thought, our own reason” (343)
  - Nicholas to Vasily: “There, that is the most terrible blasphemy! God has given us just one sacred tool for finding the truth – the only thing that can unite us all, and we do not trust it!” (343)
  - Nicholas to Vasily: “Where are the contradictions? That twice two are four; and that one should not do to others what one would not like oneself; and that everything has a cause? Truths of that kind we all acknowledge because they accord with our reason. But that God appeared on Mount Sinai to Moses, or that Buddha flew up on a sunbeam, or that Mahomet went up into the sky, and that Christ flew there also – on matters of that kind we are all at variance” (343)
  - Nicholas to Vasily: “Besides those words don’t refer to what we call ‘Church.’ It is the spirit of the teaching that matters. Christ’s teaching is universal, and includes all religions, and does not admit of anything exclusive; neither of the Resurrection nor the Divinity of Christ, nor the Sacraments – nor of anything that divides” (344)
  - Nicholas to Alexandra: “He need not believe *me*. But if he saw the truth, it would be well for him and for everybody” (346)

- Nicholas to Alexandra: “And my conscience – God – requires everybody as equal, love everybody, serve everybody” (347)
- Nicholas to Mary: “I lived when I did not understand; and when nobody gave me good advice” (349)
- Mary reading Nicholas’ letter aloud: “I cannot, in a letter, show you why that is so, nor why we must live in accord to Christ’s teachings. You can do one of two things: either believe in the truth and voluntarily go with me, or believe in me and trusting yourself entirely to me – follow me” (356)
- Nicholas to Boris: “But I cannot explain it to you now” (363)
- Nicholas to Lyuba: “His conscience – the God that dwells within him – will decide that. Had he come to me I should have given him only one piece of advice: not to do anything in which he is guided by his reason alone – nothing is worse than that – but only to act when his whole being demands it” (379)
- Nicholas to Boris: “And in this matter you should do as is said in the Gospels, and do not think beforehand [...] That is to say, do not act because you have reasoned out beforehand that you should do so and so, but act only when your whole being feels that you cannot act otherwise” (394)
- Nicholas to Boris: “Think it over with God’s help, and as if you knew you were to die to-morrow. Only so will you decide rightly” (397)
- Nobody should own property
  - Nicholas to Alexandra: “Well, if you want me to tell you why I can’t agree with those people being shut up in prison, and being totally ruined, because they cut down ten trees in a forest which is considered to be mine” (340)
  - Nicholas to Styopa: “In reality I have no right to this forest. Land belongs to everyone; or rather, it can’t belong to anyone.” (340)
  - Nicholas to Styopa: “How did I get my savings? What enabled me to save up? And I didn’t preserve the forest myself!” (340)
  - Nicholas to Styopa: “Just as a man feels no shame at taking toll from others’ labour without doing any work himself, you cannot prove to him that he ought to be ashamed; and the object of all the Political Economy you learnt at the University is merely to justify the false position in which we live” (340)
  - Nicholas to Peter: “It’s true. One should not possess anything” (341)
  - Nicholas to Alexandra: “And it should be impossible to live the way we do!” (341)
  - Nicholas to Mary: “The labour of others does not belong to me. To give him money, I must first take it from others. I have no right to do that, and I cannot do it!” (349)
  - Nicholas to Mary: “Well, here we are, living on other people’s labour – making others work for us – bringing children into the world and bringing them up to do the same” (350)
  - Nicholas to Mary: “The only way is not to possess any forest. And I will not possess any. What is one to do?” (358)
  - Nicholas to Boris: “Not take part in this evil. Do not own the land, nor devour the fruits of their labour. How can this be arranged, I don’t yet know” (362-3)

- Boris to Styopa: “That’s why he says that the first step is to possess no property; to change our whole way of life and live so as not to be served by others but to serve others” (367)
- Nicholas to Father Gerasim: “Yes! Do not kill me, do not steal from me my stolen goods. We have all robbed the people, we have stolen their land and made a law forbidding them to steal it back; and the Church sanctions all these things” (372)
- Nicholas to Carpenter: “I don’t believe that God gave it, but that some of us have taken it, and taken it from our brother men” (377)
- Nicholas to Mary: “But can only say that first we should get rid of this depraving luxury” (380)
- Nicholas to Mary: “Everybody, including Alexander Petrovich, has the right to tell me that I am a hypocrite; that I talk but do not act! That I preach the Gospel of poverty while I live in luxury, pretending that I have given up everything to my wife!” (406)
- Nicholas to Mary: “First, the whole life here is thoroughly depraved. You are vexed with the expression, but I can give no other name to a life built wholly on robbery; for the money you live on is taken from the land you have stolen from the peasants” (407)
- All property should be given away to those who need it more
  - Mary to Peter and Alexandra: “Well, so that we should live according to the Gospels and the Sermon on the Mount, and give everything away” (328)
  - Mary to Peter and Alexandra: “Yes, that is what it leads to. As it is they break our apple-trees and tread down the green cornfields, and he forgives them everything” (329)
  - Alexandra to Vasily: “I ask you, what creed is it that bids us shake hands with every peasant and let them cut down the trees, and give them money for vodka” (332)
  - Nicholas to Styopa: “In reality I have no right to this forest. Land belongs to everyone; or rather, it can’t belong to anyone” (340)
  - Nicholas to Styopa and Alexandra: “One should give everything away. Not only the forest we do not use and hardly ever see, but our clothes and our bread” (341)
  - Mary to the Princess: “There are no limits! He wants to give away everything” (355)
  - Mary reading Nicholas’ letter aloud: “My plan is this: We shall give our land to the peasants, retaining only 135 acres besides the orchards and kitchen-garden and the meadow and the river” (356)
  - Mary paraphrasing Nicholas’ letter: “Well, here follows his plan: to give up the house and have it turned into a school, and ourselves to live in the gardener’s two-roomed cottage” (356)
  - Nicholas to Mary: “But can only say that first we should get rid of this depraving luxury” (380)
- One should live off one’s own manual labour

