



Kholstomer

Leo Tolstoy

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"Kholstomer", also translated as "Strider", was started by Leo Tolstoy in 1863 and left unfinished until 1886, when it was reworked and published as "Kholstomer: The Story of a Horse".

Kholstomer Details

Date : Published December 8th 2005 by Kessinger Publishing (first published 1886)

ISBN : 9781425478711

Author : Leo Tolstoy

Format : Paperback 56 pages

Genre : Classics, Cultural, Russia, Short Stories, Fiction, Literature, Russian Literature



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?atthieu says

La première nouvelle, *Le Cheval* est assez classique. J'ai beaucoup plus apprécié la seconde, *Albert* qui capte la mélancolie alcoolisée d'un violoniste virtuose.

Johann Guenther says

TOLSTOI, Leo N.: "Der Leinwandmesser", Wien

Ein altes Pferd erzählt den anderen Pferden in einem russischen Gestüt seine Lebensgeschichte. Ein Außenseiter weil er gefleckt ist gewann ein Rennen und wurde dadurch geächtet. Vom erfolgreichen Traber über den Ackergaul kam es zum Pferdeschinder. Ja selbst mit dem Tod des Pferdes endet die Geschichte Tolstoi noch nicht. Bis die Wölfe die Reste des Fleisches verzehrt hatten und ein Bauer die übriggebliebenen Knochen wegrägt dauert es.

Dazwischen auch ein Stück russische Aristokratie, wie der Besitzer des Gestüts – ein Neureicher – Besuch bekommt und mit seinen Pferden prahlt.

(Hinterbrühl , 18.02.2015)

TarasProkopyuk says

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Trounin says

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Joan says

I have no idea what shelves to put this on -its probably one of those 'one-of-a-kind' books that defies any attempt to 'label' it. It was both wonderful and awful at the same time. Beautiful writing but also ponderous at times.

Suffice it to say, I have put this in my 'Classics' collection on my Kindle, though I think a story such as this really deserves to be in 'hardcopy' format. (hmm.. a 'classics' shelf? Problem solved!)

Four stars.

Milos Chromy says

Vyborna bajka o stari a dustojnosti.

Anca says

Povestea unui cal de rasa, simpla dar suficienta sa ma faca sa raman apoi cu ochii atintiti pe niste jockey (cred) la Tv si mai sensibila la cai. Desi ma-ndoiesc ca asta era tinta, bineinteles.

Inca o data am intalnit in lit. o parere a unui animal despre oameni in general (am mai vazut la Douglas Adams cu delfinii). Perspectiva asta inversata ma incanta in mod special.

Dar nici asta nu era esenta; tot o ocolesc, nu-mi vine sa scot un panseu.

Fie, cum se invarte roata vietii, ciclul inevitabil si capricios (saau, varianta americana "life is a fickle bitch", *Lost*). Si pe langa cerc si doua drepte paralele, intre stapan si cal.

Finalul nu e surprinzator in sine ci prin atitudinea pe care o ia autorul fata de fapte.

”Citind Holstomer, Turgheniev era convins c? Tolstoi fusese, la via?a lui, cal - ?i cine ar putea fi convins de altceva?”

(Lucian Raicu - Practica scrisului ?i experien?a lecturii)

Pavel Moiseenko says

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Sid Gustafson says

Tolstoy at his best, the War and Peace of horses.

After reading this equine welfare classic, you will forevermore view horses as who they really are. You do not know horses until you read the story of this noble piebald they called Kholstomer, translated as Strider, in English. Some English versions of this book title the tale "Strider, the story of a horse."

Tolstoy at his best, the War and Peace of horses.

????????? (Štrumpfeta) says

"Ima veli?anstvenih starosti, ima ih i ružnih i žalosnih, a ima ih koje su istovremeno i ružne i veli?anstvene. Šar?eva starost bila je baš ove vrste."

Joan Colby says

The masterly Tolstoy certainly knew his horses; in fact, he rode daily into old age. In "Strider" he details a sad life as the old horse speaks to his herd, in particular the young fillies who have taken delight in tormenting him (and he's spot on describing their behavior as well). "Strider" is a rawer, more wrenching version of "Black Beauty" with a realistic instead of an idealistic conclusion.

