

fear because there was no death" and "Well, all right, let there be pain") exemplifies what Rancour-Laferriere here and elsewhere (*Tolstoy on the Couch: Misogyny, Masochism, and the Absent Mother* [1998] and *The Slave Soul of Russia: Moral Masochism and the Cult of Suffering* [1996]) terms "moral masochism." Rancour-Laferriere rejects the transcendent aperture opened by the text, arguing that we see, instead of a magnificent illumination, a monstrously enlarging, grandiose self: "Such," Rancour-Laferriere trenchantly declaims, "is Tolstoy's covert religious message. One becomes God upon dying, or rather, one becomes God instead of dying" (129).

The pieces reprinted here include George Gutsche's discussion of the problem of didacticism in his "Moral Fiction: Tolstoy's *Death of Ivan Il'ich*," Rimgaila Salys's study of Tolstoy's use of the road as metaphor for life in "Signs on the Road of Life: *The Death of Ivan Il'ich*" and Philip Roger's "Scrooge on the Neva: Dickens and Tolstoy's *Death of Ivan Il'ich*." The last piece is a classic of literary criticism on Tolstoy, one of the few articles exploring Tolstoy's relationship to Dickens, and a superb reading of the story, which well deserves to be reprinted and made widely available.

The collection is rounded off with an ample presentation of textual annotations and a select bibliography. The result is a critical companion that is bound to become a well-thumbed resource for those teaching or writing on *The Death of Ivan Il'ich*.

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**Vasily Staroi. *Pierre and Natasha. The Sequel to L. N. Tolstoy's Novel War and Peace*. Moscow: Vagrius Publishers, 1996. 2 vols.**

The publishers of Vasily Staroi's (the name is a pseudonym for an anonymous author or group

of authors) *Pierre and Natasha* describe the novel as "something along the lines of a sequel ... but more like a fantasy on the theme of *War and Peace*. Or perhaps a historical novel about the Decembrists where the heroes of Tolstoy's novel interact on the same level with real historical personages" (I:5). This hybrid work melds the aforementioned genres with heavy-handed literary parody to give us an alternatively entertaining and excruciating read.

Obviously conversant with Tolstoy scholarship, Staroi tells us the story of Pierre Bezukhov's involvement with the Decembrist uprising and his subsequent exile to Siberia, using the discarded plot developments from numerous drafts of *War and Peace*. He endeavours to match the epic sweep of Tolstoy's original with a variety of trivial story lines related to Nikolai Rostov, Princess Marie, and Sonia. At the conclusion of Tolstoy's epilogue, Pierre appears to belong to a proto-Decembrist group. The sequel begins with Pierre as the primary theoretician of the Decembrist movement, illustrating his progression from political theorist to reluctant actor in the Decembrist revolt. In the second volume, Staroi illustrates the aftereffects of the uprising on the lives of the Bezukhovs and Rostovs. Natasha attempts to exonerate her incarcerated husband by seeking an audience with Tsar Nicholas, who mercifully pardons him. However, Pierre believes that Natasha has compromised her honour in order to gain mercy and tries to kill Nicholas in revenge. He loses the clemency granted earlier, and Natasha reluctantly follows him into exile. Staroi obviously collapses the fictional and the historical in his combination of Pierre with the Decembrist Sergei Volkonskii (the great uncle of Leo Tolstoy) and in the melding of Natasha with Maria Volkonskaia (*née* Raevskaia). In this synthetic text, Staroi also blends the historical events with literary parody, mimicking some of the most famous moments in Russian literature. The scene of the Decembrists' uprising blatantly imitates *War and Peace's* Borodino battlefield scene, with an overlay of Blok's *The Twelve* and Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman*.

The publishers marketed the book to a mass audience, hoping to capitalize on the appeal of the original classic to the greater population: "A new meeting with old friends—the heroes of *War and Peace*—awaits you. [...] The author's unexpected discoveries: Alexander Pushkin, in love with the Empress Elizaveta Alekseevna, dedicates to her—his muse—the verses "Ia pomniu chudnoe mgnovenie," ... Nikolai Rostov is occupied with state problems but with household and amorous affairs. Intrigues, gossip, conspiracies."<sup>1</sup> Though the sequel tried to garner a large audience by riding on the coattails of the original, it did not manage to make it onto the bestseller lists after its publication. Instead, it alienated the mass readership with its idiosyncratic mix of parody and historical reevaluation, and its unfaithful depictions of beloved literary characters. It also distanced the scholarly audience by attempting to add to a closed canonical text, thus trivializing a literary classic.

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### Notes

1. *Knizhnoe obozrenie* 12 (19 March 1996).

**Paolo and Vittorio Taviani's *Saint Michael Had a Rooster* (San Michele aveva un gallo, 1971): A Cinematic Re-creation of Tolstoy's *Divine and Human* (Bozheskoe i chelovecheskoe).**

An important cinematic masterpiece of the Italian 1970s has recently become available in videocassette in North America. This is the Taviani brothers' 1971 feature film *Saint Michael Had a Rooster* (San Michele aveva un gallo),<sup>1</sup> inspired by Tolstoy's *Divine and Human* (1906),<sup>2</sup> and strongly influenced by the almost literally revolutionary atmosphere of the times when it was made.

The Tavianis' film portrays the fate of a

fictional nineteenth-century Italian revolutionist, Giulio Manieri, who in vain attempts to foment a revolt in the central part of the peninsula, is jailed for long years, and by a skillful combination of discipline and fantasy successfully manages to withstand the trials of protracted isolation. Manieri, however, eventually collapses into utter despair when, during a transfer from one jail to another, he realizes from a coincidental encounter with younger revolutionaries that the political line to which he clings is superannuated and incompatible with that of the following generation. When he witnesses the scorn the younger subversives pour upon his convictions, Manieri flings himself to his death from the boat that is transporting him.<sup>3</sup>

A brief recapitulation of *Divine and Human* reveals the extent to which the film follows Tolstoy and where it departs from his text. While the Tavianis focus on one death only, Tolstoy's novella harks back to a triple parallelism already tested long before in *Three Deaths* [*Tri smerti* (1859)]. The three deaths examined in *Divine and Human* are tightly intertwined. The story's first protagonist is Svetlogub, a revolutionary sentenced to death for giving logistic support to the terrorist activities of his group—a group headed by the iron-willed leader Mezhenetskii. Despite his involvement in a violent form of subversion, Svetlogub is mild natured. In jail, he meditates on the Gospel. He lives out in peace the last few days before his execution, and when he dies, he dies serenely, exerting a profound impression on one of his elder prison mates—Tolstoy's second protagonist. This is an Old Believer who views the present social state as a direct expression of the power of the modern Antichrist, the Tsar. Stunned by Svetlogub's inner tranquility, the old man assumes that the lad must have beheld ineffable visions.

The third protagonist of the novella is Mezhenetskii himself. One day he, too, is captured, and by coincidence he is jailed in the same institution as the Old Believer. When the old man learns about this, he asks to meet the comrade of that other "luminous youth" [*svetlyi iunoshia*] he used to know. Needless to say,