

Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism

NCLC

174

Volume 174

Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism

*Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Philosophers, and Other
Creative Writers Who Died between 1800
and 1899, from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations*



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Preface

Since its inception in 1981, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism* (NCLC) has been a valuable resource for students and librarians seeking critical commentary on writers of this transitional period in world history. Designated an “Outstanding Reference Source” by the American Library Association with the publication of its first volume, NCLC has since been purchased by over 6,000 school, public, and university libraries. The series has covered more than 450 authors representing 33 nationalities and over 17,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical reaction to nineteenth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as NCLC.

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NCLC is designed to introduce students and advanced readers to the authors of the nineteenth century and to the most significant interpretations of these authors’ works. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of this period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. By organizing and reprinting commentary written on these authors, NCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in NCLC presents a comprehensive survey of an author’s career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of NCLC is devoted to literary topics that cannot be covered under the author approach used in the rest of the series. Such topics include literary movements, prominent themes in nineteenth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

NCLC continues the survey of criticism of world literature begun by Thomson Gale’s *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (CLC) and *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC).

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An NCLC entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author’s actual name given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the original date of composition.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose works have been translated into English, the list will focus primarily on twentieth-century translations, selecting those works most commonly considered the best by critics. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication. Lists of **Representative Works** by different authors appear with topic entries.

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Nikolai Leskov

1831-1895

(Full name Nikolai Semyonovich Leskov; also transliterated as Nikoli, Nikolay, Semenovich, Semionovich, Lyeskov; also wrote under the pseudonym M. Stebnickij; also transliterated as Stebnicki, Stebnitsky) Russian short story writer, novelist, essayist, and playwright.

The following entry provides an overview of Leskov's life and works. For additional information on his career, see *NCLC*, Volume 25.

INTRODUCTION

Regarded as one of the finest short story writers of nineteenth-century Russia, Leskov wrote tales depicting life among the various classes of Russian society, from uneducated peasants in remote rural areas to wealthy, sophisticated city dwellers and members of the Orthodox Church. Characterized by an adept use of colloquialism and regional dialect, witty and humorous wordplay, and a darkly comic worldview, Leskov's fiction has long been admired for what has been described as its quintessentially Russian quality. While Leskov is perhaps best remembered as the influential practitioner of the *skaz* genre, a colorful short story style that makes use of first-person accounts and anecdotal material within a larger narrative structure, he also wrote several lengthier works, which he described as "novelistic chronicles." Chief among these chronicles, *Soborjane* (1872; *The Cathedral Folk*) is considered a narrative masterpiece on the subject of the Russian Orthodox clergy. In this and many other examples of his fiction, Leskov has demonstrated his own deeply felt but unorthodox Christian spiritualism and his penetrating satirical capacity. Despite critical neglect during his lifetime, prompted in part by reaction to his frequently controversial positions on a number of major social, political, and religious issues, Leskov is acclaimed by modern scholars for his mastery of the *skaz* genre, for his skill and versatility as a storyteller, and for his vivid fictional portrayal of nineteenth-century Russian life.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Leskov was born to Semyon Dmitrievich Leskov, a minor bureaucratic official who had been trained for the priesthood, and his wife, Marya Alferieva, the daughter

