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## Книга Донны Орвин о трех великих «психологических реалистах» русской классики в новом издании<sup>1</sup>

**Аннотация:** В предлагаемой читателям рецензии рассматривается книга Донны Орвин о Тургеневе, Достоевском и Толстом, вышедшая в этом году на русском языке в издательстве «Библиороссика» (Academic Studies Press). Автор рецензии считает выход этой книги на русском не только значимым научным свершением, но и важным явлением общественной жизни, напоминающим о длительных культурных взаимоотношениях России, Европы и Северной Америки. Книга «Следствия самоосознания...» Донны Орвин, по мнению рецензента, представляет своим читателям исчерпывающий отчет о культурно-философских обстоятельствах, породивших русский психологический реализм, предлагает новаторские прочтения ключевых художественных текстов, которые демонстрируют диалог между тремя знаменитыми романистами.

**Ключевые слова:** Донна Орвин, И. С. Тургенев, Л. Н. Толстой, Ф. М. Достоевский, психологический реализм, концепции субъективности, личность, самосознание.

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Book Review

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## A New Edition of Donna Orwin's Study of the Three Great "Psychological Realists" of Russian Prose<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Discusses the Russian-language edition of Donna Orwin's book about Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy, which came out this year with Academic Studies Press / Bibliorossika. The reviewer considers this book's publication in Russian a significant scholarly contribution as well as an important reminder of the cultural entanglements among Russia, Europe, and North America. Orwin's *Consequences of Consciousness* provides its readers with a comprehensive account of the cultural and philosophical circumstances that gave rise to Russian psychological realism, and offers innovative readings of key literary texts that demonstrate the dynamic dialogue among the three authors who established the genre.

**Keywords:** Donna Orwin, I. S. Turgenev, L. N. Tolstoy, F. M. Dostoevsky, psychological realism, concepts of subjectivity, personality, self-consciousness.

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<sup>1</sup> Book review: Orwin, D. T. *Consequences of Consciousness: Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy*, translated from English. A. G. Grodet'skaya. St. Petersburg, Academic Studies Press, Bibliorossika Publ., 2022. 351 p. (In Russ.)

Donna Orwin's «Следствия самоосознания: Тургенев, Достоевский, Толстой» [Orwin 2022] is a strikingly timely book. It might seem odd to say so about a Russian-language translation of a monograph that first appeared fifteen years ago as «Consequences of Consciousness: Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy» [Orwin 2007]. Yet Orwin's meticulously researched and persuasive account of the works of these three “psychological realists” reminds us — at a time when we're inclined to forget it — of the mutually formative cultural relationship among Russia, Europe, and North America. Orwin begins her account of the leading figures of psychological realism somewhat obliquely. She invokes Oliver Sacks, renowned British-American neurologist and writer, who acknowledged his intellectual debt to Soviet neuropsychologist Alexander Luria. Luria, in turn, noted the influence of William James, who himself confessed to learning much from Leo Tolstoy. Tolstoy's ideas about psychic life, as Orwin demonstrates throughout her study, developed in close dialogue with his contemporaries Turgenev and Dostoevsky. And all three, of course, reckoned not only with their Russian predecessors but also with the European philosophical and literary tradition from Plato to Descartes, Goethe, and Rousseau. «Следствия самоосознания...» demonstrates that the works of Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy represent one moment (but a crucial one) in an ongoing dialogue between Russia and the West. As Orwin shows, Russian and Western ideas about the self and its relationship to reason, faith, language, community, and so on, are products of a transnational discourse.

While underscoring these cross-cultural entanglements, Orwin remains attentive to national specificity. Her first chapter traces how the Russian literary tradition became specially invested in rendering self-consciousness. After briefly mentioning the role of Petrine reforms in transforming Russian society, Orwin turns to Karamzin, Pushkin, and Lermontov to describe the genesis of Russian psychological prose, which she defines, in part, by its interest in subjectivity. Subjectivity for Orwin is the inner life of an



individual: «Под субъективностью я понимаю явления, которые мистер Грэдграйнд (пока не получил заслуженное наказание в романе Диккенса) не воспринял бы как реальные: внутреннюю жизнь и внутренний опыт каждого индивидуума» [Орвин 2022: 14]. Some readers might wish for a more precise definition, but Orwin offers this initial, rather capacious one in order to discuss in later chapters the narrower and more specific definitions of each of her authors. Their distinct conceptions of subjectivity put in relief what they all held in common: namely, that the self cannot exist without others: «У трех писателей <...> разный взгляд на человеческую природу, но все они согласны в том, что индивидуальная душа не способна существовать сама по себе» [Орвин 2022: 319]. The individual is not self-sufficient and must seek to understand herself through her relations. Russian psychological prose illuminates how the individual experiences this human condition.

