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THE KEYS TO HAPPINESS

Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia

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Chapter Six

Eros and Revolution: The Problem of Male Desire

The revolution of 1905 was both an organized political event—a deliberate challenge to established principles of public life—and an inchoate episode of violence, social disorganization, and personal release. The popular classes revolted against the social hierarchy (workers protested the factory regime, peasants defied the power of landlords); educated society, and some workers as well, explicitly challenged the tsar's politics of repression. On all levels the cry was for greater autonomy, for freedom of expression, for the right to self-regulation—for an end to tutelage and police control.

Everywhere social order deteriorated: violence, intimidation, disregard for the law were common on both sides of the barricades, as each camp sought to impose its political ideal.[1] Despite their disruptive tactics, however, the revolutionaries saw themselves as champions of the common good, which they strove to embody in formal structures of orderly civic life. Social Democrats in their slogans and retrospective interpretations stressed the power of collective mobilization, the triumphs exacted on the streets, in meetings, on the factory floor: in short, the force of organized public initiative. Liberals, for their part, transformed informal associations and personal influence into political instruments in the service of public goals and later hailed the institutional fruits of the revolutionary process. Across the board, protesters denounced the government's arbitrary exercise of power and proclaimed their dedication to more rational, and therefore more just, political forms. Enemies of the revolution, by contrast, saw in the massive

[1]For descriptions of the general level of violence and disorder, see Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray* (Stanford, Calif., 1988).

popular challenge the same elements of coercion and unreason that their adversaries identified in the ruling regime.

In the years after 1905, when political convictions wavered but social turmoil refused to subside and public life failed to settle into an acceptable routine, members of educated society—intellectuals, social scientists, political commentators, artists—continued to meditate on themes of transgression, disorder, chaos, and desire. These elements had a private as well as a public dimension. By 1906 or 1907 the anxiety they generated had crystallized into a self-proclaimed sexual crisis, a "sexual question" with the same rhetorical status as the more familiar "woman question" and "social question." "For the last ten to fifteen years," wrote the psychiatrist Aleksandr Bernshtein in 1908, "the sexual question has been studied from all possible angles—biological and economic, social and moral, juridical and pathological, hygienic and religious; and conversely, questions of ethics and law, political economy, and philosophy have been viewed from the viewpoint of sexual life." Sex talk, so this physician liked to believe, was not a frivolous indulgence but a matter of exalted social concern.[2]

The period in which the sexual question emerged as a subject of concentrated public debate coincided with the years of widespread political mobilization. In these years as well, themes that had earlier preoccupied professionals in the context of their own disciplinary concerns began to attract attention in settings open to a more general audience. Though many of the components of the sexual question drew on existing discursive models, the intensity of interest and the subject's heightened political charge were peculiar to the postrevolutionary decade.

The roots of the rhetorical crisis reached back into the 1890s. The political assertiveness of educated society—beginning with the liberation movement, radicalized by the mobilization of university youth, and culminating in the alliance with popular forces—spelled the end of an era of elite self-restraint. Toward the turn of the century, as students began openly to defy public authorities and highly placed men engaged in acts of deliberate insubordination, psychiatrists, pedagogues, and physicians analyzed the dangerous consequences of a repressive political regime in metaphors borrowed from the rhetoric of sexual science. They focused on the classroom both as a microcosm of the larger civic world and as a breeding ground for subservience and disaffection. Only a regime of disciplined rather than prohibited expression, they believed, could enlist the potentially disruptive energy of desire—as the current police order could not do—in the service of civic virtue.

[2]A. N. Bernshtein, *Voprosy polovoi zhizni v programme semeinogo i shkol'nogo vospitaniia* (Moscow, 1908), 5. For a similar statement, see Pavel Kokhmanskii, *Polovoi vopros: Razbor sovremennykh form polovykh otnoshenii* (Moscow, 1912), intro.

The revolution itself seemed to confirm this prediction. Sympathetic professionals, looking back, depicted the period of political confrontation as one in which libidinous impulses had shattered existing constraints but were effectively subordinated to the cause of constructing a new political order; in the heat of struggle, self-restraint had mastered aimless, volatile emotion. In the view of such observers, however, the retreat to the humdrum routine of legitimate political process from the explosive climax of December 1905 had reversed the process of sublimation: as the collective movement passed, people sought avenues of personal gratification. The erotic hunger that had been both stimulated and suppressed by the intolerant old regime and temporarily diverted by the revolution now emerged in all its force.

The sexually coded literature about 1905 and its unheroic aftermath reveals a deep anxiety not only about the unruly conduct of the lower classes but about the volatility apparent in the writers' own social world. The self-reflexivity of the "sexual question" is apparent in the preoccupation with male sexuality that characterized medical and pedagogical literature from the 1890s and through the revolution's decline. Attention to the development of male sexual control provided at once a metaphor for the maturation of political life and a program for civic intervention. In a kind of pedagogical analogy to Lenin's famous "spontaneity-consciousness" paradigm, rebellious schoolboys stood for the angry populace, prey to "elemental" urges (Lenin's untutored masses); university students, like organized workers, subordinated the power of mature but untested desire to the discipline of ideological direction; adults, finally, were capable of deliberate restraint, the self-denial and internalized control necessary if responsible citizens were to stay the long and ungratifying course of institutionalized political life or activists to lead the party.

The exclusive maleness of the terms in this developmental sequence underscores the revolution's failure to provoke images of disruptive female passion. The sexually colored anxiety about disorder in the schools and about what kind of knowledge stimulates desire and what kind keeps it in check did not concern women. It was aroused by visions not of popular rebellion but of upper-class disarray. The dangers of uncontrolled female sexuality took rhetorical precedence only when the mass movement had lost its momentum and social antagonisms no longer took organized form. Such contrasts indicate that the actual subject of pedagogical discourse was not a universal male sexuality. Rather, educators wished to train the nation's male cultural elite in the self-control necessary for civic responsibility: that selfless public devotion symbolized by the ability to inhabit the streets without succumbing to the lure of sensual gratification.

Prostitution had long represented the danger of pollution from the

social depths, of corruption from within the social body. Now, beyond the persistent concern to regulate and sanitize the supply side of this insidious exchange across class boundaries, a newly intensified interest in disciplining and purifying male demand developed. In the 1890s, adult men were the objects of individual case studies, and continence emerged as a moral and social ideal; then classrooms provided the occasion for physical exams, punitive interrogations, and instruction in sexual self-control; finally, as the political movement reached its height, universities served as laboratories for a sociology of sexual behavior. The results of sex surveys published after 1905 constituted a moral profile of the coming generation. As the political arena opened up, sexual discipline changed from a matter of personal comportment and individual therapy to a science of collective life.

In relation both to their inferiors and to themselves, the professionals' anxiety about sexual and social disorder focused on the problem of youthful insubordination, whether in the form of juvenile prostitution or of classroom chaos. The preoccupation with youth operated on two levels at once. In a practical sense, it recognized that young people had played a central role in the radical movement. By prompting concern over the future of national political life, the new generation offered its elders an occasion to exercise their professional expertise in the public interest. Teachers and physicians now looked for ways to influence and discipline rebellious children and young adults that conformed to the values they themselves wished to substitute for the principle of state coercion. On another plane, the revolt of youth stood metaphorically for adult society's own rebellion against the paternalist political regime that kept it too in a state of dependence. In that sense, this revolt provided observers with a point of identification for their own dilemma, rather than a foil against which to exercise their powers of control.

Sexual Prelude

If there was a moment when the sexual question first became a self-consciously defined cultural issue, it was in 1889, when the manuscript of Leo Tolstoy's provocative novella *The Kreutzer Sonata*—which condemned sexual passion even within marriage as corrupt and degrading—began to circulate among the cultivated elite.[3] The authorities did not grant permission for the tale's publication until 1891, when they

[3]My discussion relies on Peter Ulf Møller, *Postlude to "The Kreutzer Sonata": Tolstoj and the Debate on Sexual Morality in Russian Literature in the 1890s*, trans. John Kendal (Leiden, 1988).

finally sanctioned its inclusion in the thirteenth volume of the author's collected works, hoping thereby to limit its sale. Until then, the censors also restricted discussion of the work in the press. The text, the government insisted, was both offensive and dangerous, a challenge to respectability and religion in the crudeness of its language and in its assault on the moral basis of family life.

