



Title	<DISCUSSION>Reply to Naoko Hirooka, Mitsuyoshi Numano, Ryo Nemura
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believe that this book represents a breakthrough in Russian socio-cultural history. Every chapter will stimulate our interest and productivity.

In Japan those scholars who study Russian history have generally not paid much attention to the theories of Foucault and to the New Historicism. I think the study of Russian history in the United States is far advanced. Now we must study new theory of history. *The Keys to Happiness* will stimulate our interest in the methodology of history.

Reply to Naoko Hirooka, Mitsuyoshi Numano, Ryo Nemura

Laura Engelstein

First let me say how honored I am by the attention of my Japanese colleagues. It is also instructive to read responses that reflect a range of scholarly points of view. Naoko Hirooka discusses the book from the perspective of the social history of women. She rightly notes that it differs from social history in exploring public attitudes not behavior. She fears, however, that it may be considered too literary by some readers because it analyzes texts not social facts. It is of course true that the lived world can be perceived only through the grid of documentary sources. Even in the *Keys to Happiness* one can discern quite a bit about the sexual habits of certain social groups. My approach may be considered “subjective,” in the sense that it tries to reconstruct cultural attitudes. It is, however, intended to be “objective,” in the sense that it maps the cultural landscape in a rigorous, scholarly way. As far as Lenin is concerned, I did not know of his comment on abortion. It is interesting to contrast what he said in 1913 (“A woman’s decision to be a mother or not is the ABC of democratic civil rights.”) to the words of justice commissar Nikolai Krylenko in 1936: “A basic mistake is made in every case by those women who consider ‘freedom of abortion’ as one of their civil rights.”¹ If Lenin sounded uncharacteristically like a liberal in 1913, his successors repudiated not only the freedom to make one’s own reproductive choices, but the very notion of civil rights on which such freedom depends.

Mitsuyoshi Numano, being a student of literature, does not complain that the *Keys to Happiness* is too literary. On the contrary, he fears it may not be literary enough. The kind of “interdisciplinary” textual analysis I have undertaken has also characterized the work of literary scholars who practice the so-called new historicism. They too work with a range of texts belonging to disparate cultural contexts, some formally “literary,” others not at all. It was not my intention, at least, to imply that all texts are equivalent: issues of purpose, context, genre all distinguish medical articles from novels, whether cheap or avant-garde. It was also not my intention to challenge the judgments that distinguish enduring literary texts from those of fleeting popularity. I did, however, want to demonstrate that artistic productions of incomparable aesthetic value and contrasting styles were nevertheless in dialogue with each other. It is true that one cannot understand what makes the “Kreutzer Sonata” work

(or not work perfectly) as literature by putting its concerns in cultural context, but one can nevertheless deepen one's understanding of it and of the cultural field as a whole.

Though I am not a professional literary critic, I did try to address the question of "how" as well as "what." I agree that the structural elements of "Kreutzer Sonata," *Keys to Happiness*, and Rozanov's texts are as crucial to the production of meaning as their obvious content. Rozanov was certainly a powerful individualist, but not at all in the liberal sense. The very brilliance and idiosyncrasy of his style is perfectly consistent with, and indeed expressive of, his anti-Semitic opinions. One can call him an anti-Semite (and I think it is important to do so), without reducing him to one. This is especially the case since the subject of the Jews was more central to Rozanov's artistic and philosophical concerns than the unpleasant opinions of either Dostoevsky or Tolstoy were to theirs. I would like to have a long conversation with Prof. Numano about his fascinating observation that the blurring of "genres" paralleled a blurring of "gender." Perhaps on my next trip to Japan.

I am also delighted by the formulation of Nemura Ryo, who speaks of the "liberal unconscious." He has quite correctly seized the point that I have considered liberalism from a perspective broader than that of political activity or ideology, narrowly conceived. He is also right to emphasize my interest in the liberals' persistent "ambivalence." Although I do indeed admire the Russian cultural liberals' attempt to emulate the basic principles of Western liberalism, I do not in fact believe Western bourgeois societies to be perfect, or necessarily even capable of achieving perfection. However, I do agree with many nineteenth-century Russian liberals in thinking the Western model a good place to begin. I am also pleased that Prof. Nemura, along with his colleagues, understands this book as a statement about methodology and interpretation as well as about historical fact. It was on that level that I hoped indeed it would be read. Thank you all.

Notes

- 1 Quoted in Wendy Z. Goldman, "Women, Abortion, and the State," in *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*, ed. Barbara Engel, Barbara Clements, and Christine Worobec (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 265.