«Следствия самоосознания...» turns first to the authors' early works. In chapters two, three, and four, Orwin looks at texts such as *A Sportsman's*

*Sketches, Poor Folk*, and *The Raid* in order to tease out their distinct strategies for rendering psychic life on the page. Later chapters offer close analysis of more major works — e.g., *Fathers and Children*, *Demons*, *Notes from the House of the Dead*, *Anna Karenina*, *The Kreutzer Sonata* — to demonstrate the evolution of the authors' strategies as well as their mature conceptions of subjectivity. Chapters five, six, and seven focus on Turgenev and Dostoevsky, chapters eight and nine on Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. But Turgenev lingers in the last two chapters as a stoic foil to Tolstoy's and Dostoevsky's more impassioned responses to the tragedy of the human condition.

In fact, it is Turgenev in many ways who takes center stage in Orwin's account. He established the standards of representation with which his younger peers were forced to contend: «Современники признавали первенство Тургенева среди троих, по крайней мере до публикации “Войны и мира”, поэтому именно он устанавливал в прозе те стандарты, которым Достоевский и Толстой открыто бросали вызов, а тайно в большей или меньшей степени следовали» [Орвин 2022: 74]. Of these three, Turgenev had the most robust philosophical education; he often mediated the encounters of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky with Western literature and thought. Orwin repeatedly stresses Turgenev's significance in the development of psychological realism.

In chapter two Orwin argues that Turgenev joined with Dostoevsky and Tolstoy in a “romantic rebellion” against the Enlightenment's apotheosis of reason: «Так же как Достоевский и Толстой, Тургенев участвовал в романтическом бунте против рационалистических схем, к которым была так благосклонна эпоха Просвещения» [Орвин 2022: 81]. She highlights Turgenev's commitment to defending the individual and specific against types and generalizations. Focusing her analysis on *A Sportsman's Sketches*, Orwin shows how the narrator's expectations about people and places — expectations shaped by stereotypes — are constantly subverted. But while Turgenev elevates the individual subject, he demurs from rendering the subject's inner world: «О том, что действительно чувствуют и думают его герои, можно только строить предположения, но точно знать это невозможно — хотя то, что они глубоко чувствуют и мыслят, не вызывает сомнений» [Орвин 2022: 82]. Turgenev privileges detailed description of outward behavior over psychological analysis: «Для Тургенева <...> факт является фундаментальным исходным условием его поэтики» [Орвин 2022: 68]. There are conceptual and formal reasons for this restraint. For

Turgenev, an author's psychological probing does not illuminate subjectivity but only distorts it, and the most effective and elegant way to draw a character's inner life is through external description.