The nature of Tolstoy's sexual preoccupations and the notoriety of this particular work are well known. *The Kreutzer Sonata* soon achieved an extraordinary circulation, and its impact was felt throughout the literary and professional worlds. "In a few weeks," wrote Vasilii Rozanov, "it had stirred up all of Russia."[4] For two years a version of the manuscript passed from hand to hand and from city to city; it was recopied, lithographed, and read aloud to audiences assembled in private apartments. At the first such gathering in the fall of 1889, the text was read by the well-known legal activist and judge Anatolii Koni. A canvas by Grigorii Miasoedov, exhibited in 1893, depicted a group of men and women, ranging from youth to old age and including a panoply of Russia's most eminent cultural figures, listening intently as the story was read by a young man under the light of a shaded lamp in a plush bourgeois drawing room.[5] An epilogue written in 1890, further detailing Tolstoy's views, circulated in the same manner. Tolstoy received dozens of letters from readers and listeners, many of them women, describing the enormous impact of the work. By the time the text appeared in print, it was well known to the educated public, and even those who had missed the opening round could not avoid the heated debates that followed in the major newspapers and journals of the day.

For the first audiences, as the critic Peter Ulf Møller points out, the experience was intensified by the public circumstances in which it occurred and the lively discussions that ensued.[6] The setting of the tale's early reception thus echoed the structure of the story itself. Traveling by train, the narrator enters into a discussion of current sexual mores with the other people in his compartment. These chance companions represent a broad spectrum of social types: a modern woman intellectual and a lawyer, both of whom defend free love and divorce; an old merchant of traditional views; and a respectable though distraught gentleman called Pozdnyshev with a confession to make. This last man recounts to the narrator the story of his courtship, marriage, domestic

[4]V. V. Rozanov, *V mire neiasnogo i ne reshennogo* (St. Petersburg, 1904), 52. See also comments in S. F. Sharapov, ed., *Sushchnost' braka* (Moscow, 1901), 1.

[5]The picture is reproduced in Møller, *Postlude*, 98.

[6]Ibid., 96–97.

disillusionment, and finally murder of his wife on the suspicion of adultery. A crime of outraged honor, the court had decided, in setting Pozdnyshev free. Sex, even within marriage, Tolstoy made clear, demeaned both partners. In the grip of lust, the man created a wife who mirrored his own fantasies and desires, while she used her sexual charms in the war for personal domination. Not love but power was the issue at stake.

This tale of private passion, of sexual and domestic intimacy, is retailed to a stranger in a public setting both intimate and anonymous, just as the manuscript was read in worldly company, outside the family circle or the confines of the listener's own easy chair. The story, about the fatal consequences of male desire, is told from the husband's point of view to another man. Listening in, as they did in mixed audiences, real women intruded on this sexually exclusive exchange by writing privately to Tolstoy: some thanked him for bringing intimate subjects to public attention and cited their own domestic unhappiness in confirmation of his views; others objected to his dismal opinion of married love.[7] Once the discussion shifted from drawing rooms and personal letters to the printed page, however, almost all of the speakers were men.[8]

Even before the discussion issued into print, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, as text and cultural event, had become the touchstone for an unfolding debate on the "sexual question." It elicited literary and philosophical responses (from Anton Chekhov, Vladimir Solov'ev, and Vasilii Rozanov, to name a few) and attack from all sides: from spokesmen of 1860s radicalism, for denigrating the possibility of sexual equality and women's intellectual development and for seeking to solve sexual problems in personal rather than social terms; from the church, for disparaging the Christian sacrament of marriage and the value of procreation; from moralists who promoted premarital chastity but found the idea of total abstinence extreme; and later from modernist writers who celebrated beauty rather than didacticism in art and pleasure rather than virtue in personal life. Nearly twenty years after the manuscript first appeared, the feminist physician Mariia Pokrovskaia remembered the story as a call for male sexual continence, unions based on mutual respect rather than sensual desire, and sex for procreation only.[9]

If Pokrovskaia in 1908 somewhat distorted the story's message by

[7]On the letters of female correspondents, see ibid., 115–21. An indignant letter from a happily married woman is cited in V. A. Zhdanov, "Iz pisem k Tolstomu (Po materialam Tolstovskogo arkhiva)," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, no. 37–38 (1939): 384–86.

[8]Møller, *Postlude*, 117.

[9]M. I. Pokrovskaia, "Kreitserova Sonata," *Zhenskii vestnik*, no. 9 (1908): 193–96. No doubt because of its late date, this response is not mentioned in Møller.

mistaking its radical antisex position for Tolstoy's earlier, more limited endorsement of premarital restraint and his former celebration of women's procreative role, she did not err in emphasizing the theme of male sexual continence.[10] This preoccupation was not a personal quirk of either the feminist or the writer. It can be traced, at least since the 1860s, in the pedagogical and medical press, where it surfaced in connection with problems of sexual pathology (particularly masturbation), venereal disease, and the twin "evils" of abortion and artificial birth control.

Continence

Contrary to Tolstoy's impression, few Russian doctors endorsed sexual indulgence for either sex.[11] Indeed, they cited the novelist's authority in favor of male self-control,[12] which even Veniamin Tarnovskii, that ardent partisan of state-regulated prostitution, considered the ideal: "The young man who emerges victorious in the battle with his sexual desires not only protects his own health but strengthens his willpower and gains the moral independence necessary to succeed in the struggles of life."[13] To whatever extent moral purists dominated the Russian medical community, certainly those in favor of sexual abstinence made the loudest noise.[14] Their argument already held sway in

[10]See Møller, *Postlude*, 28–29; and John M. Kopper, "Tolstoy and the Narrative of Sex: A Reading of 'Father Sergius,' 'The Devil,' and 'The Kreutzer Sonata,'" in *In the Shade of the Giant: Essays on Tolstoy*, ed. Hugh McLean (Berkeley, Calif., 1989), 162. The 1890 Epilogue to the *Sonata* presented Tolstoy's views in their most explicit and extreme form, but they were not without contradiction. Complete abstinence, he said, was the Christian ideal. Even intercourse for purposes of procreation violated this ideal, especially since there were already more than enough children in the world. Tolstoy nevertheless took a somewhat pragmatic comfort in the thought that the ideal was no more in danger of being realized on this earth than other high-minded aspirations; see his "Posleslovie," in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii L'va Nikolaevicha Tolstogo*, 10: 107–17 (Moscow, 1913).

[11]Tolstoy assailed regulated prostitution as an incitement to debauch and said that doctors, the "priests of science," sent men to brothels to improve their health: *The Kreutzer Sonata*, in Leo Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilych and Other Stories* (New York, 1960), 170. He attacked contraception, supposedly promoted by medical men, as close to murder: "Posleslovie," 108.

[12]See, e.g., G. Rokov, "Bol'noi vopros vospitaniia," *Vestnik vospitaniia*, no. 7, pt. 1 (1902), 70; V. M. Bekhterev, *O polovom ozdorovlenii* (St. Petersburg, 1910), 5, 7.

[13]V. M. Tarnovskii, in *Trudy Vysochaishe razreshennogo s"ezda po obsuzhdeniiu mer protiv sifilisa v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1897), 2:15.

[14]For an overview of contemporary views in favor of continence, see A. V. Favorskii, "O polovom vozderzhanii," *Russkii zhurnal kozhnykh i venericheskikh boleznei*, no. 3 (1905): 257–61. Popular literature promoting abstinence includes L. A. Zolotarev, *Chto govorit nauka o polovoi potrebnosti: Populiarno-nauchnyi ocherk dlia roditelei, vospitatelei i uchashcheisia molodezhi* (Moscow, 1900); idem, *Gigiena supruzheskoi zhizni* (Moscow,

the 1890s, and they continued their agitation right up to the eve of World War I.[15] Some physicians proposed male continence as a way to stop the spread of venereal syphilis.[16] Others emphasized the unhealthy consequences of nonprocreative sex in all its forms, whether intercourse with prostitutes, masturbation, or the use of birth control. A doctor's pamphlet on the physical consequences of depravity blamed "civilized man" for degrading the sexual act by separating it from reproduction. Contraception, like masturbation, made people antisocial, morose, unhealthy.[17] Sex for mere pleasure was not only immoral but unnatural, insisted Anatolii Sabinin, a liberal Voronezh public health physician and prominent medical editor. Too much, not too little sex was dangerous for both women and men, he said: "Spermatorrhea, impotence, constipation in girls, abnormal menses, neurasthenia, neuroses and psychoses, and many other functional disturbances are the results of masturbation, early sexual activity, sexual excitement—in short, of physical and psychological depravity."[18] By contrast, "moderation, and even complete abstinence from sexual relations, does nothing but good," wrote Aleksandr Virenius, a St. Petersburg school physician and public health advocate, in the journal of the Ministry of Education. "The energy wasted on sexual release is well employed in other functions, especially those involving the brain."[19]

In 1905 a St. Petersburg physician named Liudvig Iakobzon set out

1901); P. P. Viktorov, *Gigiena i etika braka v sviazi s voprosom o polovoi zhizni iunoshestva* (Moscow, 1904); *Grekhi molodykh liudei: Nastol'naia kniga*, 3d ed. (Moscow, 1906); S. Zalesskii, *Polovoi vopros s tochki zreniia nauchnoi meditsiny: Gigienicheskii etiud* (Krasnoiarsk, 1909); *Nastol'naia kniga dlia molodykh suprugov s polnym izlozheniem pravil supruzheskoi zhizni* (Moscow, 1909).

