

Title: What a joke! Suitors for Sonya?": Blending Disability, Gender, and Sexuality in Tatyana Tolstaya's "Sonya"

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Abstract:

The crux of Tatyana Tolstaya's short story "Sonya" is a fascinating relationship between the title character and a cruel, snake-like woman named Ada Adolfovna: a relationship so liminal in terms of gender and sexuality that it's challenging to begin discussing in the first place. Is it queer, or genderqueer, or something else, or both or neither? This challenge can be endlessly circled, but it can't be satisfactorily addressed without also taking into account the power dynamics of ability and disability. This paper utilizes the theory of cognitive blending to reveal how dis/ability is deployed and negotiated in Sonya and Ada's relationship, thereby tracing the push and pull of desire, contempt, sacrifice, and ambiguous passion that make this story so compelling.