For Dostoevsky and Tolstoy psychological analysis both by the author and by the characters themselves is indispensable for portraying subjectivity. Orwin's third chapter contests the often-repeated idea that Dostoevsky is an author who absents himself from his texts. Psychological realism, she explains, demands that authors are simultaneously absent and present. They must be absent to the extent that they seek to render the inner world of others. Yet in creating this inner world they inevitably draw on the only psychic landscape to which they have immediate access — that is, their own. How does Dostoevsky meet this challenge of his representation? Orwin examines Dostoevsky's strategies for obfuscating his authorial presence through a reading of *Poor Folk*. Dostoevsky allows his characters to speak for themselves, offering their own self-analysis, which is always partly true and partly false: «Точка зрения каждого "атома" частично верна, поскольку "исходит из сердца", и частично ложна, поскольку в большей степени выражает особенное, чем общее» [Орвин 2022: 90]. He thereby creates what Bakhtin famously described as a polyphonic text, which contains a multiplicity of voices each speaking his or her own truth. Yet as Orwin observes, an authoring consciousness is required to hold all these voices and (often contradictory) truths together: «Автор у Достоевского хотя и может быть скрыт, все же необходим для читателей в роли посредника между разными голосами» [Орвин 2022: 92]. In Dostoevsky, the reader is invited to join the author in a process of reflection that surpasses the capacities of any individual character. The author's consciousness is nowhere apparent, but it suffuses the text as a whole: «Сама проблема субъективной предвзятости любого индивидуума требует, чтобы автор был вездесущим, не как "рожа сочинителя", но как его сердце, а потом и ум. В конечном счете именно его авторское сознание связывает воедино весь текст и делает его, выражаясь языком того времени, "органическим"» [Орвин 2022: 105]. It is hard to argue with Orwin that Dostoevsky lurks somewhere in his texts, however obscurely. She offers a much-needed corrective to readings that take the freedom of his characters too literally. But one is left wondering to what extent Dostoevsky's simultaneous absence and presence in the text is a conscious artistic strategy. Is this ambiguity a deliberate choice? Or is it rather that Dostoevsky's ambition to withdraw

from the text runs up against a stricture of the novel, perhaps of writing itself? In other words, can one imagine a piece of writing from which the author's consciousness is truly absent?

In chapter four, Orwin turns to Tolstoy and his conflicting authorial impulses. On the one hand, Tolstoy wished to capture the idiosyncrasies, contradictions, and irrationalities of human psychology. On the other, he had an irrepressible desire to generalize from his findings and arrive at rational conclusions that might inform his ethics. Orwin focuses on the way Plato and Turgenev help Tolstoy negotiate these contradictory drives. From Plato, he learns to build his fictional worlds from the ground up and proceed from detail to generalization: «В начале творческого пути Толстой с целью достижения художественной правды учился у Платона тому, как использовать драматическое действие и жизненные “реалии” в качестве необходимого дополнения к авторской мысли» [Орвин 2022: 128]. From Turgenev he learns to resist his own moralizing tendency: «Тургенев помог ему освободиться от тирании единой точки зрения, какой бы морально убедительной она ни была» [Орвин 2022: 129]. Orwin suggests that in mature works like *Anna Karenina* Tolstoy finds a balance between his poetic and moral objectives. He creates enough room for his characters to express their subjective perspectives while retaining his aim of bringing the reader around to his own point of view. By ending her chapter with Tolstoy's success in maintaining this delicate balance, Orwin gives the impression that Tolstoy, under the tutelage of Plato and Turgenev, resolved his contradictory impulses. But of course, as she would no doubt agree, Tolstoy continued throughout his life to be pulled in opposite directions. And this struggle in many ways defined his artistic practice.

The three chapters that follow (five, six, and seven) delve deeper into Turgenev's and Dostoevsky's views on the nature of subjectivity, pointing out what they had in common and where they diverged. The roots of Turgenev's art and thought, Orwin explains, are in romanticism. Central to Turgenev's poetics, from his early poetry to his great prose works, is the tragic longing of the finite self to unite with the infinite universe: «Тургенев никогда полностью не отступал от этой романтической веры. Он всегда считал “святую тоску” (Sehnsucht), стремление к слиянию со Всем одним из благороднейших человеческих качеств. Такое стремление возникает как следствие трагической ограниченности любого индивидуально-го существования» [Орвин 2022: 142]. Turgenev shared Romanticism's

wariness of reason, regarding it as an obstacle to the individual's longing for communion with nature and other people. In *Andrey Kolosov*, Orwin argues, Turgenev resolves the formal challenge of depicting this human striving for wholeness through the effective use of a frame narrative. Turgenev's hero, Andrey, embodies the romantic ideal of a spontaneous self that is unspoiled by reason and the self-reflective gaze. As such, Andrey cannot tell his own story while remaining within it. Turgenev therefore employs a frame narrator who steps out of the flow of his own life in order to reflect on it: «Рассказчик в большей степени излагает свою историю, чем живет внутри нее» [Орвин 2022: 165]. Schiller's categories of the "naïve" and "sentimental" might be applied respectively to Turgenev's hero Andrey and to his narrator, Orwin suggests. As readers, we share the "sentimental" position of the narrator, partaking of his desire for a wholeness that is out of reach for the modern person engaged in self-reflection. This elegiac quality of Turgenev's art had greater appeal in the 19<sup>th</sup> century than in the 20<sup>th</sup>, a fact that helps explain the waning interest of later readers. But «Следствия самоосознания...» makes a powerful case that it would be a mistake to neglect Turgenev in the development of psychological realism.