of a landowning family of the lesser nobility, at Gorokhovo in the Russian province of Orel. Leskov's childhood was troubled by family strife and financial difficulties, as were his school years at the Orel *gymnasium*, which he attended from 1841 to 1846. In 1847 he began a civil service career, first as a legal clerk and, following a move to Kiev in 1849, with the military bureaucracy. In Kiev Leskov met and married Olga Smirnova, the daughter of a merchant, with whom he had two children. The marriage was stressful and unhappy due to his wife's mental instability, and was dissolved when she was committed to an asylum in 1861. Prior to his divorce, Leskov served as an estate manager for a private corporation from 1857 to 1860, employment that entailed extensive travel, and thus he was exposed to a diverse range of Slavic dialects and folklore. In 1860 Leskov embarked on a journalistic career in St. Petersburg where, despite his desire to remain apolitical, he was soon caught up in an ongoing dissension between conservatives and the radical intelligentsia. After writing a controversial article misunderstood as an indictment of radicals, Leskov was labeled a conservative and consequently shunned by many of Russia's leading writers and thinkers. Leskov's bitterness toward his political opponents was expressed in his early novels *Nekuda* (1864; *No Way Out*), which portrayed liberal and radical leaders as fools and scoundrels, and *Na nožax* (1871; *At Daggers Dawn*), a narrative polemic against the ideological foibles of revolutionaries and nihilists. These novels aggravated the rift between Leskov and his opponents, and consequently his writings, including the many short stories he began to produce in the 1860s, were rejected by the leading progressive periodicals of the day. Undaunted, Leskov continued to write numerous stories, sketches, and loosely woven novels, or "chronicles," in the 1870s and 1880s, many of them subtly critical of religious and bureaucratic institutions. In 1874 Leskov received an appointment to the Ministry of Education, a position he held until 1883; his iconoclastic writings about the clergy then came under scrutiny and he was forced to resign his post. A short time later, a collection of his sketches, *Meloči arxierejskoj žizne* (1878), was banned by government censors as seditious. In his later years Leskov, who had scrupulously avoided any formal association with church organizations, came to advocate the biblically based doctrines of Protestantism over the liturgical traditions of the Orthodox Church. He recog-

nized a spiritual ally in his contemporary Leo Tolstoy, with whom Leskov corresponded extensively regarding religion and moral issues prior to his death in 1895.

MAJOR WORKS

Scholarly attention to Leskov's writings has generally approached his works from one of two major perspectives: either concentrating on the stylistic innovation of his *skaz* stories, or considering his writings thematically by focusing on their spiritual content and evocation of the nineteenth-century Russian national character. The typical pattern of Leskov's *skaz* features a realistic frame story in which an ostensibly credible narrator (frequently a well-educated, urbane individual) sets the scene for a second but more involved first-person account, by a less reliable, often simple-minded character who relates a tale of bizarre (sometimes supernatural) events or describes an eccentric person. The central story is often told in humorous terms, with extensive use of regional dialects, colloquialisms, wordplay, and punning. Yet the light and entertaining tone typical of Leskov's *skaz* often masks a subversive commentary on corruption in the government or clergy. Leskov's earliest sketches feature his use of *skaz* narration, apparent in the 1862 story "Pogasšee delo" ("A Case That Was Dropped"), a tale of bureaucratic corruption and peasant superstition. He further developed the technique in his later stories, the best known of which include "Očarovannyj strannik" ("The Enchanted Pilgrim"), concerning an itinerant monk who reveals to a group of fellow travelers stories of his tortured past and his struggles to expiate sin, and "Zapečatlenyj angel" ("The Sealed Angel"), which describes the "Old Believers," a sect of orthodox Christians whose revered icon, a depiction of an angel, is miraculously restored after government officials confiscate and mar it. Other frequently discussed and popular stories are "Belyi orel" ("The White Eagle"), in which Leskov offers a wryly subversive account of an honest man's inability to counter the pervasive bureaucratic corruption of the ruling powers, and "Levša" ("Lefty, Being the Tale of Cross-Eyed Lefty of Tula and the Steel Flea"), a humorous story that pits an untutored Russian craftsman against a team of English engineers. Leskov also made effective use of conventional narrative forms in some of his stories and sketches, including one of his most famous works, "Ledi Makbet Mtsenskogo uezda" ("The Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District"), which delves into the dark passions and ruthless actions of a young wife who murders three times in order to conceal her affair with a handsome servant.

