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APPROVAL FOR THE REPRINT OF AN ARTICLE
ENTITLED
"SPERANSKI'S DINNER AND THE DUALITY OF WAR AND PEACE"

November 4, 1983

RESOLVED,

That, provided the original locus of publication is identified, permission is granted for the reprint, with slight modifications, of an article entitled "Speranski's Dinner and the Duality of War and Peace" in a volume to be published by the Cornell University Press in 1984, the said article having originally appeared in volume 9, number 2 of the Connecticut Review, dated May, 1976.

A Certified True Copy:

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Executive Director

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November 8, 1983

Dr. W. Wolfgang Holdheim
Professor and Chairman of
Comparative Literature
Cornell University
College of Arts & Sciences
Goldwin Smith Hall
Ithaca, NY 14853

Dear Professor Holdheim:

Enclosed is a copy of Board Resolution #83-135, dated November 4, 1983, which gives permission for the reprinting of your article. We are pleased that it will be published in a volume to be issued by the Cornell University Press.

Sincerely,

Joseph Bardani

encl.



THE CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

P.O. Box 2008 • New Britain, Connecticut 06050 • (203) 827-7700

October 17, 1983

Dr. W. Wolfgang Holdheim
Professor and Chairman of
Comparative Literature
Cornell University
College of Arts & Sciences
Goldwin Smith Hall
Ithaca, NY 14853

Dear Professor Holdheim:

I have your letter of October 7 concerning the article in the Connecticut Review. This magazine is no longer published and, for that reason, the editorial board no longer exists. The Board of Trustees will be asked to approve the reprint of your article at its next meeting which will be held on November 4. I will inform you of the Board's decision. I anticipate that approval will be given gladly.

Sincerely,

Joseph Bardani

Central Connecticut State University • New Britain
Eastern Connecticut State University • Willimantic

Southern Connecticut State University • New Haven
Western Connecticut State University • Danbury

CORNELL UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
GOLDWIN SMITH HALL
ITHACA, N. Y. 14853

Department of Comparative Literature

October 7, 1983

Mr. J. Bardani
c/o Board of Trustees
Connecticut State University
P.O. Box 2008
New Britain, CT 06050

Dear Mr. Bardani:

I called your office today but was informed that you were away at the moment. I thereby am writing with regard for permission to reprint an article, with some slight modifications, which appeared in the last issue of Connecticut Review, published by the Board of Trustees (May 1976, vol. 9, no. 2). The article is called, "Speranski's Dinner and The Duality of War and Peace," in a volume of my critical and theoretical essays to be published by the Cornell University Press next year. Naturally, the original locus of publication will be identified in the volume. I would appreciate it if you could kindly grant this permission and am looking forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



W. Wolfgang Holdheim
Professor and Chairman
of Comparative Literature
Frederic J. Whiton Professor
of Liberal Studies

WWH/pw

RECEIVED

OCT 11 1983

THE CONNECTICUT
STATE UNIVERSITY

FILMING AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY

This is surely a novel and provocative point in considering the relationship between literature and film. Traditionally the internal monologue is regarded as a process of unvoiced verbalization. Through his divorce of internal monologue from the word and its transferral, by means of montage, into pictorial terms, Eisenstein achieved a significant break-through in cinematographic technique, as becomes apparent from a comparison of his scenario for *An American Tragedy* with the films of Sternberg and Stevens. Through its innovative methods, Eisenstein's film, had it been made, might well—notwithstanding its blatant ideological bias—have come close to catching the essential ambivalence of Dreiser's novel.

SPERANSKI'S DINNER AND THE DUALITY OF *WAR AND PEACE*

by

W. WOLFGANG HOLDHEIM

While still in the anteroom Prince Andrew heard loud voices and a ringing staccato laugh—a laugh such as one hears on the stage. Someone—it sounded like Speránski—was distinctly ejaculating *ha-ha-ha*. Prince Andrew had never before heard Speránski's famous laugh, and this ringing, high-pitched laughter from a statesman made a strange impression on him.¹

This is Tolstoy's description of Prince Andrew Bolkónski's arrival at a dinner given by the powerful Speránski, Czar Alexander's current favorite. In a nutshell, it contains the entire atmosphere surrounding that reformer and his work. Speránski wants to rationalize the organization of the Russian state—an attempt that can hardly have the sympathy of the author of *War and Peace*, who believes that history is not subject to the dictates of human will and reason. The reform movement is largely the result of Western influences, as represented in Speránski's period by Tolstoy's *bête d'aversion*, Napoleon. The objectionable filiation between the upstart Emperor and the Petersburg reformer is suggested in various ways. Speránski dominates the period of détente between France and Russia after the two rulers' meeting in Tilsit. Napoleonic France is clearly the model of his reformatory efforts. His unappetizingly white hands are a characteristic he shares with Bonaparte, and a typical Tolstoyan *Leitmotiv*. His smile is expressionless, that of the Corsican adventurer is artificial: both have that automatic quality which reflects distance from the concrete fullness of life. In fact both statesmen are represented as actors who live in a world of make-believe. The insubstantiality of the histrionic is one of the main themes of Tolstoy's novel; it culminates in the notorious opera performance during which Natásha Rostóva meets her seducer Anatole. The seduction takes place under the aegis of high society, as symbolized by the Countess Hélène—another character with a puppet-like smile. Indeed the social sphere