João Vieira says

"Eu entendi bem o que eles disseram sobre os lanhões e o cristianismo, mas naquela época era absolutamente obscuro para mim o significado das palavras "meu", "meu potro", palavras através das quais eu percebia que as pessoas estabeleciam uma espécie de vínculo entre mim e o chefe dos estábulos. Não conseguia entender de jeito nenhum em que consistia esse vínculo. Só o compreendi bem mais tarde, quando me separaram dos outros cavalos. Mas, naquele momento, não houve jeito de entender o que significava me chamarem de propriedade de um homem. As palavras "meu cavalo", referidas a mim, um cavalo vivo, pareciam-me tão estranhas quanto as palavras "minha terra", "meu ar", "minha água".

No entanto, as palavras exerciam uma enorme influência sobre mim. Eu não parava de pensar nisso e só muito depois de ter as mais diversas relações com as pessoas compreendi finalmente o sentido daquelas estranhas palavras. Eles não gostam tanto da possibilidade de fazer ou não fazer alguma coisa quanto da possibilidade de falar de diferentes objetos utilizando-se de palavras que convencionam entre si. Dessas, as que mais consideram são "meu" e "minha", que aplicam a várias coisas, seres e objetos, inclusive à terra, às pessoas e aos cavalos. Convencionaram entre si que, para cada coisa, apenas um deles diria "meu". É aquele que diz "meu" para o maior número de coisas é considerado o mais feliz, segundo esse jogo. Para quê isso, não sei, mas é assim. Antes eu ficava horas a fio procurando alguma vantagem imediata nisso, mas não deu com nada.

Muitas das pessoas que me chamavam, por exemplo, de "meu cavalo" nunca me montavam; as que faziam eram outras, completamente diferentes. Também eram bem outras as que me alimentavam. As que cuidavam

de mim, mais uma vez, não eram as mesmas que me chamavam "meu cavalo", mas os cocheiros, os tratadores, estranhos de modo geral. Mais tarde, depois que ampliei o círculo das minhas observações, convenci-me de que não só em relação a nós, cavalos, o conceito de "meu" não tem outro fundamento senão o instinto vil e animalesco dos homens, que eles chamam de sentimento ou direito de propriedade. O homem diz "minha casa", mas nunca mora nela, preocupa-se apenas em construí-la e mantê-la. O comerciante diz: "meu bazar", "meu bazar de lãs", por exemplo, mas não tem roupa feita das melhores lãs que há em seu bazar. Existem pessoas que chamam a terra de "minha", mas nunca viram ou andaram por ela. Existem outras que chamam de "meus" outros seres humanos, mas nenhuma vez sequer botaram os olhos sobre eles, e toda sua relação com essas pessoas consiste em lhes causar mal. Existem homens que chamam de "minhas" as suas mulheres ou esposas, mas essas mulheres vivem com outros homens. As pessoas não aspiram a fazer na vida o que consideram bom, mas a chamar de "minhas" o maior número de coisas. Agora estou convencido de que é nisso que consiste a diferença essencial ente nós e os homens. É por isso que, sem falar das outras vantagens que temos sobre eles, já podemos dizer sem vacilar que, na escada dos seres vivos, estamos acima das pessoas: a vida - das pessoas - pelos menos daquela com as quais convivi - traduz-se em palavras; a nossa, em atos".

Marta says

"Història d'un cavall" és la primera novel·la de Tolstoy que llegeixo. És un relat breu, fàcil de llegir tot i que es nota que la traducció té uns quants anys, que em va cridar l'atenció des que vaig llegir el títol. Pigat, el cavall, explica la seva vida plena d'entrebancs i penes als altres cavalls, les experiències que ha tingut tant amb cavalls com amb els seus amos. El retrat que dona de les persones és el de criatures superficials, despreocupades i amb ínfulas de grandesa que només pensen en tenir més. En aquest relat, Tolstoy vol deixar patent la degradació de la gent de la seva època. Parla sobre la xenofòbia, la discriminació que reps per ser diferent i sobre una lleialtat que sembla esfumar-se a mesura que passa el temps.