In terms of theme, matters of religion and spirituality figure prominently throughout Leskov's literary oeuvre, although as his career progressed he often handled these

issues ironically, as in "Na kraiu sveta" ("At the Edge of the World"), which follows a missionary priest to remote Siberia where he learns a fundamental principle of faith from his pagan guide. Leskov's fictional evocation of idiosyncratic characters, each with his own absurd but somehow saintly capacity, can be found in his early stories and sketches of the 1860s, including his "Ovtsebyk" ("The Musk-Ox") and "Kotin doilec i Platonida" ("Kotin the He-Cow and Platonida"), both centering on an unlikely hero who devotes his life to the care of others. Leskov confronted the issue of Church hypocrisy in "Vladychnyi sud" ("Episcopal Justice"), concerned with the subject of Jewish conversion and a father's efforts to exempt his son from military service. From the late 1870s Leskov became gradually more outspoken in his denunciation of the Orthodox Church and increasingly preoccupied with moral issues and the study of Christian doctrine, themes that he explored in a series of stories loosely based on the traditional tales of saints' lives collected in the Russian *Prolog*. In such works as "Odnodum" ("Singlethought") and the novella *Nesmertel'nyj Golovan* (1880; *Deathless Golovan*) Leskov depicted simple, virtuous men (known collectively as *pravedniki*) who demonstrate the strength and beauty of a righteous life. Among Leskov's longer, novelistic works, his well-known chronicle *The Cathedral Folk* is a compassionate examination of the lives of a group of rural Russian Orthodox priests, who, despite harsh surroundings and seemingly insurmountable difficulties, are faithful to their spiritual calling. Set in the fictional Stargorod (Old Town), the work offers what critics describe as an effective polyphonic narrative, in which the juxtaposed perspectives of its characters combine to render a complex portrait of conflict between orthodoxy and heretical belief among the peasantry in provincial Russia. Considered one of Leskov's most notable nonfictional pieces, *Evrei v Rossii* (1884; *The Jews in Russia*) is an eloquent plea for religious and cultural tolerance. Meanwhile, such stories as "Skazanie o Fedore khristianine i o druge ego Abrame zhidovine" ("The Tale of Fedor the Christian and his Friend Abraham the Jew") and "Zheleznaia volia" ("A Will of Iron") illustrate that Leskov was not above the use of folk prejudices and stereotypes for sardonic effect, especially in his later works.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Although nineteenth-century Russian reviewers did not generally acclaim Leskov's literary accomplishments, such notable compatriots as Feodor Dostoevsky, who praised Leskov's ability to portray character types, and Leo Tolstoy, who admired his linguistic facility, applauded aspects of his work. By the beginning of the twentieth century Leskov's writings had declined into obscurity until they received the recognition of prominent Soviet critic Maxim Gorky, who offered high praise

for his storytelling ability and the rich Russian flavor of his writing. Since this time a selection of Leskov's works have appeared in English, German, and French, despite certain difficulties in translating the Russian colloquialisms, puns, and allusive language typical of his style. In the contemporary period Leskov has been extolled as one of the earliest and most brilliant architects of the *skaz* genre. His mastery of character delineation and skilled manipulation of documentary and anecdotal material in these short works has traditionally elicited the majority of critical attention to the writer, whereas his longer chronicles have frequently been dismissed as artistically inferior—though recognition of the complex, nonlinear, decentralized, and polyphonic structure of these lengthier narratives has prompted a scholarly reassessment of this position. Contemporary English-language critics have also discussed Leskov's religious views and his stance on the political and social issues of his day. Additionally, his works have been favorably compared to stories by some of the finest European prose writers of his century, with Leskov usually numbered among the outstanding narrative stylists in the short fiction genre. Primarily, however, it is his perceptive portrayal of nineteenth-century Russian culture and customs that has elicited the greatest praise and interest of contemporary scholars, leading many to corroborate Gorky's description of him as "the truest Russian of all Russian writers" while delighting in Leskov's earnest and satirical evocations of the Russian national character.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