¹ Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Maude translation, ed. by George Gibian (New York, Norton Critical Edition, 1966), p. 508. Page references in the text will refer to that edition. The dinner is described in ch. 10 of Book VI.

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is throughout associated with empty theatricality. It is no coincidence that Prince Andrew, who after all works for Spéranski, is never shown to meet him at the ministry but always at social functions: first at a soirée, then at the dinner we are dealing with and to which we now want to return.

The imperial favorite's staccato laughter is an intensified résumé of his unnatural smile. In fact all his negative characteristics are summed up and accentuated in the dinner chapter, rendering him reprehensible beyond endurance. Never has it become so obvious that his intelligence is superficial and that he has no grip on deeper things. Nothing important or even serious is discussed at the occasion. The anecdotes concern the stupidity of all those who do not belong to Spéranski's intimate circle. Arguments are not permitted to arise, except perhaps when they serve purposes of personal self-aggrandizement. And Spéranski clearly emerges as the sole principle of this rarefied inauthenticity. His "mirrorlike, impenetrable eyes" (p. 510) bespeak a soulless estrangement from reality. The theme of his white hands recurs more frequently than ever before. Revealingly, a sensible conversation gets underway the moment he leaves the room—but his re-entry initiates an immediate reversion to forced merriment, highlighted by the recitation of backbiting verses in theatrical poses (p. 510). No wonder (we cannot help thinking) that Bolkónski leaves in disgust and forthwith breaks with the circle, whose futility he has recognized at last.

This reminds us that it is after all Bolkónski who has to go through this social nightmare. His sensitive ears are struck by those loud voices and by that oppressively deliberate *ha-ha-ha*. If we look carefully at our initial passage, we see how closely it sticks to the Prince's personal impressions, and to the way they unfold within his particular mental horizon. Andrew's very position in the anteroom is crucial, guaranteeing a distantiation that jolts the disembodied voices out of focus and rendering them (a true example of Formalist *ostranenie!*) perceptible with a kind of distorted acuteness. At first, the newly arrived guest can only think of an unidentified stage laugh. "Someone—it sounded like Spéranski": the process of identification is gradual, as we see. It is completed by the recognition of the celebrity's "famous" laughter. Is it at all likely that the reformer's close collaborator had actually never "heard" that well-known sound, or had he merely failed to register its newly perceived quality, so that the final sentence expresses not fact but the impression of estrangement which its concluding words affirm? The very possibility of the question, I think, suffices to characterize the passage: it is a classic example of *style indirect libre*, of *erlebte Rede*, presenting a character's subjective reactions in the guise of "objective" narration. And this goes for the whole account of the soirée. The *views* may be the author's, but the *point of view* is squarely Andrew's. Yet don't the two here come to coincide? In the course of that evening, so it seems, the Prince comes to realize his previous error and to see matters in their true perspective.

Such a realization, however, was not entirely foreseeable for the reader. After all, the atmosphere at Spéranski's is not completely inimical to what we know about Andrew's nature. He is very much a cold rationalist, like his Friderician father. True, he has always been critical of social histrionics, but never in the

DUALITY OF WAR AND PEACE

name of human feeling: a detached cerebral scepticism, not unlike Speránski's chilly intellectuality, is his sphere. A proud and vain man, Bolkónski is by no means averse to poking fun at others, and has a long record of ironically exposing the stupidity of his fellow men. It can in fact be easily understood how he had got into Speránski's circle. "Prince Andrew looked at the laughing Speránski with astonishment, regret, and disillusionment. It seemed to him that this was not Speránski but someone else" (p. 509). Again the effect of estrangement, but the perspective is somewhat faulty: it would seem to be Andrew, not his superior, who has become another man. This is a rather basic transformation which must have been in the making for some time: Tolstoy's novel works with psychological processes and motivations, not with sudden acts of grace. And upon checking, we find indeed that Andrew had not entered the anteroom without previous misgivings. How had he spent his time before he heard that unpleasant laugh?