[15]K. P. Sangailo, "Polovoi vopros i shkola," *Pedagogicheskii sbornik*, no. 3 (1913): 341; and M. I. Pokrovskaia, *O polovom vospitanii i samovospitanii* (St. Petersburg, 1913). I am grateful to Laurie Bernstein for allowing me to read her notes on Pokrovskaia's text before I was able to see it.

[16]E.g., P. I. Kovalevskii, "Sifilitiki, ikh neschast'e i spasenie," *Arkhiv psikhiatrii, neirologii i sudebnoi psikhopatologii*, no. 1 (1897): 65 (henceforth *Arkhiv psikhiatrii*); M. I. Pokrovskaia, *Vrachebno-politseiskii nadzor za prostitutsiei sposobstvuet vyrozhdeniiu naroda* (St. Petersburg, 1902), 84; V. M. Tarnovskii, *Bor'ba s sifilisom* (1897), cited in A. Kh. Sabinin, *Prostitutsiia: Sifilis i venericheskie bolezni* (St. Petersburg, 1905), 224; L. Ia. Iakobzon, "Kakimi merami sleduet borot'sia s rasprostraneniem venericheskikh boleznei sredi uchashchikhsia," *Russkii vrach*, no. 43 (1903): 1510.

[17]V. S. Iakshevich, *Plody razvrata* (St. Petersburg, 1904), 16; S. V. Filits, "Sovremennaia polovaia zhizn' s meditsinskoi tochki zreniia," *Meditsinskaia beseda*, no. 3 (1900): 78, 80. See also Sabinin, *Prostitutsiia*, 215; and Zolotarev, *Gigiena supruzheskoi zhizni*, 174, 177–78. For an example of popular scare literature on masturbation, see *Grekhi molodykh liudei*.

[18]Sabinin, *Prostitutsiia*, 215, 224.

[19]A. S. Virenius, "Polovoi vopros: Po povodu sochinenii prof. Avg. Forel', 'Polovoi vopros.' St. Petersburg, 1906," *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia*, May 1907, 82.

to demonstrate that chastity was the scientifically approved solution to the spread of venereal disease. To discover whether his colleagues agreed, he addressed personal letters to 207 Russian and German physicians, of whom only a few (including Veniamin Tarnovskii and the prominent psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin) bothered to reply—all, not surprisingly, in the affirmative.[20] The weak response suggests that Iakobzon may have exaggerated the extent to which his colleagues dwelt on the issue; nevertheless, his survey, which invoked the authority of foreign as well as domestic experts, was later cited as proof that continence was widely approved by medical authorities.[21]

Many Russian physicians combined insistence on male sexual temperance with a defense of women's rights.[22] In that respect, they indeed differed from the patriarchal Tolstoy. The most prolific exponent of the feminist single standard in Russia was the public health physician Mariia Pokrovskaia. In her tireless war against regulated prostitution, Pokrovskaia struck a Tolstoyan note in stressing the responsibility of clients rather than the moral turpitude of whores.[23] But unlike Tolstoy, she considered chastity the necessary condition for women's equality with men, not an attribute of old-fashioned patriarchal relations. Only

[20]L. Ia. Iakobzon, "Polovoe vozderzhanie pered sudom meditsiny," *Russkii vrach*, no. 18 (1905), 589.

[21]Cited in S. A. Ostrogorskii, "K voprosu o polovom sozrevanii (ego fiziologiia, patologiia i gigiena)," in *Trudy pervogo vserossiiskogo s"ezda detskikh vrachei v S.-Peterburge, s 27–31 dekabria 1912 goda*, ed. G. B. Konukhes (St. Petersburg, 1913), 660–61. Foreign authorities were often invoked in support of continence: A. S. Virenius, "Beseda po voprosu o bor'be s polovymi anomaliiami (onanizmom) uchashchikhsia, dlia roditelei i vospitatelei," *Meditsinskaia beseda*, no. 13–14 (1902): 388–89; V. N. Polovtseva, "Polovoi vopros v zhizni rebenka," *Vestnik vospitaniia*, no. 9, pt. 1 (1903): 27; A. G. Trakhtenberg, "Polovoi vopros v sem'e i shkole," *Voprosy pola*, no. 1 (1908): 30; idem, "Anomalii polovogo chuvstva v shkol'nom vozraste i sistema fizicheskogo vospitaniia," *Voprosy pola*, no. 4 (1908): 25–26; V. Ia. Kanel', "Polovoi vopros v zhizni detei," *Vestnik vospitaniia*, no. 4, pt. 1 (1909): 141, 147, 152, 160. Among the authors routinely cited were esp. Seved Ribbing, Hermann Rohleder, and a Professor Heim of the University of Zurich, plus August Forel and Richard von Krafft-Ebing. See S. Ribbing, *Om den sexuela hygienen och nägra af dess etiska konsequenses* (Lund, 1888) (trans. 1891); Hermann Rohleder, *Die Masturbation: Eine Monographie für Ärzte und Pädagogen* (Berlin, 1899) (trans. 1901). For Ribbing and Rohleder, see *Biographisches Lexikon der hervorragenden Ärzte der letzten fünfzig Jahre (1880–1930)*, ed. I. Fischer, 3d ed. (Munich, 1962), 2:1291, 1313–14. On Heim's "marvelous brochures," see M. I. Miagkov, "Nekotorye zadachi vospitaniia v sviazi s polovoi zhizn'iu chelovecheskogo organizma," in *Trudy pervogo s"ezda ofitserov-vospitatelei kadetskikh korpusov (22–31 dekabria 1908 g.)*, ed. P. V. Petrov (St. Petersburg, 1909), 322; also Zalesskii, *Polovoi vopros*, ii. For a bibliography of Russian and foreign sources, see N. A. Rubakin, *Sredi knig* (Moscow, 1913), 2:353–55, 424–25.

[22]E.g., Rokov, "Bol'noi vopros," 87–89; L. V. Slovtsova, "Polovoe vospitanie detei," in *Trudy pervogo vserossiiskogo zhenskogo s"ezda pri Russkom zhenskom obshchestve v S.-Peterburge 10–16 dekabria 1908 goda* (St. Petersburg, 1909), 675–78; Bekhterev, *O polovom ozdorovlenii*, 10, 17, 18.

[23]See Leo Tolstoy, *Resurrection* (1899); also his expression of sympathy for down-and-out prostitutes: "Tak chto zhe nam delat'" (1886), in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 17:33–37.

when people refrained from intercourse for purposes of enjoyment, she argued, would "the sexual enslavement of men and women, which . . . prevents the full development of human individuality, finally disappear."[24]

Pokrovskaia agreed with Tolstoy that men must learn sexual restraint, starting at the earliest possible age, for she believed that passion once awakened was hard to control.[25] She differed, however, in her opinion of women's role in the moral revolution. According to Tolstoy, the modern, freethinking, educated woman—depicted in *The Kreutzer Sonata* as smoking cigarettes, wearing a "mannish coat," and defending divorce—betrayed the true calling of her sex. She was part of the same depraved social world in which other women bared their shoulders and prostituted their drawing room charms for the sake of wealthy matches. The only excuse for sex (and that a feeble one), in the novelist's opinion, was the production of children; the ideal marriage embodied a chaste companionship in which the wife devoted herself to domestic affairs.[26] But Pokrovskaia approved of the modern woman who shouldered public concerns. In 1908 she told the feminist congress meeting in St. Petersburg that women must "act in concert to obliterate the conditions that turn young men into beasts": in private by educating their sons, in public by ridding the street of prostitutes and pornography.[27] Where Tolstoy thought a return to traditional moral standards was the only way to save fallen women and saw the exercise of male self-control as the key to this social rebirth,[28] Pokrovskaia argued for practical reforms, implemented with women's help, for the benefit of women: society must provide poor women with work, education, and welfare services to keep them off the streets and out of the brothels. Though she did not hesitate to blame men for the problem of disorderly desire, she could not leave the solution to them. Indeed, her confidence in men's capacity for self-restraint seemed to diminish with the years. In 1902 she had insisted that sex education aimed at young men, not medical inspection, was the key to stopping the spread of venereal disease. By 1908 she had shifted the responsibility to women's shoulders; their emancipation, she argued, depended on their "having the deciding voice in regulating sexual relations."[29]

[24]See M. I. Pokrovskaia, "Prostitutsiia i bespravie zhenshchin," *Zhenskii vestnik*, no. 10 (1907): 225–31; idem, "Kreitserova Sonata," 195. On the need for moral restraint, see her "Sovremennyi erotizm s fiziologicheskoi tochki zreniia," *Voprosy pola*, no. 4 (March 23, 1908): 30–32. Though Pokrovskaia disapproved of sex for pleasure, like many of her medical colleagues, she defended women's right to abortion; see chap. 9 below.