- O raskol'nikakh goroda Rigi* (prose) 1863
Tri rasskaza M. Stebnitskogo [as M. Stebnickij] (short stories) 1863
Nekuda [No Way Out] (novel) 1864
Oboidennye (novel) 1865
Ostrovitjane [The Islanders] (novel) 1866
Rastočitel' (play) 1867
Na nožax [At Daggers Drawn] (novel) 1871
Zagadochnyi chelovek. Epizod iz istorii komicheskogo vremeni na Rusi s pis'mom avtora k Ivanu Sergeevichu Turgenevu (prose) 1871
Soborjane. Stargorodskaja khronika v 5-ti ch. [The Cathedral Folk] (novel) 1872
Truženiki morja [adaptor and translator; from the novel *Les travailleurs de la mer*, by Victor Hugo] (prose) 1872
Zakhudalyj rod. Semeinaia khronika kniazai Protozovnykh. Iz zapisok kniazyni V. D. P. [A Decrepit Clan] (novel) 1874
Detskie gody (novel) 1875

- Velikosvetskii raskol (Lord Redstock, ego uchenie i propoved')*. *Ocherk sovremennogo religioznogo dvizheniia v peterburgskom obshchestve* [Schism in High Society: Lord Radstock and His Followers] (prose) 1877
Meloči arxierejskoj žizne (Kartinki s natury) (sketches) 1878; revised and enlarged, 1880
Nesmertel'nyj Golovan [Deathless Golovan] (novella) 1880
Evrei v Rossii [The Jews in Russia: Some Notes on the Jewish Question] (prose) 1884
 **Zametki neizvestnogo* (short stories) 1884, 1917-18
Sobranie sočinenij. 10 vols. (short stories, novels, play, essays, and sketches) 1889-90
Nevinnyi Prudentsii. Skazanie (prose) 1892
Polnoe sobranie sočinenij. 36 vols. (short stories, novels, play, essays, letters, and sketches) 1902-03
The Sentry and Other Stories (short stories) 1922
The Musk-Ox and Other Tales (short stories) 1944
The Tales of Leskov (short stories) 1944
The Enchanted Pilgrim, and Other Stories (short stories) 1946
The Amazon, and Other Stories (short stories) 1949
Sobranie sočinenij. 11 vols. (short stories, novels, play, essays, letters, and sketches) 1956-58
The Enchanted Wanderer, and Other Stories (short stories) 1958
Nikolai Leskov: Selected Tales (short stories) 1961
Satirical Stories of Nikolai Leskov (short stories) 1968
Nikolai Leskov: Five Tales (short stories) 1984
N. S. Leskov o literature i iskusstve (essays) 1984
The Sealed Angel and Other Stories (short stories) 1984
Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk and Other Stories (short stories) 1988
Vale of Tears; and, On Quakeresses (short story and essay) 1991
On the Edge of the World (short stories) 1992

*Publication of this short story cycle began in 1884, in the journal *Gazeta A. Gattisuka*, but was halted by censorship and did not resume until 1917-18 when the last three stories appeared in the journal *Niva*.

CRITICISM

William B. Edgerton (essay date December 1953)

SOURCE: Edgerton, William B. "Leskov and Tolstoy: Two Literary Heretics." *American Slavic and East European Review* 12, no. 4 (December 1953): 524-34.

[In the following essay, Edgerton discusses the major influences on Leskov's religious non-conformity, including the writings of Leo Tolstoy and Leskov's contact with English Protestantism.]

We are not sectarians, but heretics. . . .

Leskov to Lidija Veselitskaja, about himself and Tolstoy.¹

Probably no other writer in pre-Revolutionary Russian literature ever suffered so much at the hands of politically-minded critics as Nikolaj Leskov. He once said that the role of the writer is to struggle against the prevailing current of his time,² and his own career illustrates both the application of that principle and its consequences. His independent attitude toward all intellectual fashions, whether nihilism in the 1860's or conservatism in the 1880's, led single-minded Russians of various political colors to suspect him of hypocrisy and duplicity. Doctrinaire Russian critics of the right and the left, accustomed to classifying all writers in such tidy categories as "religious reactionary" or "atheistic liberal," were even more bewildered by Leskov's own kind of non-conformity than by the Christian anarchism of his great associate Tolstoy. Tolstoy, after all, had the virtue of pushing his convictions to their logical extreme, in the best tradition of Russian maximalism; whereas Leskov, though he acknowledged himself to be a devoted follower of Tolstoy, refused to become doctrinaire even in his Tolstoyanism.