Next day Prince Andrew thought of the ball, but his mind did not dwell on it long. "Yes, it was a very brilliant ball," and then. . . "Yes, that little Rostóva is very charming. There's something fresh, original, un-Petersburg-like about her that distinguishes her." That was all he thought about yesterday's ball, and after his morning tea he set to work. (P. 507)

This is the beginning of that chapter and that day. It is dominated by the thought of the previous night's party—a memory which Prince Andrew (in the way of many busy people, or so it seems) nonchalantly classifies and stacks away before passing on to more important matters. The ball was "very brilliant" and that little girl with whom he had happened to dance was "very charming": the classification has nothing unusual. Is it not in fact more stereotype than we could expect? Andrew, an acid critic of that type of social gathering, is not really prone to such clichés. He is more recognizable in his appreciation of Natásha's originality, but even here his reaction remains banal. Also, it is purely *en passant*; Natásha has entered his mind only in the wider context of the party, which is itself not very important: "That was all he thought about yesterday's ball. . . ." But is not this assurance unexpectedly emphatic? "His mind did not dwell on it long": the gentleman, methinks, protests too much. For it is he again, Andrew, whose mental processes we follow; we are still in the domain of the *style indirect libre*. And if we keep this in mind, it becomes obvious that Andrew is trying to repress and minimize the memory of the ball (no: of Natásha). Is he successful? Let us continue:

But either from fatigue or want of sleep he was ill-disposed for work and could get nothing done. He kept criticizing his own work, as he often did, and was glad when he heard someone coming. (P. 507)

He is absent-minded, and it cannot be denied that the ball must be to blame. But not (heaven help!) the memory of Natásha: it is quite simply a matter of tiredness. Again an escape into banality—and into uncharacteristic vagueness, for what is the difference between "fatigue" and "want of sleep"? Besides, the consideration is safely deflected from the causes to the symptoms ("his own work"), and from the particular occasion to a recurrent state of mind ("as he often did").

The new arrival is Bitski, who is received gladly at this moment, the more so since he is bound to speak about those serious political matters that weigh

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so heavily on Andrew's mind. Significantly, however, the value of Bitski's news is from the outset undercut by a negative account of his character: he is nothing but an opportunist and a gossip. He brings news about the reformist stance publicly adopted by the Czar in opening the Council of State. A new era in Russian history seems to have been inaugurated—but Andrew can only listen "with quiet irony" (p. 517) to the account of an event which he had eagerly expected. He is himself surprised by his reaction. This is how he resolves the problem:

A very simple thought occurred to him: "What does it matter to me or to Bitski what the Emperor was pleased to say at the Council? Can all that make me any happier or better?"

And this simple reflection suddenly destroyed all the interest Prince Andrew had felt in the impending reforms. (Pp. 507-508).

His orientation appears to be changed by a simple self-evident consideration, a veritable clear and distinct idea in the manner of Descartes. The Emperor's words mean nothing to Bitski and to myself: that is a philosophical reflection, encompassing his interlocutor (and, by implication, all men) in its generality. "Can all that make *me* any happier or better?" The cat is halfway out of the bag: the universality of the thought is seriously impaired by the exclusiveness of the "I"—and happiness (perhaps even love?) moves to the center of the stage, imperfectly concealed by an ethical criterion (that of betterment) which is added as an afterthought. And what about the suddenness with which the reflection, such as it may be, is said to destroy Prince Andrew's political interests? We know that the destruction of those interests had occurred well before that questionable incursion of Cartesianism. Bolkónski's gut reaction had preceded the "rational" revelation which is actually nothing but the rationalization of an irrational state of mind that remains unidentified by the protagonist. This is the mood in which the Prince reluctantly goes to Spéranski's party, and in which the reformer's laughter strikes his ear.

It should be clear by now that Andrew is far from viewing things in their true perspective. He is a radically unreliable reflector, guided by feelings he refuses to recognize or admit. His change of heart is after all quite sudden, and is not due to reasoned insight but to the previous evening's *coup de foudre*, which he (who has once before been hurt by emotional entanglements) is still desperately trying to ignore. If his point of view coincides with Tolstoy's opinions, the fact can hardly do much to bolster the cognitive value of the latter. And nevertheless one could almost be persuaded. The rapid reader can easily miss the ironic subtlety of the contrast between true and false motivation in the initial paragraphs, and be captivated by Andrew's prejudiced viewpoint, which becomes entirely dominant in the subsequent account. It might be argued, therefore, that we should take Tolstoy at face value, just as in the opera scene where Natásha's subjective perspective potently transmits the author's contempt of that musical genre. For all practical intents and purposes, it could be assumed that the gap between objective truth and subjective experience, ideology and narration is effectively bridged by Tolstoy's art.

