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Lori Wright

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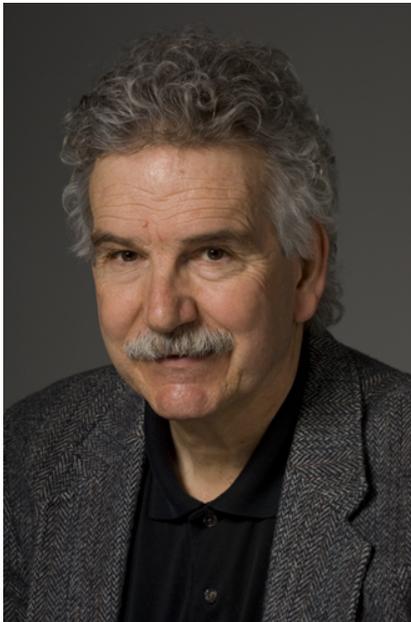
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Slavic Sins Of The Flesh Is Focus Of UNH Professor's New Book

Media Contact: [Lori Wright](#)
603-862-0574
UNH Media Relations

Sept. 2, 2009



Ronald LeBlanc

DURHAM, N.H. -- Much has been written about Russia's literary giants Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, but a new book takes a provocative new look at the writing of these masters by analyzing their use of eating as an expression for male sexual desire.

"Slavic Sins of the Flesh" (University of New Hampshire Press, 2009) by Ronald LeBlanc, professor of Russian and humanities at the University of New Hampshire, has been hailed as a path-breaking "gastro-critical" approach to the poetics of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and their contemporaries. The book is the first study to appraise the representation of food and sexuality in the 19th century Russian novel.

Meticulously researched and elegantly and accessibly written, "Slavic Sins of the Flesh" sheds new light on classic literary creations as it examines how authors Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Goncharov, Grigory Kvitka-Osnovyanenko, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Lev Tolstoy used eating in their works as a trope for male sexual desire.

"The treatment of carnal desire in these renowned works of fiction stimulated a generation of young writers to challenge Russian culture's anti-eroticism, supreme spirituality, and utter disregard for the life of the body, so firmly rooted in centuries of ideological domination by the Russian Orthodox Church," LeBlanc says.

LeBlanc's book has received critical acclaim from Russian and Slavic scholars.

"'Slavic Sins of the Flesh' offers a magisterial new reading of the Russian classics. It not only illuminates the great works of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy but also tackles larger, underlying questions of Russian culture. By analyzing representations of power and pleasure in texts both familiar and obscure, LeBlanc explores the ideals that shaped Russian society. This book is a triumph of scholarship and innovation," said Darra Goldstein, Francis Christopher Oakley Third Century Professor of Russian at Williams College and editor of "Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture."

"Ronald LeBlanc has written a marvelous study of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy from the perspective of 'gastro-criticism.' His comparison of the alimentary and psycho-sexual dynamics in their works leads to an intriguing analysis of their influences on early 20th century Russian and Soviet literature. A book to be both tasted and devoured by all readers interested in the Russian novel and early Soviet fiction," said Eric Naiman, professor of Slavic and comparative literature at the University of California-Berkeley.

LeBlanc is a professor of Russian and humanities at the University of New Hampshire and research associate at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University. He is the author of "The Russianization of Gil Blas: A Study in Literary Appropriation" and many scholarly book chapters, articles, and book reviews.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 11,800 undergraduate and 2,400 graduate students.

PHOTOS

Ronald LeBlanc

<http://www.unh.edu/news/img/ronaldleblanc.jpg>

Ronald LeBlanc on a hand-made bridge at the Tolstoy family estate at Yasnaya Polyana, Russia.

<http://www.unh.edu/news/img/leblanc2.jpg>

Cover of "Slavic Sins of the Flesh"

http://www.unh.edu/news/img/leblanc_bookcover.jpg

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