This failure on the part of Russian critics to understand the nature of Leskov's thinking, their inability to find a ready-made label to paste on his peculiar type of non-conformity, is probably responsible in large measure for the fact that his position in Russian literature is still undefined. Recent Soviet studies, though providing much valuable information, have been as unsuccessful in getting at the essence of Leskov's writings as studies before the Revolution. The fall of tsarism made it possible to publish a number of Leskov's works that had been suppressed by tsarist censors, including one of his greatest short novels;³ but in general the change of regimes in Russia has simply meant the exchange of one set of limitations on the study of Leskov for another set just as narrow. The non-conformist religious outlook on life that colors virtually everything he ever wrote can be studied no more adequately within the framework of Soviet Marxism than it could within the framework of Pobedonoscev's Orthodoxy. If a satisfactory study of Leskov's thought is to be written in our day, it will probably have to be written abroad.

A chapter of crucial importance in the development of Leskov's thought is the story of his relations with Leo Tolstoy. From the time of their first meeting in 1887 until Leskov's death in 1895 he counted himself a follower of Tolstoy, but the nature of their relations was far more complex than that of mere teacher and pupil. After all, Leskov was only three years younger than Tolstoy himself, and when they first met in 1887 both men were in their late fifties.

The best way to describe Tolstoy's influence on Leskov might be to call him a sort of catalytic agent in Leskov's

philosophy, crystallizing a set of convictions, a world outlook, that had been in the process of formation since Leskov's early childhood. Indeed, it is not going too far to say that Leskov had been groping toward the formulation of his own Tolstoyan philosophy long before Tolstoy himself worked it out. Both Tolstoy and Leskov confirm this fact. Leskov's biographer and close associate A. I. Faresov reports these words from his interview with Tolstoy in 1898: "Leskov was my follower, but not in a spirit of imitation. He had long before started out in the same direction I am traveling now. We met each other, and I am deeply moved by his agreement with all my views."⁴ Faresov likewise quotes the following words from Leskov about Tolstoy: "They say I am imitating him. Not in the least! When Tolstoy was writing *Anna Karenina* [in other words, between 1873 and 1877], I was already close to that which I am now saying."⁵ In a letter to Lidija Veselitskaja in 1893 Leskov offered this comment on a newspaper statement that he was a follower of Tolstoy:

That is quite true. I have said and I do say that I long ago sought what he is seeking; but I did not find it, because *my light was poor*. On the other hand, when I saw that he had found the answer that *satisfied me*, I felt that I no longer needed my own insignificant light, *and I am following after him*. I seek nothing of my own, nor do I make a display of myself; but *I see everything in the light of his great torch*.⁶

D. S. Mirsky called Leskov "the most Russian of Russian writers and the one who had the deepest and widest knowledge of the Russian people as it actually is."⁷ No one who has read very much of Leskov will be likely to question this. And yet, paradoxically enough, in the life of this most Russian of Russian writers there were certain strong English influences which have never been adequately studied and which may be largely responsible for the religious non-conformism that so profoundly influenced his literary career and finally led him to Tolstoy.

These English influences reached Leskov by way of an English family named Scott that lived in Moscow in the early nineteenth century. James Scott, Jr., and his four sons managed the great landed estates of the Naryškin and Petrovskij families; and one of the sons, Alexander, was married to a sister of Leskov's mother. Leskov himself stresses the close relations of his family to Protestantism through the Scotts and says that

all of us children grew up with respect for the convictions and piety of our English relatives, whom our elders held up to us as models of the active Christian life, serving as examples for us in a great many ways. I think this reference alone should be enough to make clear to the reader how a little of the spirit of English religion made its way into our family.⁸