I believe that such arguments should be rejected by the critic. It is his excruciatingly exhilarating task to go beyond general intents and purposes, to

DUALITY OF WAR AND PEACE

read closely and critically, and to believe that precisely hidden contradictions can be meaningful. And in this particular case, the critic's professional assumption may prove something less than perverse. Perhaps the Speránski dinner will turn out to be more problematical than the opera performance, and Tolstoy's ideology might yet reveal itself as less assured than it may seem. In the chapter at hand, that ideology has hitherto appeared only by negative indirection. Its direct statement comes in the very last paragraph, when Andrew draws the lesson from his day's experience:

He thought of the meetings of a committee of which Berg was a member. He remembered how carefully and at what length everything relating to form and procedure was discussed at those meetings, and how sedulously and promptly all that related to the gist of the business was evaded. He recalled his labors on the Legal Code, and how painstakingly he had translated the articles of the Roman and French Codes into Russian, and he felt ashamed of himself. Then he vividly pictured to himself Boguchárovo, his occupations in the country, his journey to Ryazán; he remembered the peasants and Dron the village elder, and mentally applying to them the Personal Rights he had divided into paragraphs, he felt astonished that he could have spent so much time on such useless work. (P. 511)

Reform and Westernizing rationalism, connected with the primacy of empty form over content and with the sphere of social climbing as represented by Berg: these aspects of inauthenticity which permeate the entire novel are here restated in a concentrated way. By contrast, the realm of authenticity is the everyday life of the Russian peasant, in its concrete proximity to nature. This is Tolstoy's familiar philosophical conviction, and Andrew seems to have come around to it at last. But has he really, is this what follows from his preoccupations? If we consent to look closely, we discover that these considerations are far from corresponding to his deeper feelings. Actually they are not even new with him. After all, he had tried out that landowners' existence amongst his *mushiks*, and had left it four months earlier because of overriding boredom. Will he at least return to it, now the truth has struck him with such force? By no means. Instead, he will devote himself to his romantic wooing of Natásha—an enterprise hardly in keeping with such populist ideals. We are still dealing with the self-deceiving Andrew, who is ready to mobilize an entire philosophy of life to hide his real motives. The logic of this character's development simply does not correspond to the logic of the author's demonstration. The final paragraph of the chapter reaffirms and underscores the unbridgeable gap between narration and ideology.

Let us look at that ideology where it is stated more authoritatively, in the author's own name. The Sixth Book, with which we have hitherto been concerned, is introduced by a striking passage:

In 1809 the intimacy between "the world's two arbiters," as Napoleon and Alexander were called, was such that when Napoleon declared war on Austria a Russian corps crossed the frontier to co-operate with our old enemy Bonaparte against our old ally the Emperor of Austria, and in court circles the possibility of marriage between Napoleon and one of Alexander's sisters was spoken of. But besides considerations of foreign policy, the attention of Russian society was at that time keenly directed on the internal changes that were being undertaken in all the departments of government.

Life meanwhile—real life, with its essential interests of health and sickness, toil and rest, and its intellectual interests in thought, science, poetry, music, love, friendship,

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The contrast is the same as that in Andrew's questionable "conversion," on a putatively higher level of generality. "Real life" is opposed to an existence of empty forms and gestures. This well-known Tolstoyan polarity, however, is presented in a very puzzling way. What do its opposite poles really represent? The first paragraph deals (among others and above all) with such matters as domestic reform and foreign war, which certainly pertain to the unfolding of a meaningful historical process. The second paragraph refers to those recurrent human concerns that are not bound to any time and place. Ultimately, it is symbolized by the life of "the peasants and Dron the village elder."

The basic contrast, then, is one between history and nature. But Tolstoy is embarked on an enterprise both insidious and fundamental. By means of certain twists and associations, some subtle and others not so subtle, he tries to subvert that traditional polarization and to transform its very meaning. History is the realm of conscious and volitional human action, the domain of the spirit as opposed to nature—such, at least, has been our assumption ever since the Judeo-Christian tradition began to shape our concept of history and time. What is Tolstoy's procedure in the first paragraph? He banalizes the eminently historical activities of foreign policy and legislation, reducing them to superficial and ineffective dynastic interests; thus in effect he despiritualizes history and devalues the entire sphere of active human will and reason. The full scope of this subversion appears only by reference to the implications of the second paragraph. Health and sickness, toil and rest, even love, friendship, hatred, passions: these are indeed eternal human concerns, scarcely tied to any particular period. But what about thought, science, poetry and music? Are we to believe that they are as unhistorical as love and friendship, merely because they are unaffected by Napoleon's relationship with Alexander's sister? It is a sleight-of-hand to put them in the second paragraph; it betokens an underhanded spiritualization of nature, which completes the previous despiritualization of history. More precisely: it is a *pseudo-spiritualization* and, concomitantly, a veritable *pseudo-historicization* of nature. For it is only one step to an utterly paradoxical conclusion: the conclusion that history is nature, *actio* is *passio*; that meaningful historical development springs not from human intentionality but from the instinctual passivity of the people; that man is essentially a natural being after all. And this is in effect the thesis which Tolstoy proclaims *ad infinitum* in his philosophical digressions. The very repetitiousness of these assurances, which more than once tends to undermine the form and progression of the novel, indicates the philosophical and artistic weakness of such an extreme position. It is philosophically questionable because in our complex modern era, the duality of spirit and nature cannot be overcome by a sweeping monistic fiat. And the artistic weakness is surely shown by the restiveness of the narrative material, as exemplified in the Speránski episode.