[25]M. I. Pokrovskaia, "Bor'ba s prostitutsiei," *Zhurnal Russkogo obshchestva okhraneniia narodnogo zdraviia*, no. 4 (1900): 425–27.

[26]See Tolstoi, "Posleslovie."

[27]M. I. Pokrovskaia, "Kak zhenshchiny dolzhny borot'sia s prostitutsiei," in *Trudy pervogo vserossiiskogo zhenskogo s"ezda*, 278–79.

[28]Tolstoi, "Tak chto zhe nam delat'?" 33–37.

As time wore on, Pokrovskaia resorted more often to biological arguments in the defense of sexual restraint, enlisting the latest scientific language in the feminist cause. "The single sexual standard," she wrote in 1910, "by restraining the sexual instinct . . . will free our progeny from the hereditary burden imposed by today's sexual licentiousness. Future generations will be physically and psychologically healthier."[30] Her rhetoric in 1912 was stronger still: "Early sexual activity is largely responsible for the fact that the vast majority of our male students are nervous, debilitated, sickly, and suffer from various mental abnormalities. When they mature, they become veritable beasts and moral monstrosities!"[31] Until the war she continued to denounce the "abnormality" of sexual mores, blaming "benighted" sexual attitudes (by which she meant intercourse without the desire to conceive) for the prevalence of abortion and infanticide and for the deplorable number of materially deprived and genetically defective children.[32]

The Private Vices of Men and Boys

Personal behavior, in such arguments, had enormous power to shape the social body, to alter the quality of public life. Responsible mothers and sexually continent men held the key to civic virtue. This conviction led physicians and educators to focus on the moral and physical health of those young men in a position to heed their advice or to suffer their intervention. Early training, they believed, would produce the kind of adults who would hew to the standards of sexual hygiene deemed essential to the national welfare. The scrutiny and schooling of individual male conduct was not intended for the uneducated masses, which had at best taken only the first steps toward enlightened self-regulation under the intelligentsia's careful guidance but in general still endured the joint tutelage of family, community, and police. Rather, the professionals' interest in moral discipline sharpened as educational opportunities expanded, cities grew, and political activity spilled out of institutional

[29]Pokrovskaia, *Vrachebno-politseiskii nadzor*, 84–85. In the same period, however, she called for women to lead the fight against regulated prostitution, saying men's "protection" had gotten them nowhere: *O zhertvakh obshchestvennogo temperamenta* (St. Petersburg, 1902), 48. Cf. idem, "Kreitserova Sonata," 195.

[30]M. I. Pokrovskaia, "Edinaia polovaia nravstvennost'," *Zhenskii vestnik*, no. 4 (1910): 92. She believed that healthy sex (intercourse with a loved one for purposes of procreation) would improve the genetic condition of the race: see Pokrovskaia, *O polovom vospitanii*, 30–31.

[31]M. I. Pokrovskaia, "O prostitutsii maloletnikh," *Zhenskii vestnik*, no. 10 (1912): 196.

[32]M. I. Pokrovskaia, "K voprosu ob aborte," *Zhenskii vestnik*, no. 4 (1914): 105.

Dr. B, of a slightly earlier generation, takes a more optimistic view. Condemning traditional, patriarchal sexual mores, which have directly affected his own life, he believes that sexual attitudes have improved since his mother's time. Born in 1817, she had had her first child at age fifteen and, after producing five more, died of consumption at twenty-three. His own initiation at age twelve he attributes to the then prevalent (by implication, unfortunate) attitude that children had active sexual desires. As a young man he avoided prostitutes but had many affairs, estimating that he engaged in sexual intercourse a total of 2,000 times between the ages of twelve and thirty-five, a number he does not consider extreme. Nevertheless, he warns that young men must be trained to curb their desires: "The intense pleasure achieved by sexual intercourse is so deceptive and enticing," he writes, "that it often paralyzes good sense and silences reason, making the person an unwilling and obedient slave of his sexual passions."[54]

These two confessions in scientific guise justify their narcissism in social terms but retain their very personal focus. Dr. B's article appeared just as his professional peers were collectively about to join a sustained political challenge to the autocratic regime in the form of the liberation movement. The entire decade 1900–1910 was one in which professional discourse was particularly freighted with social and political implications. Far from extinguishing interest in such private affairs as the sex lives of educated men, the revolution put Dr. B's call for systematic inquiry on the professional agenda. Questions of social order, of the relationship between public and private, reason and passion, surged to the forefront of scientific discourse, intensifying and transforming the existing public interest in sex.

Schoolboy Sex

It may be no accident that the medical and educational journals began to strengthen their focus on the regulation of sexual behavior in the schools after student unrest surfaced in 1899.[55] While some writers ruminated on the state of schoolboys' moral health, other researchers planned systematic inquiries into the sexual habits of university students. The dominant theme, emphasized with even greater insistence after the revolution of 1905, was the need to reconstitute the operation of social discipline: to harness rather than repress the natural forces at

[54]"Lichnaia statistika," 154.

[55]For a detailed examination of the origins of the student movement, see Samuel D. Kassow, *Students, Professors, and the State in Tsarist Russia* (Berkeley, Calif., 1989), chap. 3.

work in the social body, to engender responsibility rather than obedience. Schoolboys and college men did not, however, simply represent successive stages of personal maturation; they also symbolized two moments in the development of political consciousness. Broken windowpanes and abandoned desks reflected the spontaneity of libidinous release, the joy of flouting authority and evading discipline. Demonstrations and political meetings, by contrast, demonstrated the triumph of ideology over spontaneity: older students put the eros of defiance to constructive work. If revolution was inspired by passion, it was completed by means of intellectual control.

Pedagogical literature had already identified the civic microcosm in the classroom before 1905. The image was sharply delineated in the writing of the St. Petersburg physician Aleksandr Virenius.[56] His 1901 essay "Sexual Depravity in School-Age Children," which appeared in *Vrach* when he was almost seventy years old, remained the standard citation for at least another decade. A proponent of what he considered enlightened, scientific attitudes toward sex, Virenius warned that constraint alone could not contain the latent force of the schoolboys' repressed desires. His anxious description of the orderly classroom seething with longing and revolt can well be read as political allegory:

> Take the young man [who] approximates the ideal of the well-disciplined average student. On the surface everything seems fine, but inside, a battle rages between desires, impulses, and passions on the one hand and the demands of duty and school discipline on the other. The imagination looks for ways to free itself, if only for an hour or moment, from the oppressive mood, the melancholy, regimented [*kazennaia*] life; to experience something vibrant or enticing. . . . Since the school environment fails to satisfy young nature's needs . . . , the field is open for all kinds of enthusiasms, for any temptation or excuse to forget the habitual, loathsome daily round. The students' physical and moral oppression makes them yearn for excitement, for artificial ways to revive their depressed vital forces.[57]

[56]Professional information in *Rossiiskii meditsinskii spisok* (St. Petersburg, 1890); for membership in the Russian Society for the Protection of Public Health, see E. I. Lotova, *Russkaia intelligentsia i voprosy obshchestvennoi gigieny: Pervoe gigienicheskoe obshchestvo v Rossii* (Moscow, 1962), 21.

[57]A. S. Virenius, "Polovaia raspushchennost' v shkol'nom vozraste," *Vrach*, no. 41 (1901): 1261–65. Examples of late citation: Slovtsova, "Polovoe vospitanie detei," 675; Bekhterev, *O polovom ozdorovlenii*, 4. Virenius had earlier published the basic ideas of this article in *Mediko-pedagogicheskii vestnik* (1886); they had been popularized by L. A. Zolotarev in his pamphlets on sexual conduct: *Chto govorit nauka*, 56; and *Gigiena supruzheskoi zhizni*, 40.