The Scott family in Moscow also served as a sort of informal placement bureau for English girls who came to Russia to work as governesses. Leskov tells us that

these girls "were always very upright persons, sometimes highly educated and always strictly religious," and he adds that they were all either Methodists or Quakers.⁹ Another of Leskov's aunts, a sister of his father, took one of these girls as a governess for her daughters; and in time she herself became a close friend and religious follower of her own governess. These two women, Leskov's Aunt Polly¹⁰ and the English Quaker girl Hildegard, served as the heroines of one of the best stories of Leskov's last years, "**Judol**" ("**Vale of Tears**"), which describes their courageous and efficient relief work among the cholera-ridden peasants of Leskov's own Orël province in the great famine of 1840. The example of Christianity in action that nine-year-old Leskov saw in this young English girl made a profound and lifelong impression on him.

The aunt who married Alexander Scott was responsible for still further English connections in Leskov's family. When one of Leskov's cousins was left a widower with three small children, she advised him to go to Britain and bring back a Quaker wife to serve as their stepmother. He followed her advice, and his marriage to the Quaker girl he brought back from Scotland turned out so well that his brother went to Scotland and married her sister.¹¹

Finally, when Leskov was twenty-six years old he quit a government position in Kiev to go to work for his English uncle in the newly-organized commercial and contracting firm of Scott and Wilkins. As a responsible agent of the company he spent the next three years traveling over European Russia almost from one end to the other. According to Leskov himself this rich firsthand experience among all types of people all over Russia provided him with enough material to last him a lifetime as a writer,¹² and he referred to his experiences with his English uncle in at least half a dozen stories.

To be sure, these English Protestant influences do not in themselves explain everything in Leskov's complex personality. Lack of space prevents any discussion here of such matters as his relation to Ukrainian and Polish culture, to the literature of the Orthodox Church, and to a number of prominent figures in the literature, philosophy, and religious thought of Western Europe and America. Nevertheless, the very use Leskov made of these other influences is in itself further evidence of the way in which his early English associations helped to shape his manner of thinking. These associations account for much of the intellectual independence that made his contemporaries misunderstand him and for many of the difficulties he had in working out his own philosophy of life.

All of us are the children, and the victims, of the society that has molded our thinking; and even our originality tends to express itself within the conventional pat-

terns of thought and action that each society creates for its individualists. The rebel in nineteenth-century Russian society tended to express his rebellion through such traditional channels of non-conformism as hostility to the tsarist regime, defiance of the Orthodox Church (which he associated with all religion), and reverence for what he thought was science. In this the radical intellectual observed a standard of radical behavior that was probably as rigid in its own way as the conventions of the conservatism he opposed. Leskov's path of development, on the other hand, was difficult just because it was genuinely independent, and led in a direction that defied analysis in terms of the thought patterns that divided—and therefore united—the conventional radicals and conservatives of his time.

As late as 1871 Leskov referred to himself as a "humble and devoted son" of the Church and a "convinced Orthodox,"¹³ but his devotion to Orthodoxy had always been far from uncritical. Even in his novel *The Cathedral Folk* (*Soborjane*), where he perhaps gave supreme proof of his independence by taking the much-scorned Russian clergy as his heroes, he pitted his courageous Archpriest Tuberozov against the intolerant, bureaucratic Church hierarchy in a way that makes the whole story a kind of speech by the loyal opposition.

Moreover, from the beginning of his literary career he had shown great interest in the various forms of Christianity that existed outside of the Orthodox Church. In the colorful multitude of characters that tramped through his stories we find innumerable Old Believers, who were the heroes of his short novel *Zapečatennyj Angel* (*The Sealed Angel*), not a few Lutherans, and a sprinkling of Roman Catholics, Stundists, Moravians, Quakers, and fashionable followers of the evangelical English Lord Radstock. In all this assortment of unorthodox Christians, as well as in members of the State Church itself, Leskov was attracted, wherever he found them, by just those elements that Tolstoy was later to point out as the essence of the teachings of Jesus. Leskov, like Tolstoy, laid great emphasis on a proper understanding of the New Testament. Like Tolstoy, Leskov considered the heart of Christianity to be love of one's fellow man rather than membership in a particular church or the observance of a particular ritual. In fact, one of his best-known stories, "**At the End of the World**" ("**Na kraju sveta**"), contrasts the genuinely Christian spirit of an ill-smelling Siberian heathen with the spurious Christianity of certain ambitious missionaries to Siberia. Further, Leskov anticipated Tolstoy's belief that men who had been transformed individually by the teachings of Jesus could and should set about to transform society. In "**Nekreščennyj pop**" ("**The Unbaptized Priest**") he tells with his characteristic humor the story of an Orthodox priest whose spiritual pedigree wasn't quite in order, but whose genuinely Christian life made a new place out of his parish.