Tolstoy's contorted view of historical efficacy has one aspect that requires clearer exposition. By devaluing the domain of human intentionality, the author does nothing less than undermine our linear conception of historical

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time. Meaning no longer resides in a process of development where present action, transforming the past, creatively projects itself towards a partly malleable future. All this is mere sound and fury, an empty inauthentic to and fro. "Real life, with its essential interests of health and sickness," by definition always proceeds "as usual"; meaning lies in perpetual repetition, in circular (rather than linear) time. The peasants are authentic because they live in unison with the eternally repeated rhythm of the seasons—just as that oak tree which Andrew sees in its infinitely alternating states of barrenness and renewal. The existence of the *mushiks* seems to exemplify a state where man was one with nature, happily submitting to its laws. For the modern consciousness, such an ideal has taken shape in the epic universe. And here, I think, lies the key to that large component of *War and Peace* which has often been recognized as epicizing, and which is an expression less of natural epicity than of a modern nostalgia which Tolstoy shares with others of his time. He does his best to depict man *sub specie naturae*, outside of what we know as human duration. Let us think of the famous hunting scene with Natásha's uncle; of popular characters such as Karatáev; of the pointedly unhistorical treatment of the peasants' revolt in Boguchárovo; of the attempt to present battles as natural cataclysms in which the human element is "active" only as a collective, willess, unconscious analogue of tidal waves. The high point, of course, is the landowners' existence as depicted in the First Epilogue. Here is Pierre's state of mind in that condition: "He felt that his way of life had now been settled once for all till death and that to change it was not in his power, and so that way of life proved economical" (p. 1290). Once for all, powerless to change: time has stopped, volition has been amputated. There is something deliberate and reductive in Tolstoy's epicizing, which is very much an illustration of his antitemporal philosophy of history. Understandably so: man is simply no longer a fully "natural" being. In modern times, the results of the "epic" impetus are all too often nostalgically idyllic. The landowners' idyll of the First Epilogue is more reminiscent of Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea* (and even at times of Voss' *Luise*) than of the Homeric world.

The quest for ahistorical timeless circularity (disguised or not as historicity) is therefore not limited to the theoretical disquisitions: it has its illustratively narrative side. The line of division, then, does not run neatly between ideology and artistic representation. The narrative body of the work is itself split between a novelistic and an epicizing component. Is there an analogous split within the body of authorial judgments? The answer is implicit in another one of those attacks on inauthenticity, placed as strategically as the previously cited exaltation of "real life." It deals with the reaction of the salons to the beginning campaign of 1812:

Among the innumerable categories applicable to the phenomena of human life one may discriminate between those in which substance prevails and those in which form prevails. To the latter—as distinguished from village, country, provincial, or even Moscow life—we may allot Petersburg life, and especially the life of its salons.

There is nothing here that does not sound familiar. Again the vacuity of life in high society is opposed to the pristine existence of the people. We might feel able to predict how the argument will proceed:

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That life of the salons is unchanging. Since the year 1805 we had made peace and had again quarreled with Bonaparte and had made constitutions and unmade them again, but the salons of Anna Pávlovna and Héléne remained just as they had been—the one seven and the other five years before. (Book X, chapter 6, p. 788)

Here our reasonable expectations have been undermined and (upon examination) shattered. For those domestic reforms and those relations with Napoleon, once the very quintessence of futility, have now turned into a gauge of meaning, exposing the absurdity of salon existence. Suddenly the salons are inauthentic not because they are changeable, but because they are unchangeable; not because they reflect the ups and downs of foreign and domestic policy, but on the contrary because they fail to do so. Anna Pávlovna's circle (as we learn on the ensuing pages) obstinately continues to view everything from the standpoint of patriotic legitimism, Héléne's group from that of Bonapartistic liberalism. Neither takes cognizance of events in their process of substantial transformation during the last five or seven years. It is quite clear what is the principle of authenticity that is being violated here: the principle of meaningful historical development, unfolding in the flux of linear time.