Virenius faulted the school regime for forcing all boys into a single mold in disregard of individual desires, for wanting young children to act like compliant adults, and for undermining their vitality by needless intrusion into their private affairs. He recommended a less rigorous system, with more free time and less supervision, which would encourage independence, creativity, and "the natural development of body and mind." The political order he envisaged in miniature allowed for the autonomous self-expression of subordinate members, individual difference (*lichnye osobennosti*) rather than bureaucratic (*kazennaia*) uniformity, and freedom from the scrutiny and control of authorities. This liberal ideal would foster "naturalness," he said, allowing children to be childlike and pure, free of artificial stimulants and unawakened to sexual desire, whereas current practices produced moral and physical "depravity."[58]

Depravity not only was a moral problem, in the physician's opinion, but had consequences for public health and the national economy. Elsewhere he listed "infertility, the birth of weak and sickly children, a declining birth rate, rising mortality, and the spread of syphilis" as "the horrible, indeed fatal, consequences of sexual depravity."[59] But if the repressive old order fostered unhealthy habits by constraining desire, modern life produced equally harmful results by allowing desire unfettered rein. An enemy of daily comforts and sensual indulgence of any kind (from good wine to fast cars), Virenius also distrusted the commercial world of public pleasures: not merely brothels, but popular entertainment, bazaars, fairs, sporting events, even cheap art were bad for the health.[60] Dirty books, operettas, cigarettes, and alcohol were "agents that pervert[ed] human nature."[61] Neither the regiment nor the pavement provided the social context for the "natural" regime of Virenius's imagination.

Such anxiety about the perils of modernity recalls similar fears among Western advocates of moral purity. The latter, however, were not obliged to combine their critique of the marketplace and of the commercial mobilization of desire with an assault on premodern forms of discipline, as Virenius was compelled to do. Hostility toward the repressive classroom regime was likewise joined with ambivalence about the corrosive effects of modern culture in the doctor's interpretation of schoolboy masturbation, a vice he depicted as both source and symptom of the weakening of collective ties and the growing power of

[58]Virenius, "Polovaia raspushchennost'," 1264–65.

[59]A. S. Virenius, "Zhiznennye soblazny i bor'ba s nimi s tochki zreniia gigieny i pedagogii," pt. 2, *Pedagogicheskii sbornik*, no. 12 (1904): 477.

[60]For an extended tirade against "the temptations of daily life," see ibid., pt. 1, *Pedagogicheskii sbornik*, no. 11 (1904): 417–19.

[61]Virenius, "Beseda," 377.

selfish individualism. The masturbator, Virenius wrote, "easily ruptures the bonds of love and friendship, soon cools to his intimates and becomes a vicious egotist, ready to sacrifice everything and everyone to his own individual self." In detailing the habit's ill effects, Virenius merely repeated the commonplaces of the current medical literature, asserting that natural, healthy sex occurred among adults only for purposes of procreation and that premature sexual activity of any kind depleted the organism of energy it needed for other ends. Healthy adults, unlike those who succumbed to the seductions of the kiosk and café, were those who moderated their appetites. Healthy children had no sexual desire at all. Those who showed signs of excitation or sexual interest should be encouraged to feel repulsion at everything to do with sex, until the time when mature desire would lead them to engage in measured reproductive activity.[62]

To determine what the little subjects of schoolroom autocracy were up to, the doctor himself reached into their schoolboy pants and emerged with very contradictory findings. The truly natural state that he contrasted favorably to the distortions imposed by civilized life was nevertheless quite unpleasant: sweat and secretions gave a boy's penis an acrid smell, Virenius reported, and the residue of farts made the underwear less appetizing still. Genitals were dirty; better to keep one's hands away except for washing, "if not every day, then at least two to three times a week . . . with cold tap water, and occasionally with eau de cologne, spirits, or vodka." The civilized penis was a clean one, the product of scientifically prescribed intervention. By contrast, too much touching (unregulated intervention, reflecting moral and cultural depravity) altered the very face of nature: the organ itself grew in size; the scrotum withered. Good boys had small organs, Virenius announced; the cultured man's ideal penis was small, almost atrophied, in proportion to his restrained sexual urge.[63]

Masturbation appears in this account as the intimate equivalent of the world of commercial delights in that both substituted pleasure for production. However, Virenius blamed the supposed prevalence of the vice as much on the suffocating rigidity of the traditional order as on the

[62]Ibid., 380–82, 384, 386–87. Other contemporary articles on the harm of masturbation and the need for sex education include V. M. Bekhterev, "O vneshnykh priznakakh privychnogo onanizma u podrostkov muzhskogo pola," *Obozrenie psikhiatrii*, no. 9 (1902): 658–62; A. A. Prais, "Polovaia zhizn' uchashchikhsia," *Meditsinskaia beseda*, no. 23 (1902): 665–71; Rokov, "Bol'noi vopros"; Polovtseva, "Polovoi vopros."

[63]Virenius, "Beseda," 374, 383–84; idem, "Polovaia raspushchennost'," 1262. The notion that sexual acts distorted the shape of sexual organs was upheld by some forensic experts in the West and shared by some, but not all, Russian physicians. On the enlarged penis, see Tarnovskii, *Polovaia zrelost'*, 43. V. M. Bekhterev, by contrast, doubted that the appearance of the penis was a useful guide to sexual practice, though he admitted that perhaps the head might become enlarged: "O vneshnykh priznakakh," 658–62.

unstable enticements of the new. His 1902 study of masturbation in the lower schools appeared in the journal of the politically progressive Voronezh public health society, which stood at the forefront of social medicine's fight against the repressive aspects of the tsarist regime.[64] His tirade against the evils of solitary pleasure was, in fact, part of his activist posture. Convinced that social attitudes represented biological states, Virenius concluded that the selfish were physically frail and the generous healthy and robust.[65] In exhausting bodily energy, masturbation affected the very way in which society operated; in curbing it, the physician could affect the tenor of public life. Virenius's discussion of masturbation thus included a vision of the good society. The onanist's morbid self was not the ideal individuality he wished to free from the rigid constraints of the current pedagogical regime but an antisocial self-involvement produced by those very same external constraints and encouraged by the open market in promiscuous pleasure. What was needed, Virenius believed, was not grudging obedience to external authority but enlightened self-control based on the latest scientific information, which also provided an antidote to the dubious attractions of disease-ridden streets and mass-produced fantasies.

The doctor's scholarly 1902 article shared its publication date with Leonid Andreev's controversial short story "In the Fog," which likewise demonstrated the perils of ignorance and attracted public attention to the subject of adolescent sexuality. Tormented by the first urgings of sexual desire, the story's young hero collects dirty drawings and sleeps with a prostitute, who leaves him infected with syphilis. Unable to discuss his feelings at home, with no one to confide in and no expert advice, he fears the disease is incurable. Lonely, despairing, filled with guilt and self-loathing, he wanders the sinister, fogbound sidewalks of St. Petersburg until he encounters yet another prostitute, as miserable as he. After a desperate and humiliating brawl, he ends by stabbing her to death and killing himself. Such tragedies, Andreev suggested, were the fruits of petty-bourgeois respectability, which substituted prudishness and silence for the refreshing openness that science and literature—socially sanctioned forms of plain-speaking—could provide.[66]

Questions of Class

Like Andreev's story, almost all medical discussions of sexual mal-

[64]Virenius, "Beseda," 373–89. On the journal's politics, see Lotova, *Russkaia intelligentsia*, 36–37.

[65]Virenius, "Zhiznennye soblazny," pt. 1, *Pedagogicheskii sbornik*, no. 11 (1904), 412–13.

[66]L. N. Andreev, "V tumane," *Zhurnal dlia vsekh*, no. 12 (1902): 1411–50.

aise drew conclusions about the cultural environment. Virenius believed that the habit of masturbation transcended class lines but nevertheless explained its causes in social terms. Not everyone bore the same relation to the material and cultural luxuries of modern city life: the behavior of wealthy boys, Virenius argued, reflected the corrupt attitudes of their social milieu; the same practice among poor boys should be understood as the consequence of deprivation, of "unfavorable hygienic conditions," as well as lack of guidance at home and at school. He believed, however, that communities that retained "the strict [patriarchal] customs of the past" maintained standards of sexual chastity that also met the demands of modern hygiene.[67] Thus, although ignorance might sometimes be the origin of vice, culture (or privilege) was not always a guarantee of virtue. The sanitary physician Abraham Prais told the Smolensk medical society in 1902 that education itself was the root of upper-class unhappiness and moral failure (Andreev had depicted his young hero as a student with serious intellectual interests). The common folk, Prais attested, adhered to firm moral standards and avoided sexual excess.[68] One educator went so far as to deny that lower-class youth masturbated at all.[69]

In claiming that the comfortable life doomed privileged boys to sexual self-indulgence, Virenius was not original. His colleagues all extolled the healthy effects of hard work (or, as a substitute, sport),[70] deplored the late age of marriage among the upper classes,[71] and denounced the artificial excitement generated by the leisure and eroticized social customs of the well-to-do and the nouveau riche.[72]Tolstoy

[67]Virenius, "Polovaia raspushchennost'," 1261; idem, "Beseda," 376–77.