Orwin next turns her attention to the dialogue between Dostoevsky and Turgenev. She identifies their points of disagreement and analyzes Dostoevsky's complex response to his contemporary. In *Demons*, Dostoevsky satirizes Turgenev in the character of Semyon Yegorovich Karmazinov. Orwin cautions that this caricature should not be read as an indictment of Turgenev or a rejection of his thought: «Умный, но лишенный поэзии Кармазинов становится карикатурой на Тургенева, а не объективным портретом писателя, которого Достоевский уважал на протяжении всей жизни» [Орвин 2022: 191]. Dostoevsky parodies Turgenev's politics and his personal traits, but at the same time respects and even relies on his artistic innovations: «Достоевский извлекает пользу из лучших литературных произведений Тургенева, даже когда в "Бесах" его окарикатуривает и оскорбляет как личность» [Орвин 2022: 194]. (Dostoevsky, we might mention, receives his comeuppance in the form of similar treatment by Vladimir Nabokov.) Reading the various ways Turgenev is present in *Demons*, Orwin illuminates the ideological and artistic disagreements that lurked well beneath the surface-level caricature. For all his attention to the limits of reason, Turgenev continued to regard it as the bedrock of our freedom and our humanity. For Dostoevsky, in contrast, our freedom



and our humanity depend not on reason but on the will. Consequently, the two brought fundamentally different assumptions and anxieties to the task of rendering subjectivity. Turgenev, as Orwin explains, scrutinized the strictures of dogma, whereas Dostoevsky worried about what binds our will.

After giving her reader a clearer sense of Dostoevsky's philosophical presumptions and concerns, Orwin returns to the question of form. She analyzes *Notes from the House of the Dead* to describe how self-reflection (of the author and of his characters) functions in psychological realism. She underscores the inescapability of the autobiographical and the need for authorial self-reflection: «Стремящийся к подлинному пониманию и изображению человека, не мог его достигнуть только посредством эмпирического наблюдения. Писателю необходима способность к рефлексии, с помощью которой он может как лично пережить все возможное для человека, так и осмыслить пережитое» [Орвин 2022: 209]. Orwin shows us how Dostoevsky grapples with this demand in *Notes from the House of the Dead*. There he has a dual aim: to depict with nuance and sympathy the prisoners he met in Siberia, and to describe a journey of individual spiritual transformation. In painting his narrator's encounters with other prisoners, Dostoevsky points up the limits of our ability to think and feel ourselves into the inner lives of other people. In rendering his characters' confessions, Dostoevsky underscores the distortions of our reflections on ourselves. *Notes from the House of the Dead* thus queries our capacity to faithfully render either other people or ourselves. Orwin reminds us that while Dostoevsky went farther than Turgenev in his efforts to depict from within the psychic lives of others, he did not believe they could ever come fully into view: «Как и Тургенев — и вопреки мнению о нем Тургенева, — Достоевский не утверждает, что способен полностью осветить внутреннюю жизнь других <...> Несмотря на его способность проникновения в чужие души, чужая субъективность в конечном счете остается в его прозе тайной» [Орвин 2022: 235]. Orwin thereby points out something perpetually overlooked in studies of psychological realism — namely, its ultimate reverence for the mystery that is another person's inner life.

