

and immoral marriage with Hélène. Bede has far more reason for self-accusation as he murdered his rival, John Ollivera, while Pierre only wounds his wife's lover in a duel.

Wood's moralizing on domestic themes—on the institution of marriage, for instance, which Victorians held sacred above all—has a certain correspondence to Tolstoy's outlook and his portrayal of upper class life. In these elements, the writers echo each other. Yet, these similarities are superficial—they are not pervasive or penetrating, they do not go much beneath the surface of the works.

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Notes

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Universality in *The Death of Ivan Ilich*

One of Tolstoy's greatest challenges in *The Death of Ivan Ilich* is persuading readers to accept his protagonist as a universally representative man, for Ivan Ilich is of course a rather despicable character in many respects. In short, he is a self-absorbed snob, and his most glaring faults include a blindly slavish concern for propriety and decorum and an appalling lack of compassion both in his family life and as public prosecutor and judge, where he prides himself in removing the "human element" from all legal proceedings and savors "the consciousness of his power, being able to ruin anybody he wished to ruin" (127)¹. As James Rice observes, in court Ivan Ilich "sadistically tortures the litigants, an abuse that is habitual throughout his career. [...] Let us make no mistake about the hero's personality. The judge, in fact, is a son-of-a-bitch" (83). Given that Ivan Ilich is indeed something of a "son-of-a-bitch," how is it that, as Gary Jahn says, *Ivan Ilich* "impresses the reader [. . .] above all with the evident applicability of the life and death of its protagonist to each reader individually" (9)? How does Tolstoy encourage readers to identify with Ivan Ilich?

Robert Russell's "From Individual to Universal: Tolstoy's 'Smert Ivana Il'icha'" provides the most concentrated discussion of Tolstoy's method of encouraging universal identification with Ivan Ilich. Russell follows C. J. G. Turner in believing that Tolstoy's placement of the protagonist's funeral in chapter 1, before describing his life and death in the remaining chapters, helps to "generalize" [. . .] not only spatially, as it were, but also chronologically" the "contrast between social behaviour and real feelings," the crux of Ivan Ilich's most troubling faults (Turner 120). Russell points out several "generalizing" connections between the first chapter and the subsequent narrative of Ivan Ilich's life, most notably the fact that Peter Ivanovich's refusal to heed the corpse's reproachful warning in the first chapter anticipates Ivan Ilich's later refusal to accept that the syllogism, "Caius is a man, men are mortal, therefore Caius is mortal," applies to him. Peter Ivanovich feels that the warning is "out of place, or at least not applicable to him" (Russell 114), while for Ivan Ilich, the syllogism "had always seemed [. . .] correct as applied to Caius, but certainly not as applied to himself" (Russell 147). The repetition of this denial, Russell concludes, serves to "generalize the point, to show how the trap of self-deception ensnares all men" (632). In considering Tolstoy's narrative method, Russell follows Wasiolek in noting how atypical it is for Tolstoy to engage in so much authorial "telling" in *Ivan Ilich* instead of scenic or "panoramic showing" (in Percy Lubbock's terms), the predominant mode in Tolstoy's earlier fiction. Russell observes, too, that Tolstoy's self-conscious management of time, with frequent summarizing of different periods in Ivan Ilich's life and overtly acknowledged narrative ellipses—"So Ivan Ilich lived for seventeen years," for example (Tolstoy 128)—gives the story its air of being a parable. He suggests that "Tolstoy adjusts his normal presentation of time in order to raise Ivan Ilich's life from the particular to the general so that his fiction might alter the