[68]Prais, "Polovaia zhizn'," 665–66.

[69]Rokov, "Bol'noi vopros," 66. Similar views on lower-class restraint were expressed by socialist writers in Germany in the same period: R. P. Neuman, "The Sexual Question and Social Democracy in Imperial Germany," *Journal of Social History* 7:3 (1974): 274–75. Official investigations of St. Petersburg workers in the 1860s, by contrast, noted that both men and women practiced masturbation: G. I. Arkhangel'skii, "Zhizn' v Peterburge po statisticheskim dannym," *Arkhiv sudebnoi meditsiny i obshchestvennoi gigieny*, no. 2, sec. 3 (1869): 72; henceforth *Arkhiv sudebnoi meditsiny*.

[70]See, e.g., Filits, "Sovremennaia polovaia zhizn'," 79; Trakhtenberg, "Anomalii," 28–29. Favorskii ("O polovom vozderzhanii," 257) offered the physiological explanation that vigorous activity kept the blood circulating and prevented it from accumulating in the genital organs. Zhbankov thought hard physical labor would syphon off the excess energy and consume the extra time essential to the elite's pursuit of sensual pleasure (particularly in perverse forms): "Izuchenie voprosa o polovoi zhizni uchashchikhsia," pt. 1, *Prakticheskii vrach*, no. 27 (1908): 471–72. The idea of work as the antidote to sexual overexcitement was a popular one; see the journalistic A. I. Matiushenskii, *Polovoi rynok i polovye otnosheniia* (St. Petersburg, 1908), 118; also Il'ia Nakashidze, "Bor'ba s nizshimi instinktami cheloveka. K voprosu o polovom samovospitanii," in *Polovoe vospitanie: Sbornik statei, sostavlennykh uchiteliami, roditeliami i vospitateliami* (Moscow, 1913), 82.

[71]Bekhterev, *O polovom ozdorovlenii*, 17.

[72]Kanel', "Polovoi vopros," 154–56, 162–63; Filits, "Sovremennaia polovaia zhizn'," 79. In a journalistic vein, see V. S. Iakshevich, *Plody razvrata* (St. Petersburg, 1904), 7–9 (on *meshchanstvo*).

had endowed his domestic fable with the same class dimension. The guilty husband in *The Kreutzer Sonata* identifies himself as "a landowner and a graduate of the university, and . . . a marshal of the gentry." His morality is that of his social milieu: "Before my marriage," he tells his listener, "I lived as everyone does, that is, dissolutely; and while living dissolutely I was convinced, like everybody in our class, that I was living as one has to."[73]

The tendency in the professional literature was to depict the sexual habits of the uneducated as natural, and the closer to nature, the more natural. Peasant men might behave in unrefined ways, one educator explained in 1902, and use language too explicit for cultivated circles; peasant women might have more intimate knowledge than upper-class women of the biological facts of life. But in comparison with the artificial and hypocritical attitudes of the educated, he was convinced, the peasantry exhibited a moral purity based on physical strength and well-being, a realistic understanding of the opposite sex, and a relaxed and natural relation to sexual experience which represented an uncorrupted human ideal.[74]

Not everyone accepted this picture. The class hierarchy of virtue in its Tolstoyan version was challenged, for example, by the famous writer and country doctor Anton Chekhov in his 1891 short story "Peasant Women" ("Baby"). Conceived as a reply to *The Kreutzer Sonata*, the tale depicts the same love triangle of wronged husband, unfaithful wife, and the lover who disappears from the picture. This time, however, the principals are peasants, and the sexual infidelity cannot reasonably be construed as a figment of the husband's imagination. It is not the power of desire that destroys human life and happiness, in Chekhov's view, but the weight of conventional norms and patriarchal relations. The wife's mistake, as he tells it, is not the betrayal of her marriage vows but her belief in the legitimacy of true love. It is her lover who soon tires of the affair and urges the woman to return to her husband. A mild-tempered man, the husband is willing to take her back. In contrast to Pozdnyshev's wife, who denies having been unfaithful, the peasant woman boldly insists on the moral value of her transgression. When she resists her husband's and her lover's urging to resume her proper place, the two men resort to the traditional male expedient of violence, beating her soundly in turn. As the husband then repents his violent deed, the lover lectures the woman on her conjugal duty. When the husband suddenly dies, she is accused of his murder, and the lover testifies against her: she "had a mind of her own" (*s*

[73]Tolstoy, *Kreutzer Sonata*, 167–68.
[74]Rokov, "Bol'noi vopros," 65–69.

kharakterom byla), he says, and did not love her man. On her way to hard labor, the woman dies of a fever; the lover survives to tell the tale.[75]

Certain structural features distinguish the two stories. The narration reported in Chekhov's version once again constitutes an exchange between men, just as the plot itself involves a contest between males. The ex-lover (who, unlike the husband, is in a position to know "what really occurred") recounts his story to an innkeeper. But the innkeeper's womenfolk also listen in and offer their own dissenting commentary on the tale. They, like the details of the story itself and its title, shift the focus to the subject of female rather than male sexuality. The setting of the interior narration in "Peasant Women" is less claustrophobic, more communal, than the dark train compartment in which Pozdnyshev tells his tale to one other traveler. In that confined and individualistic frame, the upper-class male's narrative voice exercises the sole power of interpretation. By contrast, the peasant male's recital gets interrupted, even challenged, as the women mutter among themselves.

In switching the class venue, Chekhov has altered the meaning of the tale. In the first place, he questions the elite's supposed monopoly on sexual immorality. The common folk, in his view, not only are subject to the same passions but are no less capable than their betters of the cruelest hypocrisy and the most brutal conformity. Some (like the woman in this case) are able to rise above moral convention and defend their personal rights, but these few are swiftly brought to their knees—if not to their graves—by the force of communal censure. Second, the author insists that women are no strangers to true sexual passion. Chekhov's focus on peasant rather than upper-class women may have made it easier for him to argue that men are not so much ensnared by the power of female seduction as women are oppressed by the legal and physical power of men.

Chekhov was not the only one to question the purportedly edifying effects of impoverished living. At least one trained observer of children's sexual habits, the physician and Social Democrat Veniamin Kanel', suggested that the apparent virtues of country life might be the result not of old-style patriarchy or nature's beneficent effects but of material deprivation: hard work and poor nutrition might diminish sexual opportunity and desire.[76] Dmitrii Zhbankov, the zemstvo physician

[75]A. P. Chekhov, "Baby" (1891), in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, 7:340–51 (Moscow, 1977).
[76]Kanel', "Polovoi vopros," 151. On Kanel''s radical politics, see S. I. Mitskevich, *Zapiski vracha-obshchestvennika (1888–1918)*, 2d ed., rev. (Moscow, 1969), 230; Lotova, *Russkaia intelligentsia*, 136; John F. Hutchinson, "'Who Killed Cock Robin?': An Inquiry into the Death of Zemstvo Medicine," in *Health and Society in Revolutionary Russia*, ed. Susan Gross Solomon and John F. Hutchinson (Bloomington, Ind., 1990), 8.

from Kostroma, had noted that when village men left for long periods of work in the cities, their womenfolk were obliged to assume more taxing agricultural labor than was usually demanded of wives. He blamed the increased work load for the women's loss of sexual appetite and interrupted menstruation.[77] The example from Kostroma showed the effects of change rather than tradition, but poverty, not morality, was at work in both cases. Even industrial labor might have the same result. A 1902 article on female "anaphrodesia" explained, for example, that "a woman exhausted by factory work, living under the heavy burden of pauperism, finally becomes impotent [*impotentnaia*], no matter how young she may be." Believing that agricultural tasks were lighter, this author suggested that if the woman returned to "her native [*rodnaia*] circumstances or to housekeeping [*domovodstvo*]," her sexual functioning would return.[78]

After 1905, however, the tendency in the literature was to define the pathology of working-class sexuality in opposite terms: not as suppressed desire but as disorderly, promiscuous family life, precocious childhood sex, and adult sexual indulgence. This critical view of working-class mores as the product of urban experience did not disturb the earlier association between peasants and the virtues of nature. Rather, the problem of sexual indiscipline among the lower classes emerged as part of a sharpened concern with the horrors of city life: a perceived increase in crime and in the virulence of prostitution. Though inhabited largely by the poor and uneducated, just as the countryside was, cities represented modernity, luxury, and cultural sophistication. As the urban lower classes became more of a social problem, they acquired the taint of upper-class vice. But distinctions were still made. Depravity in the personal sense—as a failure of self-control, not a social pathology—remained the province of pedagogues concerned with producing a disciplined elite.