We are faced with a new criterion, radically opposed to the one that had been previously identified. It attributes falsity, rather than genuineness, to stasis and repetition. And this criterion as well is not limited to an isolated statement but expresses a basic tendency of the book. "There were *the same* receptions and balls, *the same* French theater, *the same* court interests and service interests and intrigues *as usual*" (p. 1037, italics mine): now it is not "real life" that goes on "as usual," but the phantom existence of Petersburg society, which remains ultimately impervious even to the events of 1812. And it is precisely the parody of social sameness which makes the first party given by the newlywed Bergs an irresistibly comical scene. The affair is a faithful imitation of all other parties. The old sit with the old, the young with the young, and the tea table boasts "exactly the same kind of cakes in a silver cake basket as you can find at the Panins" (p. 515). Even the conversation is appropriately identical. At first there is one deplorable deficiency: the gentlemen will not engage in the obligatory dispute about some (any) clever and important question. But at last, even that seems to be starting (p. 518), and the upstart Berg is ecstatically happy: has he not succeeded in reproducing the very essence of social intercourse?

But what about society's adherence to the changing dictates of fashion, which molds its very feelings and opinions? Thus Vasili Kurágin (that incarnation of the "homme du monde") quite sincerely reverses his judgments on Kutúzov in accordance with imperial moods of favor or disfavor, without ever remembering what he thought the day before. This very obliviousness, however, is a fragmentation of genuine time and shows that no true development takes place. Exchangeability is the opposite of real change. Prince Vasili frequents both the Bonapartistic salon of Héléne and the legitimistic one of Anna Pávlovna, expressing the proper views in each—and when he occasionally confuses the appropriate opinions, nobody takes it seriously, since nothing substantial is involved. Unchangeability and interchangeability are two sides of the same medal. If repetition is a refusal of duration, fashion is its inferior imitation,

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always bearing within it the possibility of total recurrence; just like stasis and repetition, it undermines the creative unilinearity of time.

Meaningful development is more than an occasional criterion of evaluation: it is nothing less than the active principle of representation underlying the best (the artistically most essential) parts of *War and Peace*. The vacuous characters (such as Berg and Boris) are those who do not grow but merely get ahead: their advance takes place in the dimension of social space, not in that of human time. The Kurágin remains unchanged throughout the years. Vasili's aging is purely biological, not substantial; Hippolyte always appears as the identical halfwit; Hélène is little more than a function of her "unchanging smile"; and Anatole's death is less the culmination than the amputation of an existence: his life is cut off like his leg. The story of the genuine characters, in contrast, takes place in a perspective of temporal unfolding. One thinks of Princess Marie, Nicholas, Natásha, but above all of the complex and contrapuntal development of the principal heroes, Pierre and Andrew. All are seekers for true values, enmeshed at times in worldly falsity, but on the road to their authentic being—even the simplistic Nicholas Rostóv. *War and Peace* is very much an *Erziehungsroman*. Andrew's death (in the same battle as Anatole's) may be a symbol of partial failure, but is at least unmistakably his own. The positive, constitutive role of temporality also comes out in Tolstoy's unmatched mastery in depicting the various chronological ages, from the gay childhood of the young in the Rostóv household to the senility of Countess Rostóva and of Andrew's father. And do not the old Princes Bezúkhov and Bolkónski (the redoubtable rococo cavalier and the austere "king of Prussia") vividly represent two complementary aspects of the Catherinian 18th century? Such specimens of human "local color" make *War and Peace* more truly an historical novel than any Scottian description of contemporary gadgets could do.

Above all, *War and Peace* is a genuine novel, and specifically a realistic novel about high society. For all his popular, epicizing presumptions, this is the sphere where the young nobleman Tolstoy is most at home.² It is finally the life of the Moscow and Petersburg aristocracy, not that of the Russian mushik, which provides the basis for the confusingly but artfully complex plot. All the significant characters of the novel define themselves with regard to sociality, however false sociality may be. In fact *War and Peace* is an extremely modern novel, using devices quite revolutionary for its time. The chapter on the dinner at Speránski's reveals that Tolstoy had little to learn from Flaubert or Henry James about the practices of *style indirect libre*, about the subtle manipulation of "point of view." His work, written in the 1860's, contains instances of "stream of consciousness" technique; the Formalist Victor Shklovsky could use it to exemplify the undermining of literary tradition by devices of

² Cf. Tolstoy's well-known statement in a draft for an introduction, written in late 1864 or early 1865: "The life of clerks, merchants, seminarists, and peasants is uninteresting and half unintelligible to me; the life of the aristocrats of that time, thanks to documents of that period and for other reasons, is intelligible, interesting, and dear to me" (in *War and Peace*, Norton Critical Edition, p. 1365).