real lives of his readers" (Russell 635). Many have noted the representative commonness of Ivan Ilich's name, but Russell argues further, perhaps tenuously, that Tolstoy underscores Ivan Ilich's representative status in referring to him only by first name and patronymic instead of first name alone (e.g., Gerasim), first and last name (Anna Karenina), or last name alone (Schwartz). The use of first name and patronymic implies Ivan Ilich's "status as an ordinary member of a particular social class," and after listing a host of other characters called by first name and patronymic, he suggests that Ivan Ilich is made to seem all the more ordinary as "just one of many people called by their name and patronymic" (Russell 637). Among the more salient of Russell's remaining observations on Tolstoy's method of encouraging universal identification with the story are, first, the use of third-person narration instead of first person as Tolstoy originally planned, permitting shifts in perspective between the consciousness of a single character and full editorial omniscience, with overt value judgments and authorial generalizations in the narrative discourse; and second, Tolstoy's use of symbol and metaphor—figuring death as the black sack Ivan Ilich simultaneously resists and craves to enter, for instance, which may symbolize the womb and rebirth. Russell notes that "symbols are a way of organizing and controlling experience," and in *The Death of Ivan Ilich* "the symbols are used to universalize." Through metaphor Tolstoy extends the particular to the general in order to "convince his readers of what their own deaths will inevitably be like" (636).

The matter of authorial generalizations in the story's narrative discourse, a distinctive feature of "editorial omniscience" that Russell touches on only briefly, deserves closer attention. One small but vitally important part of Tolstoy's method in persuading us to identify with Ivan Ilich is that the intrusive authorial narrator makes explicit value judgments about Ivan Ilich and his circle

that he quite frequently and emphatically *tells* us are so ordinary and routine as to apply to everyone universally. Through these generalizing pronouncements, Tolstoy establishes a compelling authorial ethos that encourages our trust in the narrator's judgment, even when his claims are less valid or genuinely universal than he so confidently asserts. Josef Metzler notes that the intrusive authorial comments throughout Tolstoy's story serve to "prove the reliability of their author" (109), such that the omniscient narrator is established as having a "truthful and reliable perspective" (110).

Quite often the generalizing authorial pronouncements are delivered in expressions including the Russian words "all" (весь), or "always" (всегда), and especially the phrase, "as always" (как всегда), sometimes translated alternately, "as usual." The frequent recurrence of these expressions has a cumulative effect of rhetorical accretion, encouraging and reinforcing the seemingly inevitable universality of Tolstoy's observations to the extent that we find ourselves nodding and thinking, "Yes, this is indeed how it always is, for all of us."

These sorts of ethos-building "as always" statements abound in the opening chapter. In describing Peter Ivanovich's entry into the room containing Ivan Ilich's casket, Tolstoy writes that:

Peter Ivanovich, like everyone else on such occasions [*как всегда* это бывает (PSS 63 emphasis added, here and in passages in Russian below), lit. "as always this happens"], entered feeling uncertain what he would have to do. All he knew was that at such times it is always safe to cross oneself. But he was not quite sure whether one should make obeisances while doing so. (113)

While the reader's specific customs may not include genuflecting or making the sign of the cross, we can probably all accept that Peter Ivanovich's discomfort and uncertainty are indeed

feelings like those everyone normally has on such occasions. The description of the corpse, too, contains generalizing "as always" statements:

The dead man lay, as dead men always lie [*как всегда* лежат мертвецы (PSS 64)], in a specially heavy way, his rigid limbs sunk in the soft cushions of the coffin, with the head forever bowed on the pillow. His yellow waxy brow with bald patches over his sunken temples was thrust up in the way peculiar to the dead [*как всегда* выставляют мертвецы (PSS 64), lit. "as always exhibited by the dead"], the protruding nose seeming to press on the upper lip. He was much changed and grown even thinner since Peter Ivanovich had last seen him, but, as is always the case with the dead [*как у всех* мертвецов (PSS 64), lit. "as with all the dead"], his face was handsomer and above all more dignified than when he was alive. (114)

Here the narrator makes three generalizations on how the dead *always* appear in open caskets: rigidly heavy, with forehead pressing upward, presumably the effect of a pillow, and solemnly dignified—a description most would probably accept as typically accurate.