Revolution in the Classroom

For physicians such as Virenius and Pokrovskaia, who strove to protect public health and ensure public virtue by training young boys to early sexual restraint, the revolution only made their task more compelling. The school had always been a political instrument, whether in the hands of education ministers eager to limit social mobility and restrict access to cultural goods or in the plans of war ministers interested in military reform or under the auspices of zemstvo representatives who hoped to improve local welfare or in the dreams of radicals who wished to inspire revolt. In the professional literature published after 1905 the schoolroom figured both metaphorically and practically: first, as an analogue of the political order; second, as an arena for intervention by professionals bent on recasting public habits and preparing themselves (through their progeny) for a more responsible role in a restructured political life.

The revolution showed that traditional authorities had lost their grip on the social energy so tightly contained by the police regime. In 1901 Virenius had warned against the dangerous consequences of repressing desire by external means, of preferring coercion to self-discipline. The thirst for excitement he had perceived under the students' surface compliance turned into overt rebellion once controls were relaxed. When the repressive order collapsed, students of all ages entered the thick of the conflict. Universities and secondary schools became centers of political ferment; teenagers helped build barricades; schoolchildren broke windowpanes. In part, youngsters identified the older generation with the school's oppressive disciplinary regime. In part, they imitated their politically mobilized elders: pupils in the early grades played at student and Cossack, formed their own right-wing anti-Semitic bands, sang revolutionary songs.[79]

As Vasilii Rozanov put it in 1906, "Revolution is almost entirely the work of youth, in both its poetic and its physical dimension. Revolution can be characterized in two words: youth has arrived."[80] During the revolution, reported one educator in 1907, the monitors of order had released their hold or rejected their mandate: "Normal studies were interrupted; parents had no time for their children, teachers even less; the authorities lost their heads. . . . In a word, chaos reigned in the schools." It was then that the frustrated charges took their opportunity for revenge: "Everything that thrives on boredom, idleness, dullness, and malice, which had long been contained by the corporal's stick—all shot to the surface. To everyone's horror, pranksters erupted on all sides, like criminals released from prison after an earthquake or fire."[81] The violence unleashed by the disarray of established authority, he concluded, echoing Virenius's warnings of six years before, demonstrated

[77] D. N. Zhbankov, *Bab'ia storona: Statistiko-etnograficheskii ocherk* (Kostroma, 1891), 91. This idea is repeated in "K voprosu o polovykh snosheniiakh," 12. See Barbara Engel, "The Woman's Side: Male Outmigration and the Family Economy in Kostroma Province," in *The World of the Russian Peasant: Post-Emancipation Culture and Society*, ed. Ben Eklof and Stephen P. Frank (Boston, 1990), 71.

[78] V. M. Burlakov, "Ob anafrodizii zhenshchin," *Meditsinskaia beseda*, no. 13–14 (1902): 392.

[79] S. Zolotarev, "Deti revoliutsii," *Russkaia shkola*, no. 3 (1907): 1–23.

[80] V. V. Rozanov, *Kogda nachal'stvo ushlo* (St. Petersburg, 1910), 345.

[81] Zolotarev, "Deti revoliutsii," 6. For the rebellious classroom as the emblem of revolution, see also Rozanov, *Kogda nachal'stvo ushlo*, iii–iv.

production of men with the character needed to keep themselves in check. In the eyes of sober pedagogues worried about the effects of unregulated male passion, women of their own social class did not represent the threat of erotic enticement but offered another kind of prophylactic—along with the dispassion of science—in the fight against male depravity. In this conviction, Mariia Pokrovskaia was not alone.

Most physicians and educators favored coeducation and believed that the sexual instruction of women would encourage their interest in maternity and prepare them for the moral tasks it entailed.[101] The neglect of motherhood on the part of modern young women figured in some popular texts as an analogue to masturbation among young men: both were deviations that substituted selfish desire—pleasure without responsibility to others—for the rigors of social obligation.[102] Women's equality, seen as the necessary condition for increasing their disciplinary influence on public life through private intervention, was not infrequently a plank in the professionals' platform of moral reform.[103] Mothers raised the future generations upon which society's moral and even biological well-being relied; hence, Bekhterev argued, "[women's] equality is at the heart of the sexual question."[104] Professionals thus helped articulate a notion of modern domesticity governed by scientific precepts, similar to the one that had evolved in the West, which would replace the old-style patriarchal family and the paternalistic administrative regime as a primary instrument of social discipline.

Sex Surveys

How ready was the younger generation to shoulder the burdens of public life, with its rapidly expanding opportunities? How well had respectable mothers succeeded in raising morally responsible men? These were the questions that prompted the medical profession's most important representative organization, the Pirogov Society, to sponsor a series of four investigations into the sexual conduct of university students

[101]On the moral role of mothers, see Virenius, "Zhiznennye soblazny," pt. 2, 484–85.

[102]For the pejorative view on "the contemporary young woman," see Iakshevich, *Plody razvrata*, 11–14.

[103]Polovtseva, "Polovoi vopros," 18; E. P., "Opyt osvedomleniia v polovom voprose devochki i mal'chika," *Vestnik vospitaniia*, no. 3, pt. 1 (1908): 118; Trakhtenberg, "Polovoi vopros," 29–31; Rokov, "Bol'noi vopros," 74, 82–83, 87–89; Kanel', "Polovoi vopros," 166; Bekhterev, *O polovom ozdorovlenii*, 14, 18; A. S. Virenius, "Period polovogo razvitiia v antropologicheskom, pedagogicheskom i sotsiologicheskom otnoshenii," *Russkaia shkola*, no. 12 (1902): 123; Slovtsova, "Polovoe vospitanie detei," 677–78; Bernshtein, *Voprosy polovoi zhizni*, 14.

[104]Bekhterev, *O polovom ozdorovlenii*, 18.

in the years leading to and following the revolution of 1905, precisely at the height of the society's own involvement in the political movement.[105] Three of these surveys (in Kharkhov, Moscow, and Iuriev) were conducted between 1902 and 1905; findings were announced at the Pirogov congresses of 1904 and 1907, both highly politicized gatherings.[106] The results of the fourth study (Tomsk, 1907), revealed in 1910, offered a retrospective interpretation of the link between private life and political behavior, between sexual morality and revolutionary mobilization.[107]

These larger issues grew out of the investigators' central preoccupation with the problem of venereal disease and its connection to prostitution. The sex surveys represented the obverse of the numerous public health studies of prostitutes: they were the first attempts to chart the male side of the commercial sexual equation. Respectable women were not at issue in these projects. Physicians still had virtually no systematic knowledge of female sexuality that did not relate to prostitution.[108] Some effort was finally made to include women in the Pirogov Society's overall scheme, but it came to very little. The Tomsk survey extended its research to female students (10 percent of respondents), but their answers were not mentioned in the published report.[109] Also in 1907, the Pirogov congress formed a committee to design a questionnaire for women. Among the committee's female members were four physicians, two schoolteachers, a representative of the Union for Women's Equality, and the popular novelist Anastasiia Verbitskaia. All the men were physicians, including Dmitrii Zhbankov, the well-known advocate of community medicine and women's education and a member of the Pirogov Society's governing board. The questions were ultimately distributed to over 5,000 female students.[110]

The results of the women's survey were never compiled, however. The project was terminated by the police for reasons not indicated in

[105]See Ia. Kh. Falevich, "Itogi tomskoi studencheskoi polovoi perepisi: Doklad, chitannyi 18 fevralia 1910 g. na zasedanii Pirogovskogo studencheskogo meditsinskogo obshchestva pri Tomskom Universitete," pt. 1, *Sibirskaia vrachebnaia gazeta*, no. 17 (1910): 197–98; "Polovaia zhizn' iur'evskogo studenchestva," *Vestnik obshchestvennoi gigieny, sudebnoi i prakticheskoi meditsiny*, no. 7 (1907): 1162–63; N. P. Malygin, "Iz itogov studencheskoi perepisi v Iur'eve (Derpte)," *Zhurnal obshchestva russkikh vrachei v pamiat' N. I. Pirogova*, no. 1 (1907): 20–31.

[106]On the ninth Pirogov congress (1904), see Nancy Mandelker Frieden, *Russian Physicians in an Era of Reform and Revolution, 1856–1905* (Princeton, N.J., 1981), 231–61; on the tenth (1907), see M. A. Chlenov, *Polovaia perepis' moskovskogo studenchestva i ee obshchestvennoe znachenie* (Moscow, 1909), 5, 11.

[107]Falevich, "Itogi," pts. 1–13, *Sibirskaia vrachebnaia gazeta*, nos. 17–29 (1910).

[108]They sporadically deplored their own ignorance: "Lichnaia statistika," 157; Bernshtein, *Voprosy polovoi zhizni*, 13.