One mysterious corner of psychic life that has a tremendous significance for all three authors is the experience of childhood. All three agreed with Jean-Jacque Rousseau that children are inherently virtuous: «Как следует из предыдущих глав, Руссо оказал значительное влияние на всех трех авторов, главных героев этой книги. Все трое верили в природ-

ную добродетельность детей» [Орвин 2022: 248]. In Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, the transition from childhood to adulthood becomes a dominant theme. Orwin teases out the subtle but important distinctions in how these two authors drew children. Tolstoy is well known for his idealized portraits of children, starting with his debut novel, *Childhood*. Children in Tolstoy possess a happiness and authenticity that is lost in the process of maturation, especially during the discovery of sexuality. Dostoevsky, in contrast, offers few portraits of happy children — children untouched by the depraved adult world. But it is Dostoevsky, Orwin argues, who holds childhood in higher esteem. Tolstoy's portraits of childhood do not exclude egoism. It is simply that children do not differentiate themselves from those around them, so their self-love extends to others. Dostoevsky, on the other hand, perceives the child's love as selfless. In childhood we experience a spiritual state that excludes egoism, and this experience can later nourish the adult self and become a source of goodness: «Вопреки, казалось бы, нашим ожиданиям, Достоевский больше, чем Толстой, верит в укорененность во взрослой жизни невинной, бескорыстной, детской любви. Причина в том, как я бы предположила, что для Достоевского доброта детства выше, чище, чем любое человеческое качество, которое представлялось Толстому» [Орвин 2022: 277]. Tolstoy and Dostoevsky each offer characters who even in their adult life can approximate the spiritual heights of childhood. But this capacity is elusive, and for most people the vestiges of childhood's exalted spiritual state are not enough to resist the (often pernicious) passions of adulthood.

The final chapter of «*Следствия самоосознания...*» considers the depiction of evil. Orwin traces the hidden dialogue between Dostoevsky and Tolstoy on the nature of evil, and contends that each distinguished between two kinds: evil as an unintended consequence of egoism, and intentional, premeditated evil. The first kind is a byproduct of the force of “human vitality,” which can overwhelm reason and conscience: «Тургенев, Достоевский и Толстой поразили и ужаснули викторианских читателей изображением силы человеческой витальности, способной овладеть разумом и совестью даже хорошего человека, как мужчины, так и женщины» [Орвин 2022: 314]. Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* demonstrates how one can become possessed by evil passions to such an extent that one can be aware of one's crimes and yet powerless to stop them; self-reflexivity can be a counterweight to dangerous passions but not enough to prevent immoral

action. Dostoevsky's works take a further step by asking what happens when self-reflexivity does not serve even this function, and instead becomes an accomplice to criminal passions: «Но что, если самосознающее “я” развращено и стало соучастником побуждений, которым должно противоборствовать?» [Орвин 2022: 304]. Orwin argues that, in the end, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy converge on the idea that evil is a consequence of our tragic human condition: of our awareness of our own finitude. Since they located the source of evil in our shared predicament, all three — to the consternation of readers past and present — expressed sympathy for even the most immoral characters and sought to find in them traces of conscience.

Orwin's *«Следствия самоосознания...»* presents its readers with a comprehensive account of the cultural-philosophical circumstances that gave rise to Russian psychological realism. It offers innovative readings of key fictional texts that demonstrate the dialogue among their authors. It clarifies subtle but important differences in how Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy approached similar themes. Finally, in her conclusion, Orwin turns her attention to a question that confronts every generation of readers: Why do we continue to read these works? The great contribution of Russian psychological realism, she contends, is that it strengthens the authority of individual experience while underscoring that the individual is not self-sufficient: «Влияние русской психологической прозы на мировую литературу выразилось в первую очередь в укреплении авторитета индивидуального голоса субъекта <...> Все трое <авторов> согласны в понимании ее <индивидуальной души> радикальной неполноты, нецелостности и вытекающих из этого ее потребностей и стремлений» [Орвин 2022: 318–319]. We sense our incompleteness, long for wholeness, and strive for communion with others. Orwin suggest that these authors offer us something deeply desirable: a search for moral principles that might help us transcend individualism yet still maintain respect for the individual. One might wish (even at the end of a long and exacting tome) that Orwin had dwelled for a moment longer on this thought, and more generally on the implications of looking for moral guidance in 19<sup>th</sup>-century fiction. Nonetheless, we are well prepared to accept her assessment, and to agree that readers forgive the didactic excesses of the great realists because their moral conclusions are finally always provisional; all three evince a deep appreciation for the limits of our capacity to think and feel our way into the inner lives of others.

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