- Mary quoting Nicholas to Alexandra and Peter: “Why not plough? It is much better than being in a Government Office” (330)
- Nicholas to Styopa: “We have never put any labour into this land” (340)
- Nicholas to Styopa: “How did I get my savings? What enabled me to save up? And I didn’t preserve the forest myself!” (340)
- Nicholas to Styopa: “Just as a man feels no shame at taking toll from others’ labour without doing any work himself, you cannot prove to him that he ought to be ashamed; and the object of all the Political Economy you learnt at the University is merely to justify the false position in which we live” (340)
- Nicholas to Mary: “Well, here we are, living on other people’s labour – making others work for us – bringing children into the world and bringing them up to do the same” (350)
- Mary to the Princess: “He wishes me now, at my age, to become a cook and a washerwoman” (355)
- Mary reading Nicholas’ letter aloud: “We will try to work ourselves, but will not force one another, nor the children. What we keep should still bring us in about £50 a year” (356)<sup>80</sup>
- Nicholas to Boris: “I am learning my own position. Finding out who weeds our gardens, builds our houses, makes our garments, and feed and clothes us” (362)
- Nicholas to Boris: “Not take part in this evil. Do not own the land, nor devour the fruits of their labour. How can this be arranged, I don’t yet know” (362-3)
- Nicholas to Father Gerasim: “But who is proud? I, who consider myself a man like the rest of mankind, and one who therefore must live like the rest by his own labour and as poorly as his brother men, or those who consider themselves to be specially selected sacred people, knowing the whole truth an incapable of error” (373)
- Nicholas to Carpenter: “I am ashamed to lead an idle life” (377)
- The government is at best ineffectual, and at worst evil
  - Mary quoting Nicholas to Alexandra and Peter: “Why not plough? It is much better than being in a Government Office” (330)
  - Nicholas to Tonya, “We cannot wait for the problem to be solved by public measures” (367)
  - Nicholas to Father Gerasim: “I have found that the Church blesses oaths, murders and executions” (371)
  - Nicholas to Mary: “I see how he, a pure, strong, resolute man, is deliberately being goaded to lunacy and to destruction, that the Government may be rid of him” (407-8)
- Institutional law and the law of God are incongruous
  - Nicholas to Alexandra and Styopa: “And it should be impossible to live the way we do!” (341)

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<sup>80</sup> The Maudes convert roubles to pounds in their translation, no doubt to better communicate the connotation of the amount to their audience. Other translations have retained the proper amount, being “five hundred roubles” (Kantor and Tulchinsky 45).

- Nicholas to Vasily: “It is as great a crime as man can commit” (345)
- Nicholas to Father Gerasim: “God and His law, given to us in the Gospels” (370)
- Nicholas to Father Gerasim: “Yes! Do not kill me, do not steal from me my stolen goods. We have all robbed the people, we have stolen their land and made a law forbidding them to steal it back; and the Church sanctions all these things” (372)
- One should not serve in the military
  - Styopa paraphrasing Nicholas to Alexandra: “He says military service the basest kind of employment, and that therefore one should not serve” (335)
  - Lisa quoting Nicholas to Styopa: “He says that if you cannot avoid serving, you should go when you are called; but to volunteer, is to choose that kind of service of your own free will” (335)
  - Nicholas to Mary: “To enter military service of my own free will, I consider either stupid, insensate action, suitable for a savage if a man does not understand the evil of his action, or despicable if he does it from an interested motive” (349)
  - Nicholas to Father Gerasim: “I have found that the Church blesses oaths, murders and executions” (371)
- The educational system deceives the children and perpetuates society’s ills
  - Mary to Alexandra and Peter: “Yesterday I told him that Vanya is not studying properly, and will not pass his exam., and he replied that it would by far be the best thing for him to leave school altogether” (329)
  - Nicholas to Styopa: “the object of all the Political Economy you learnt at the University is merely to justify the false position in which we live” (340)
  - Nicholas to Vasily: “A child, fresh and ready to receive all that is good and true, asks us what the world is, and what its laws are; and we, instead of revealing to him the teaching of love and truth that has been given to us, carefully ram into his head all sorts of horrible absurdities and meanness, ascribing them all to God” (345)
  - Nicholas to Mary: “I lived when I did not understand; and when nobody gave me good advice” (349)
  - Mary paraphrasing Nicholas’ letter: “Well, here follows his plan: to give up the house and have it turned into a school, and ourselves to live in the gardener’s two-roomed cottage” (356)
  - Nicholas to Mary: “Mary, you know I am out of sympathy with the whole manner of life you are all leading, and with the education you are giving to the children” (380)

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