[109]Respondents totaled 636, of whom 573 were men: Falevich, "Itogi," pt. 2, 209.

[110]Zhbankov, "Izuchenie voprosa," pt. 1, 474; pt. 3, *Prakticheskii vrach*, no. 29 (1908): 503, 505–6.

the available sources.[111] We do know that not only the police but even the audience at the 1907 congress had revealed a certain anxiety about interrogating respectable women. Some delegates worried that asking questions about sex might destroy the innocence of young female minds. Zhbankov disagreed: no one of the postrevolutionary student generation was innocent of sex, he assured them. What had once constituted inside information or private pleasure was now unfortunately open to public view: in the press, in the stores, on dirty postcards, in "erotic" texts that no one could avoid. City women—at least those who could read—no longer had any illusions. The ill effects of such dubious lore, Zhbankov argued, could be countered only by scientific knowledge.[112] What he could not admit was that the market in cheap ideas had broken a taboo that respectable scholars had dared not breach, but could now profit from doing.

The furtive attempt to peer behind the scenes of female student life occurred during the depoliticized postrevolutionary lull, but the unblinking disclosure of male students' sexual habits accompanied their emergence onto the street in a political capacity. What did physicians discover when they turned from inspecting the classroom habits of young boys to investigate the behavior and attitudes of young men, asking questions—as befitted subjects capable of rational response—rather than groping for genital organs? Most of their findings were little different from those of Virenius and the cadet academy instructors: stories of adolescent self-indulgence, private vice, and, in this case, commercial consolation. Nor were the proposed solutions anything new. Mikhail Chlenov, who conducted the Moscow survey, concluded in 1907 that only "personal prophylaxis"—that is, sexual restraint—could solve the twin social ills of prostitution and venereal disease.[113] Iakov Falevich, who presented the Tomsk findings in 1910, favored male sexual abstinence as the only way out of Russia's moral impasse.[114] As the term "prophylaxis" suggests, Chlenov did not think simple moral fervor would do the job; science and enlightened pedagogical practice were the essential underpinnings of the reformed sexual life.

Some respondents and a few doctors did go beyond the liberal prescription. The zemstvo physician Nikolai Malygin, commenting in

[111]Falevich, "Itogi," pt. 1, 198, mentions suppression without further comment. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Sex and Revolution: An Examination of Literary and Statistical Data on the Mores of Soviet Students in the 1920s," *Journal of Modern History* 50:2 (1978): 258, cites a report from the early 1920s indicating that Zhbankov conducted a sexual survey of women in 1914, but I have come across no other mention of it.

[112]Zhbankov, "Izuchenie voprosa," pt. 1, 471; pt. 2, *Prakticheskii vrach*, no. 28 (1908): 486, 488.

[113]Chlenov, *Polovaia perepis'*, 97–99.

[114]Falevich, "Itogi," pt. 13, 343.

1907 on the Iuriev study, insisted that the "so-called culture of the bourgeois-capitalist type" could breed only sexual exploitation and misery; it would take democratic socialism and women's liberation to purify public morals and establish genuine public health.[115] And among Tomsk students—most of whom echoed their teachers in favoring coeducation and supporting sex instruction for both men and women, more openness about sexual matters, and dialogue between parents and children—several believed that socialism alone could eliminate the underlying causes of prostitution and upper-class depravity.[116]

A twenty-two-year-old medical student in 1910, Falevich seems to have fallen back on the old self-help formula, although it was precisely the nature of the connection between politics and morality that the Tomsk survey, unlike its predecessors, had intended to establish with scientific rigor. One of its stated goals had been to explore "the possible influence of party work on attitudes toward the sexual question and on sexual experience itself." Of the men who responded to the survey, 44 percent belonged to political parties: 80 percent of them to the radical left, 18 percent to the liberal-constitutionalist center, and a tiny fraction to the radical right. Another 13 percent of respondents considered themselves sympathizers: 90 percent on the left, 10 percent in the middle. Half the respondents had taken part in "revolutionary work," but only half of these activists claimed that their involvement had altered their sexual feelings: 80 percent thought the revolution had exercised an "ennobling" effect on their sexual life; another 13 percent described their sexual appetite as having diminished; a mere 2 percent believed it had grown; and only 3 percent said the revolution had drawn them to sexual abnormalities.[117]

Falevich concluded that the revolution had in general curtailed sexual activity by monopolizing young people's energy and time. Chlenov too, citing the perception that venereal disease had diminished in 1905, surmised that political interests took the place of sexual indulgence during moments of intense revolutionary conflict.[118] Tomsk students who boasted of greater sexual restraint attributed their improved conduct to ideological as well as personal experience. Working closely with women had taught men to view them as comrades rather than objects of sexual desire, they reported, an attitude encouraged, so they said, by the Marxist parties and reinforced by the reading of August Bebel and Lily Braun. Sex, the students' radical mentors taught them, could be

[115]Malygin, "Iz itogov," 21–22.

[116]Falevich, "Itogi," pt. 12, 329; pt. 11, 318–19.

[117]Ibid., pt. 2, 209–10.

[118]Chlenov, *Polovaia perepis'*, 74.

justified not as a source of pleasure but only "as a physiological need" (*stol'ku po skol'ku etogo trebuet priroda*). In sum, Falevich decided, "the revolution itself seems to have improved people's attitudes in general and in particular their views on women and on the sexual question."[119]

Such evidence indicated that the vision of schoolboy libido running wild had its limits. Discipline, not disinhibition, characterized university youth, who appeared to have attained heights of sublimation during the revolutionary months. The apparently contrasting behavior of boys and young men provided physicians with biological models for the two aspects of revolutionary mobilization: its angry, destructive component on the one hand and its purposeful dedication on the other. The libidinous energy released in the schoolroom was both presexual and prepolitical; the same impulse liberated in young adults served definite civic purposes. Thus frustrated preteens broke windows and built barricades, while their older siblings joined political parties, attended all-night meetings, and were too tired for love. Once the revolution was over and the civic dream had failed, however, the recently activated libido returned in full force in its original sexual form, more imperious for having been liberated from the discipline and constraint of the old regime. The political crisis past, passion returned from the abstract to the bodily, and the thirst for sensual gratification increased as substitute excitement died down: political and sexual virtue deteriorated apace. The ban on public involvement caused people to turn inward, dwelling on personal and, in particular, sexual affairs.[120]

Echoes of this interpretation could be heard as far afield as Berlin, headquarters of enlightened sexual science. The 1908 edition of Iwan Bloch's influential *Sexual Life of Our Time in Its Relation to Modern Culture*, for example, included the story of a Russian anarchist who claimed to have gratified his masochistic sexual inclinations in the *Angst-Ekstase* of political confrontation during the revolution of 1905.[121] Another German sexologist portrayed the revolution as a check on sexual desire: "Radical circles discouraged the discussion of sexual questions and considered any encouragement of sexual activity to be unrevolutionary," the reporter claimed; in any case, when "personal feelings were absorbed in the struggle for social change, the need for sexual expression was minimal." But after the proletarian movement abated, "the intelligentsia abandoned [the struggle] and devoted its energy to sexual relations."[122]

In this curious reversal of the Bolshevik paradigm, according to which the party restrains the formless outbursts of popular feeling, the sober proletariat checks the spontaneous expression of its leaders' passionate desire; set adrift from the workers' noble and constraining cause, students and intellectuals revert to the erotic introversion typical of their class. But alongside the persistent stereotypes of popular virtue, new and less idealized images of lower-class sexuality emerged after 1905, especially in relation to city life. To educated observers the laboring masses represented the subordination of private to collective interests, of personal sensibility to communal norms—a model to which the individualized upper classes could aspire only in fleeting moments of civic self-absorption such as revolution. But at the same time, workers had participated in organized politics, demonstrating a capacity for the kind of rational behavior considered the mark of educated men. Each cultural world, the popular and the elite, thus borrowed for an instant its opposite's defining trait. When the moment of political transcendence had passed, all those left in the city—the site of commerce, individuality, and desire—acquired the attributes of modern life and the sexual volatility it represented.

[119]Falevich, "Itogi," pt. 3, 221–22.

[120]Ibid., 222; Zhbankov, "Izuchenie voprosa," pt. 2, 487, 490.

[121]Iwan Bloch, *Das Sexualleben unserer Zeit in seinen Beziehungen zur modernen Kultur*, 6th ed. (Berlin, 1908), app. to chap. 21, 646–68. Bloch notes that the anonymous personal account had been transmitted to Magnus Hirschfeld in Berlin in 1906. Bloch's volume appeared in Russian translation in 1910.

[122]Werner Daya-Berlin, "Die sexuelle Bewegung in Russland," *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft*, no. 8 (1908): 494–95.