In "Odnodum" ("The One-Track Mind") he tells about an incorruptible Bible-reading policeman named Ryžov whose refusal to take bribes came close to upsetting the economic and political life of his whole town. Leskov makes it clear that this "Biblical socialist," as he calls him, has set himself free from all worldly ambitions, and therefore from all fear of worldly authorities; and the humorous, heroic account of his interview with the governor of the province has scarcely a parallel anywhere in Russian literature.

As early as 1865, in his novel *Obojdennye (Those Who Were Overlooked)*, Leskov anticipates Tolstoyan nonviolence in his description of his hero's mother. He portrays her as a saintly Orthodox woman from whom nobody could steal because everyone was free to take what he needed from her without stealing. Her goodness and forgiveness not only shielded her from conflicts with her enemies but actually destroyed her enemies by turning them into friends. The very thought of human enmity or of violence and destruction filled her with spiritual anguish and led her to call on God's mercy for the evildoers, saying: "God is the judge of human wickedness, not man."¹⁴

The whole thorny question of Leskov's attitude toward Tolstoyan nonviolence (or, as Tolstoy himself called it, "nonresistance to evil") seems to have puzzled everybody who has ever written on the relations between the two men; and no one has yet explained it adequately.¹⁵ The usual interpretation has been that Leskov strongly disagreed with Tolstoy's nonresistance and yet was attracted to him and the rest of his teachings in spite of this disagreement. Since what is generally called "nonresistance" lies at the heart of Tolstoy's whole philosophy, this interpretation seems to betray inconsistency either in the interpreters or in Leskov himself.

The one article by Leskov that might have clarified this whole matter has lain buried for nearly seventy years in the columns of an almost inaccessible newspaper, and seems to have been overlooked by every scholar who has ever written about him. It is "O rožne. Uvet synam protivlenija" ("About Goads: An Exhortation to the Children of Resistance"), which Leskov published in *Novoe Vremja* (No. 3838, pp. 2-3) on November 4, 1886. It is the last of seven different articles Leskov wrote about Tolstoy in that single year, and it is the most complete expression we have of his attitude toward Tolstoyan nonresistance.

At first glance, "About Goads" might appear to be an attack on the very arguments against Tolstoy's doctrine that Leskov himself had written five months before, in "Zagrobnyj svidetel' za ženščin" ("A Witness From Beyond the Grave in Defense of Women"),¹⁶ which various scholars have pointed out as evidence of Leskov's opposition to nonresistance. The fact that the ear-

lier article was not published until the same month as "About Goads" would seem to support this theory, and the usual conception of Leskov does not make it hard to imagine him rushing into print with a *feuilleton* in *Novoe Vremja* to answer the arguments that he himself had abandoned since writing them in the previous June.

A close examination of the facts, however, makes it clear that the Leskov of November was not essentially different from the Leskov of June. In his earlier article he had made this significant statement about Tolstoy: "The Count's other theses, on nonresistance to evil, are not understood either by his supporters or by his opponents."¹⁷ The little-known article "About Goads" is simply Leskov's effort to explain what Tolstoy did mean by "nonresistance" and to evaluate it justly.