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³ For a translation

⁴ R. F. Christian stresses the *Leitmoti*. The chief contempor Steiner (*Tolstoy or*

⁵ Cf. Georg Lukács esp. ch. 2 of Part II. Kate Hamburger stre lifelike temporal op English translation o 1480-1481).

⁶ Cf. *War and Pea*

⁷ *The Craft of Fic*

⁸ Isaiah Berlin, *T*

estrangement;³ and the obstinately recurring descriptive expressions, though reminiscent of Homeric repetitions, may well be closer to *Leitmotive* in the manner of Richard Wagner and Thomas Mann.⁴ But more than anything else, it is the constitutive function of time as duration that defines the hypermodern novel in contrast with the epic, as Georg Lukács was the first to recognize.⁵

We can now more clearly define the duality of *War and Peace*, which has often been acknowledged in various forms. Even the earliest readers were unsure whether they were dealing with a novel or an epic, and the author himself felt unable to name the genre of his creation. Boris Eikhenbaum sees a military-historical narration that is superimposed upon a family chronicle, a saga.⁶ And for all his Jamesian one-sidedness in judging Tolstoy's "large loose baggy monster," Percy Lubbock as well gets close to the truth when he distinguishes two unintegrated novels: an unhistorical story of generations, of youth, old age and death; and a strictly historical tale of war and peace.⁷ Both, therefore, recognize the essential dichotomy between the historical and the extra-historical, time and eternal recurrence, the realm of spirit and the realm of nature. What we are paradoxically faced with is a creation which is novelistic as well as epicizing, adeptly modern though nostalgically archaic. And this casts the final light on Sir Isaiah Berlin's existential diagnosis of its author: Tolstoy is tragically torn between a quest for static unity and an immersion in dynamic multiplicity; he is an antihistorical hedgehog and an historical fox.⁸

The duality is irreconcilable, based as it is on two mutually exclusive conceptions of authenticity and time. Again and again, the story tries to bear out the correctness of the philosophy. Tolstoy performs miracles of illustrative narration to show how action really springs from willless and unplanning inactivity. But despite repeated *tours de force*, the material remains largely restive to the premisses. Ultimately, action cannot help taking place in the mode of intentionality. When all has been said, we fail to believe that Russia prevails because of the slovenliness of Kutúzov. The gap between narrative logic and epicizing ideology remains unbridgeable. Speránski's dinner is a case in point. Even in the First Epilogue does the paradox rear its head. At first sight, the idyll seems to represent the final triumph of naturalness and temporal circularity. The diligent landowners and their wives live far from the spasmodic falsifications of social and historical activity, in patriarchal harmony with their peasants, engaged in the ceaseless tilling of the soil accompanied by

³ For a translation of Shklovsky's remarks, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 1429ff.

⁴ R. F. Christian (*Tolstoy's 'War and Peace'. A Study*, Oxford, 1962, esp. pp. 148-150) stresses the *Leitmotiv* character—as against the epic-formulaic one—of Tolstoyan repetition. The chief contemporary proponent of the "epic" interpretation of Tolstoy's work is George Steiner (*Tolstoy or Dostoevsky; An Essay in the Old Criticism*, New York, 1959).

⁵ Cf. Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, tr. by Anna Bostock (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), esp. ch. 2 of Part II. The first German edition in book form appeared in 1920. More recently, Kate Hamburger stressed the open and decentralized form of *War and Peace*, relating it to lifelike temporal openness (*Leo Tolstoi. Gestalt und Problem*, München, 1950, pp. 20ff. An English translation of the central passage is found in the Norton ed. of *War and Peace*, pp. 1480-1481).

⁶ Cf. *War and Peace*, Norton ed., pp. 1442ff.

⁷ *The Craft of Fiction* (New York, 1957), pp. 39-42.

⁸ Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (London, 1953), pp. 35-42.

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the dutiful perpetuation of the species. It is true that this process comes across as somewhat dull. Marriage and procreation are normative things, eternally recurrent, and risk to appear boring to a restless modern mind like (for example) Andrew's, who has a presentiment of this after his engagement to Natásha: "In the house that poetic dullness and quiet reigned which always accompanies the presence of a betrothed couple" (p. 527). Boredom, after all, is nothing else than a dilution of time. The question is whether dullness can in the long run be poetic. In the First Epilogue, it surely tries. Many readers, however, seem to react as Andrew would, had he lived to share in the paradise. They cannot help concurring with the young Lukács' judgment that this ending ("with its nursery atmosphere where all passion has been spent and all seeking ended") is disconsolately trite. Tolstoy's depiction of love as marriage does not create the impression he intended. Its triumph over culture

is meant to be a victory of the natural over the falsely, artificially refined, yet it becomes a miserable swallowing-up by nature of everything that is great and noble in man. Nature is alive inside man but, when it is lived as culture, it reduces man to the lowest, most mindless, most idea-forsaken conventionality.⁹

