

12. He also did not attend the ceremony, but this may have been due to illness (Tolstaya 53).

13. Kuzminskaya's memoirs were only written decades later, but, given her closeness to the Tolstoys, they likely reflect the way the writer and his wife recalled these events, whatever the truth.

14. According to Tolstoy's letter to his wife of July 9, 1872, she made plans to visit Liza's estate at Khodynino.

15. Sofia Andreevna recalls visiting Liza in the 1890s (Tolstaya 765, 937).

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When Did Ivan Il'ich Die?

Chapter twelve of *The Death of Ivan Il'ich* begins by noting that Ivan's final three days were spent in incessant screaming "during which time ceased to exist for him" (131).¹ In Chapter one, though, his wife Praskovya Fyodorovna tells us she experienced those three days differently: "It was unbearable. I don't know how I bore up through it all" (43). The reader is given no other detail of the days of screaming until the final hour or hours. The narrator tells us that Ivan finally admits to himself that his life had not been "the real thing," determines that he could still make it the real thing, and asks himself what the real thing is. We are told, "This took place at the end of the third day, an hour before his death" (132). We then get the

remarkable scene of Ivan's "conversion," catalyzed by a kiss from his son Vasya. As speech begins to fail Ivan, the narrator describes Ivan's internal realization that pain, the fear of death, and indeed death itself have ceased to exist for him. Because the narrator previously set the scene in the final hour of Ivan's life, the reader naturally presumes that this conversion indeed occurs in the final hour of Ivan's life. We are told, however, that "All this happened in a single moment, but the significance of that moment was lasting. For those present, his agony continued for another *two hours*" (133, emphasis added). So which is it—one or two hours before his death?

When things happened is not very important compared to *what* things happened at the end, so readers are unlikely to notice that two inconsistent times are given. The timeline is a trivial detail that the reader's peripheral vision may catch sight of in passing, only to focus on far more important matters concerning Ivan's redemption. But having noticed the inconsistency, what are we to make of it?

The first possibility to consider is that we simply have a mistranslation. But the Russian text of the Jubilee edition (PSS) seems to unambiguously include the inconsistency: "за час до его смерти" (PSS 26: 112) is followed by "агония его продолжалась еще два часа" (26: 113). However, "за час до его смерти" could be translated loosely and idiomatically as "just before his death" rather than literally as "an hour before his death." This does not seem to be the likely solution, though, when one considers that unlike Lynn Solotaroff's translation, Aylmer Maude's translation does not have the inconsistency, instead giving us two references to two hours. While "за час до его смерти" could be translated as "just before his death," it cannot be translated the way Maude has it, as "two hours before his death."

So, a second possibility to consider is that it is not an inconsistency. Perhaps Ivan dies two deaths. Perhaps there is a physical death and a spiritual

death, or a literal death and a metaphorical death. No details, however, support this interpretation. Nor is it clear what this interpretation would really mean. Robert Bernasconi believes that the inconsistency "was perhaps no more than a slip of Tolstoy's pen" but nonetheless says "we can all the more readily separate two different descriptions of Ivan's changing relation to his own death. One simply marks the transformation of his guilt, while the other seems to refer that transformation to an encounter with his son and wife" (27–28). While Bernasconi may have a point about two different accounts being merged in the editing process, Tolstoy does not seem to have intended that two different accounts should be perceived by the reader.

A third possibility is that there is an error in the Russian text. As Julian Barnes discusses brilliantly in *Flaubert's Parrot*, *Madame Bovary* contains inconsistencies such as the color of the title character's eyes. Great authors like Flaubert and Tolstoy make mistakes. Still, how could the short text of *Ivan Il'ich* contain an inconsistency within the space of a couple of pages? We will probably never know, but one answer, suggested to me in correspondence by Michael Denner, is that the error was introduced in the editing process. Tolstoy drafted and revised passages many times, cutting and pasting parts of drafts to form a final version. That Tolstoy cut and pasted the passage under consideration seems clear not just because of the temporal inconsistency, but also because time is mentioned twice. The second mention of time (two hours) is superfluous; we already know it is the final hour of his life. The mention of two hours may have been in part of a draft that Tolstoy liked and pasted in. Perhaps, like many authors, he did not read the final page proofs carefully enough.

If this third possibility is the solution, then it is odd that Maude corrects the original Russian text by translating both time mentions as two hours. To set the action in the final hour would be more dramatic and thus would more likely be Tolstoy's

intention. If this is right, then Maude is guilty of not just the ethical misjudgment of altering the text but the aesthetic misjudgment of altering the text in a way that was not optimal.

But Maude (1934) seems vindicated when we consider that he is not the only translator to give both time mentions as two hours. In fact, other early translators have the same translation: Dole (1887), Bain (prior to 1909), and Garnett (1915). More recent translators, with the exception of Katz (2008), who revises Maude, all have the inconsistent timeline: Edmonds (1960), Wettlin (1963), Solotaroff (1981), and Pevear and Volokhonsy (2010). Presumably, all of these more recent translators worked from the Jubilee Edition, whereas the earlier translators did not. It seems reasonable, then, to conclude that earlier editions had no inconsistency in the timeline. So either there was an error introduced into the Jubilee edition or the Jubilee edition introduced an inconsistency that Tolstoy actually wanted. The former possibility seems the more likely of the two, but either possibility would be odd. Further investigation is warranted.

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Notes

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1. Unless otherwise indicated, quotations from *The Death of Ivan Il'ich* are from the Solotaroff translation.

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Lions and Dogs: Apropos of a Tolstoy Story

Tolstoy's very short story, "The Lion and the Dog" ("Лев и собачка"), from the *Second Russian Book for Reading*, has long been one of the most popular works of Russian children's literature. Even in this short note, we can quote the piece in its entirety:

Wild animals were on display in London where admission was paid in money or in dogs and cats that would be fed to the wild animals.