Dan says

The one criticism of Tolstoy is that he was never able to write from a peasants point of view. All of his characters came from his own life experiences and when he did attempt to write a well rounded peasant character he never seemed able to really make them come alive on the page.

This is telling not just of Tolstoy but of all Russian society of his time. There was a sharp divide between those who have and those who have not, those who own land and those who work the land, those who give orders and those who follow. And Tolstoy was always painfully aware of this divide and saw how unfair it was - and not only Tolstoy but plenty of the Russian well-to-do were pained by this inequality in their society and much of the social change came from the privileged and not just from the ground up.

Tolstoy's struggle with this "sin" in Russia society (a sin much like what Americans felt with slavery in the south) is apparent in nearly all his major works, especially in his two most famous characters: Pierre (in War and Peace) and Levin (in Anna Karenina). Both characters know what is right and wrong and try to live their life by a more moral and simple code of conduct. They go against decent society, are seen as outcasts and a little odd and eccentric, but in the end are enlightened unlike those who wallow around them.

Yet where Pierre goes through one tortured transformation and another and is never sure of anything except that he wants to be good, and where Levin instinctively knows what is right and wrong because he is 'a good man', this story takes a much bleaker look at the class divide.

Most obviously is the fact that Tolstoy uses a horse as a stand-in for the peasant class. Take what you will of this, but it there is no denying the implications of using an animal to represent a man. However, since we are reading Tolstoy we can look deeper into this and also understand how important horses are to Russian society in the 19th century (as they were important to everyone up until the automobile). Horses were a status symbol, took brave men into battle, drove the wealthy about, pulled farm equipment, and made possible all of civilization. Without the horse Europe would have been much like the Americas. So the importance of the horse cannot be understated meaning that though Tolstoy paints a picture of an entire class of people with that of a beast of burden, he does not do so out of spite, but rather because that's the way people like him thought. It was not cruel, it was misinformed, and unenlightened, but not overtly meant to debase. Joseph Conrad famously has these same issues when describing black people in his novels and he can be fairly criticized but one has to be aware of the broader picture, too.

But what Tolstoy is trying to show in this story is how a trick of fate, in this case being piebald (black and white spotted) can mean the difference between a good life and one of servitude. Had Strider (the horse as we learn his name to be) not been piebald he would have never been gelded and would have had a fine life, but fate played its hand and ruined him with those spots that no man wanted on his thoroughbred. And what Tolstoy is saying here is that man, too is made the same way - a twist of fate determines if we live in opulent pleasure in the Winter Palace or sends us to work the fields until our backs break and we die starving in the winter. There is no real difference between men, just random chance.

This is radical stuff for 19th century Russian living under the autocratic rule of an absolute Emperor whose power is given to him by God above. The Emperor would not agree with anything Tolstoy has to say in this story because he would believe there is a difference between men: those who rule and those who serve and that distinction is made by God.

For us this might seem a little too "on the nose", the point is pretty obvious and we all feel like we have learned the lessons of the past concerning class and society - especially Americans. Yet the lines are still drawn. Race and economics still divide us. We may not have actual slaves and serfs, but we'd be kidding ourselves if we said we all lived equally.

Yet we all die equally. And that's what sets this story apart from Tolstoy's other major works. The ending is bleak and painful. I felt as if Tolstoy was sick of treating this subject matter with kid gloves and finally just decided to lay the facts bare on the ground. Joyce, too, in *Ulysses* makes this very same point during the funeral and that rat who eats away at the corpses underground (it's all the same to the worms).

The lesson is still valid today as it was when he wrote this and it will probably always be as valid because it's unlikely we will ever live equally. Sure, we might try and we may start a revolution and force everyone to be equal, but we saw how that turned out for the Russians just a generation after Tolstoy wrote this.

And I do think Tolstoy almost managed to write one really good peasant character in this story with Strider because all he needed to do was realize there is no difference between peasant and gentry - they're all the same breed so why bother even making a distinction?

Seems simple enough, right?

Yet it's really hard to actually do both in fiction and in real life.

Bruno Quadros says

Um conto pungente sobre animais, inclusive os humanos, sua natureza e a transitoriedade das coisas.