Later, in describing the decor of the Petersburg home which Ivan Ilich takes such care in supervising, the narrator again offers generalizing commentary extending beyond the world of the story:

In reality, it was just what is usually seen in the houses of people of moderate means [*что бывает у всех* не совсем богатых людей (PSS 79), lit. "what happens with all not entirely wealthy people"] who want to appear rich, and therefore succeed only in resembling others like themselves: there were damasks, dark wood, plants, rugs, and dull and polished bronzes—all the things people of a certain class have in order to resemble other people of that class [*всё то, что все* известного рода

люди делают, чтобы быть похожими на всех людей известного рода (PSS 79)]. (132)

The recurrence of the Russian “everything” and “all” (всё and все) in the last bracketed passage indicates a softening of the emphatic strength of the narrator’s claim in the Maude translation; a more literal rendering would be “*everything* that *all* people of a certain class do in order to resemble *all* others of that certain class.” Although we know the moderately well-to-do often decorate their homes in strikingly different styles, the force of Tolstoy’s insistence, even softened in translation, still encourages us to feel, “Yes, I know just what he means. There is a certain similarity in how the would-be wealthy decorate their homes with the same types of furnishings.”

Two paragraphs later are two more “as always” generalizations in a single sentence:

So they began living in their new home—in which, as always happens [как всегда], when they got thoroughly settled in they found they were just one room short—and with the increased income, which as always [как всегда] (PSS 83-84) was just a little (some five hundred rubles) too little, but it was all very nice. (132)

Most readers can probably identify with this generalization from firsthand experience: Even when we get raises and move into larger homes, we do often soon find ourselves thinking that our finances are still tighter than we would have expected or discovering that we could still use more space. A few paragraphs further on, Tolstoy echoes his judgment of the Golovins as being like all others of their class when describing their entertaining:

Ivan Ilich’s chief pleasure was giving little dinners to which he invited men and women of good social position, and just as his drawing-room resembled all other drawing-rooms [похожа на все гостиные] so did his enjoya-

ble little parties resemble all other such parties [похоже на обыкновенное препровождение времени таких людей (PSS 81)]. (134)

Here as well, Tolstoy encourages readers to agree simply by suggesting with such conviction, “this is always how it is with these parties—you know the sort I mean.” Tolstoy persuades us to accept these pronouncements on how things are, universally, sometimes even despite our having experience to the contrary. The absolute certainty expressed in these pronouncements encourages all but the most resistant among us to accept them, even if, for instance, we have upper-middle-class friends whose parties do not resemble each other’s at all, or if in fact our expenses do not catch up to our means within months of getting a sizeable raise in pay.

Tolstoy is on unequivocally solid ground when describing how office visits at the doctor’s *always* seem to go:

Everything took place as he had expected and as it always does [как всегда делается (PSS 83)]. There was the usual waiting and the important air assumed by the doctor [. . .] and the sounding and listening, and the questions which called for answers that were foregone conclusions and were evidently unnecessary, and the look of importance which implied that “if only you put yourself in our hands, we will arrange everything—we know indubitably how it has to be done, always in the same way for everybody alike.” [. . .] The doctor said that so-and-so indicated that there was so-and-so inside the patient, but if the investigation of so-and-so did not confirm this, then he must assume that and that. If he assumed that and that, then. . . and so on. (137)

Who among us has not waited long past a scheduled appointment time to be seen by a doctor? And while doctors certainly do not all fit the mold

Tolstoy describes, it is probably not uncommon that doctors do impress their patients as having just such an air of knowing superiority with the technical jargon Tolstoy conveys as “so and so” and “that and that.” Equally convincing is the narrator’s generalization on the discussion of the theatre in Ivan Ilich’s sick room between his wife and their daughter and her fiancé. Praskovya Fedorovna and Lisa recall various roles played by Sarah Bernhardt, and:

Conversation sprang up as to the elegance and realism of her acting—the sort of conversation that is always repeated and is always the same [ТОТ САМЫЙ РАЗГОВОР, КОТОРЫЙ ВСЕГДА БЫВАЕТ ОДИН И ТОТ ЖЕ (PSS 104)]. (160)

Tolstoy has no need of elaborating here, for we can probably all imagine precisely the sort of conversation he has in mind.

