

Title: Tolstoy's Allusions to Pushkin's *Stone Guest* in *Anna Karenina*
Author: Alexander Burry, Ohio State University

This paper will reexamine the oft-noted Pushkin connection in *Anna Karenina* by addressing parallels with *The Stone Guest*. Tolstoy's heroine betrays a stodgy older husband, just as the widow Donna Anna is about to do in Pushkin's play. Both characters fail to conform to societal expectations because of their inability to contain previously untapped sexual passions. Like Donna Anna, Tolstoy's protagonist brings a rigid Commander-like character (Karenin) together with a Don Juan figure (Vronsky) in a curious love triangle in which the "two Alekseis," as she refers to them, merge in a gesture of temporary reconciliation. This scene recalls Pushkin's concluding stage direction of "provalivaiutsia," indicating a motion of falling down together, rather than the Statue sending Don Juan to hell. Tolstoy develops this notion of the identity of seeming opponents, as both Karenin and Vronsky are unable to provide Anna with the happiness she seeks.

Ultimately, Tolstoy's use of motifs from Pushkin's play is connected to his larger interest in fate, vengeance, and apocalyptic destruction, as suggested in the novel's Biblical epigraph. Pushkin transforms the Don Juan legend in part by turning the traditional direct vengeance on an unrepentant libertine into a more complex, inscrutable punishment. Like his predecessor, Tolstoy depicts an irrevocable, inhuman agent of retribution waiting to crush what lies in its path. Both Pushkin's Statue and the "cast-iron wheels" of the train that destroys Anna represent inanimate objects that inexorably cut off human freedom and passion. More broadly, Pushkin's reflection in his play of the artist and rebel's fate under Nikolai I serves as a starting point for Tolstoy's political statement about his own times, as – following Anna's death – Vronsky and other Russian volunteers head by train for deadly armed conflict in Serbia.

burry.7@osu.edu