An astonishing reversal—but the preceding analysis clearly shows how it could come about. The two contrary criteria of temporal authenticity sooner or later had to become confused. In a late age imbued with Judeo-Christian spirituality, repetition can perhaps still be theoretically exalted as the supreme earmark of meaning, but it will have trouble presenting itself narratively in this way. And thus the positively conceived circularity of nature must turn into the negatively depicted recurrence of social convention, the only temporal circularity we really have. In the epic world, there is an effortless (a given) harmony of society and nature. But Tolstoy, a modern despite himself just like Rousseau, is led to exalt nature *against* society—only to find society rushing in by the back door. His Epilogue succeeds in fusing the two poles; but ironically, the fusion is negative and pseudo-epic: society is not natural but vice versa, the idyllically normative turns out to be the socially banal.

There is, however, yet another strain in the Epilogue, ignored by the early Lukács but emphasized (too exclusively!) by the Marxist Lukács of later years.¹⁰ The idyll does not manage to insulate itself against historical reality, against the restlessness of the spirit: it is threatened on all sides, and even from within. Only through conscious self-abnegation can the spirituality of Princess Marie submit to the inanity of her husband Nicholas Rostóv. As for Pierre Besúkhov, he exhibits disquieting tendencies of which his pastoral model Karatáev would disapprove¹¹; his frequent trips to the capital are devoted to the discussion of political and social projects. This duality within the Epilogue is reinforced

⁹ Lukács, op. cit., p. 148. The reference to a "nursery atmosphere where all passion has been spent" cannot render the ironic pithiness of the German original, which speaks of a "beruhigte Kinderstubenatmosphäre" (Georg Lukács, *Die Theorie des Romans*. Neuwied am Rhein, 1963).

¹⁰ In the Preface written for the 1963 re-edition of *Die Theorie des Romans*, Lukács refers to his later (Marxist) interpretation of the First Epilogue, and uses it to criticize his "nursery" view of 1920 (cf. *The Theory of the Novel*, p. 14). His mistake is that he adheres too exclusively first to one, then to the other. The point is precisely that the Epilogue is torn between both tendencies.

¹¹ As he himself admits on p. 1307.

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THE PAST

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by the author's ambivalent presentation, which tends to question both Pierre's utopianism and Nicholas' stupidity. Most important, however, is the fact that the idyll (and the book) has no harmonious conclusion, but one that points toward a future both troubled and unknown. The last character we see is Nicholas Bolkónski, the adolescent son of Prince Andrew—of that Andrew who had once collaborated and dined with Speránski—and the heir to his father's tormented restlessness. Nicholas dreams of future deeds that will be worthy of his admired father. From the glass house of his questionable pastoral, he is anxiously gazing outward—and looking forward to a period charged with tormented historicity: the Decembrist year 1825.

THE PAST AS PRELUDE: AMERICAN POPULAR MUSIC, 1840-1895*

by

HUGHSON MOONEY

The nineteenth century was crucially important to twentieth century popular music.

For one thing, the ragtime craze which began just before 1900 saw a resurgence and intensification of musical and social ferment ongoing since at least the 1840s. A plebeian movement was underway during and immediately following the Jacksonian years, a sharpening class-consciousness, a romantic populism. A prosperous leisured class of intellectuals had arisen, tired of the counting house, looking for new causes, new visions—abolitionism, the Indian, the People, the frontier Utopia, or simply a Myself transcending Them, just as common folk were looking for a religion of the heart. The banjo of blacks and bucolic whites—like rough-voiced Dylan's guitar more than a century later—excited new audiences. From the frontier revivals came hand-clapping, raw, rocking hymns tinged with free-style Africanism. The railroads were to carry the musical whoops and hollers of backwoodsmen into the receptive hearts of a restless people: restless because they were moving—from city to frontier, from old city to new town, from farm to metropolis, and, even before Emancipation, from plantation to ghetto. We were a nation of migrants and, particularly after the late 1840's, of immigrants: The Irish were the first great wave, and influential in music. They might often empathize, musically at least, with blacks, long before the Jewish influx—the Witmarks, Irving Berlin, Al Jolson—finally sparked the ragtime revolution of 1900.

But before the Jews, before even the Irish, came those declassé native born "anglos" who (as purists saw it) fornicated with the black muse to produce a gorgeously disreputable mulatto infant. If Stephen Foster "made a lady"

*Neither Professor Mooney nor the editors approve of certain expressions which appear in this text that are derogatory to minority groups. They are printed in these pages in order to recapture the slang that was used in the past so as to present an accurate historical statement of the development of popular music.