In all these sweeping pronouncements on how various things are *always* just so, Tolstoy builds ethos and inspires the reader’s trust in the narrator’s perspective. But the accumulating ethos also enables him to present more debatable matters as inevitably, *always* so with persuasive impact as well. Two of the more questionable “as always” statements in the funeral scene are particularly important to Tolstoy’s message on people’s denial of their own ultimate mortality. In describing the reactions of Ivan Ilich’s colleagues upon learning he is dead, Tolstoy relates that their first thoughts are of how his death might bring them promotions or increased influence since filling his vacant seat on the bench could have a ripple effect reaching each of them. The narrator observes that beyond these thoughts, “the mere fact of the death of a near acquaintance aroused, as usual [как всегда], in all who heard of it the complacent feeling that, ‘it is he who is dead and not I’” (112). The same sentiment is reiterated when Peter Ivanovich realizes that death might come to him unbidden at any time just as it has for Ivan Ilich.

Tolstoy writes that for a brief instant Peter Ivanovich is terrified:

But—he did not himself know how—the customary reflection [ОБЫЧНАЯ МЫСЛЬ (PSS 67)] at once occurred to him that this had happened to Ivan Ilich and not to him, and that it should not and could not happen to him, and that to think that it could would be yielding to depression which he ought not to do. (118)

Here Tolstoy employs the “as always” and the “customary” (обычная) to urge us to feel, “Yes, this is how we usually do think,” universally, when in fact Tolstoy’s assessment of typical responses to the deaths of acquaintances may not be so accurate as the narrator suggests. The more truly customary reflection when seeing an acquaintance laid out in a casket is that we are reminded quite forcibly of our own mortality, particularly when the deceased is middle-aged or younger. Rather than thinking complacently, “it is he who is dead and not I,” we are perhaps more prone to think, “If it can happen to him, it can happen to me too.” Still, even with such debatable generalizations, the bold assuredness of the narratorial voice making these pronouncements is likely to hold persuasive sway with all but the most intensely resistant readers.

These generalizing “as always” observations regarding a variety of characters in different situations do not, of course, on their own influence readers to believe that *The Death of Ivan Ilich* applies to all people universally. Probably the most crucial factor in the story’s universal appeal is Tolstoy’s increasingly sympathetic portrayal of this unlikable but scared and lonely man in the later chapters as he approaches the verge of that mysterious abyss which lies before us all. We know Tolstoy had a lifelong fear and dread of death, and in essence, this story speaks to virtually everyone universally because we all have a similar fear of death which most of us suppress except perhaps in isolated moments. We can probably all

relate to Ivan Ilich in knowing intellectually that we will die, but believing, unless we are confronted very personally with life-threatening danger, that our mortality is something we can postpone reckoning with until some indefinite later time. Tolstoy plays to our own instinctive fear of dying before we are ready to go, of having quite suddenly to be accountable for our lives as a whole when many, perhaps most of us, have not yet made time to consider too deeply whether we have been making truly the best use of our lives—like Ivan Ilich, we concentrate instead on making things “pleasant,” “comfortable,” “easy,” and “agreeable.” *The Death of Ivan Ilich* appeals to all of us universally because at its very core on the most fundamental level of plot—a man struck down by terminal illness in his prime—it speaks to our universal fear of dying before we think *our* time should come.

But in combination with this appeal to our primal fears on the simplest level of plot, and in conjunction with the full array of rhetorical tactics and strategies Russell, Turner, Wasiolek and others describe Tolstoy bringing to bear upon the reader in *Ivan Ilich*—the ordering of chapters, the use of third-person editorial omniscience rather than first person, “telling” instead of “showing,” the careful selection of metaphors, and more—Tolstoy’s use of so many “inevitably” and “as always” generalizations serves a subtle but significant function in getting readers to identify with Ivan Ilich despite our aversion to his more troubling and offensive attitudes and actions.

By emphasizing that *we, too*, have had to wait to be seen by self-important doctors, that *we, too*, have been uncomfortable in the presence of a widow freshly in mourning, that *we, too*, have discovered that a raise or a larger home did not give us quite the breathing room we expected, Tolstoy persuades us to identify closely both with the narrator making the generalizations and with Ivan Ilich and Peter Ivanovich and their entire circle.

Tolstoy uses these sweeping universalizing pronouncements to bring us subtly but surely closer to these characters we would emphatically hope not to resemble or to relate to in the least: selfish and shallow people guided by what others deem “proper” and so concerned with their own comfort and ease that they have no real compassion for those around them, even their own families and closest friends. As noted above, this may be the greatest challenge Tolstoy faced in composing *Ivan Ilich*, getting readers to identify with characters whose values and behavior are ultimately reprehensible. And with accumulating force and nearly imperceptible stealth, the “as always” generalizing authorial comments play a crucial role in Tolstoy’s success in meeting this challenge.

One of the key facets of Tolstoy’s greatness is his ability to make readers think repeatedly, “I know just this sort of character,” “I have been in just that situation,” or “I have had that very same thought.” Regardless of who we are—Russian, American, Japanese, or Venezuelan—and regardless of our distance in time from the late nineteenth-century Russian world Tolstoy depicts, peopled with characters ranging from peasants to princesses, we continually find ourselves identifying to an almost uncanny extent with Tolstoy’s characters. It is this strong sense of identification with his characters that led Matthew Arnold to say that in *Anna Karenina* Tolstoy created not art, but “a piece of life” (412). It is this close identification with Tolstoy’s characters that prompted Percy Lubbock to say of *War and Peace*:

The business of the novelist is to create life, and here is life created indeed! [. . .] Peter and Andrew and Natasha and the rest of them are the children of yesterday and to-day and to-morrow; there is nothing in any of them that is not of all time. (Lubbock 29-30)

So often we have felt *just that same* excitement Natasha feels at a much-anticipated party, we

have felt *just that same* guilt weighing so heavily on Pierre after a night of carousing, we have felt *just that same* frustration Andrei Bolkonski has when dealing with his aging father. The greatest part of Tolstoy's magic in creating *life* resides in his uncommon ability to see so deeply into what lies within us all, what unites us universally as living, breathing persons in the most fundamental ways. But part of the magic resides, too, in his subtle but profoundly effective rhetorical encouragement of our identification with even such unattractive characters as Ivan Ilich. There is more to his method, certainly, but the encouragement to identify closely with his characters is effected in no small part through Tolstoy's frequent habit of saying simply and with unshakable confidence, "this is how it is for us all," как всегда, "as always."

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Notes

1. Quotations from *Death of Ivan Ilich* are from the Maudes' translation; references to the Russian are taken from the *Complete Collected Works* (Полное собрание сочинений, PSS).

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Tolstoy's Hieromonk

(Editor's note: This research note will be further developed in an article, "Terror Un-sublimated: Hieromonks, Revolution and Tolstoy Last Master Plots," forthcoming in *Tolstoy Studies Journal* Volume XXII (2010). See Hugh McLean's translation of "Hieromonk Iliodor" immediately following this note, in "The Whole World of Tolstoy.")

The Later Tolstoy's Plans, Fragments and Plots: a Problem

When Tolstoy died November 7, 1910 (November 20, new style) at Astapovo, he had published ten editions of his collected works in Russia with new ones in preparation. Dozens of editions had been published abroad in European languages, including his work forbidden in Russia. Within a few years of his passing, his diaries, letters and other artistic works banned in Russia during his lifetime finally saw the light of day, including unpublished masterpieces such as *Khadzhi Murad*. In these first years after Tolstoy's death the first generation