Leskov begins by clearing away the unfortunate misconceptions to which the negative word "nonresistance" has given rise ever since Tolstoy first used it:

. . . Tolstoy does advocate resisting evil, and he even offers a program for the conduct of this resistance with hope of giving good the upper hand over evil. . . . This program is outlined very clearly and well in his parable "The Godson" (Tolstoy's *Works*, Vol. 12, p. 499), which has attracted very little attention.

After a detailed analysis of this story, with references also to two others dealing with nonresistance, "Ivan the Fool" and "The Candle," Leskov reaches the following conclusion:

In all truth, a fair-minded and sensible man would have to admit that Tolstoy allows resistance to evil only after a person has himself achieved 1) purity, 2) steadfastness, and 3) love, that is, great and "perfect love." As for what this "perfect love" is, Paul gives us a ready-made definition: "perfect love" is that which "seeks nothing for itself, is kind in all things, and casts out fear."

Evil cannot prevail against the man who sets forth with this kind of love. But if he undertakes to "resist evil" without himself being *pure, steadfast*, and filled with *unselfish love*, then any kind of "resistance" by such a man will be vain and will do no good; on the contrary, it will only bring on redoubled bitterness and thus will occasion great harm.

Pointing out that this doctrine did not originate with Tolstoy, but was expressed long ago by Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, and Jesus Christ, Leskov says that it is also defended to a significant degree by contemporary humanists, and that even the everyday experience of ordinary, clear-thinking people is leading in the same direction. Then he asks:

Why does Tolstoy's reasoning now appear all of a sudden so stupid, harmful, and insignificant? . . . Is it not because we feel, willy-nilly, that we are *not pure enough*

to purify others, not strong enough to strengthen others, and not sufficiently filled with love to frighten terror away instead of being frightened by it ourselves?

After devoting more than half of his article to an explanation and defense of Tolstoy's "nonresistance," Leskov then proceeds to make certain criticisms of it that throw light on his earlier polemics with Tolstoy in "**A Witness From Beyond the Grave**." His principal criticism is directed at Tolstoy's assertion that men have no right to resist evil in others until they themselves are free of evil. Leskov shares Tolstoy's great faith in the power of nonviolent means of resisting evil; and he realizes, like Tolstoy, that their effectiveness depends largely on the spiritual development of the person who attempts to use them. But Leskov disagrees with Tolstoy over the course of action to be followed by those who have not yet understood the power of nonviolence or who have not yet grown in spirit to the point where they can use it effectively. For these persons Leskov can find little in Tolstoy's teachings except "nonresistance to evil" in the literal meaning of the phrase, and this Leskov can never accept. Tolstoy, following the Russian revolutionary tradition in spite of himself, would divide history at the point where each man's spiritual revolution made him capable of overcoming evil with love. Tolstoy would concentrate on working for this inner revolution in each human soul, and leave the righting of everyday wrongs until after the revolution had taken place. Leskov, the sober realist, would set out toward the Kingdom of God from where men actually are. His view of the world was essentially organic and complex rather than mechanical and simple, and the notion that history—even one man's individual history—could be neatly divided into two parts was foreign to his conception of reality.

It is interesting to observe that in his views on nonviolent resistance to evil Leskov was much closer to the great Indian follower of Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi (who some would say far outstripped his teacher), than he was to Tolstoy himself. Gandhi, like Leskov, insisted to the end of his life that violent resistance to evil was better than passivity or cowardice, but he lived and died in the conviction that the world would eventually come to recognize the superior power of nonviolent resistance based on love.

Leskov's article "**On Goads**" makes it clear that his claim to be a follower of Tolstoy was based on a genuine understanding and acceptance of the essence of Tolstoy's teachings. Throughout the last eight years of his life he placed his literary talents beside those of Tolstoy at the service of the religious convictions that united them. A comparison of the way they illustrated their beliefs through art would in itself be a tempting subject for discussion, but space does not permit it here. I will limit myself now to venturing the no doubt controversial opinion that Leskov created a number of characters

who are more convincing and attractive embodiments of the Tolstoyan religion of love than the characters of Tolstoy himself. With his at times dogmatic rationalism, his stern moralism, and his powerful satire, Tolstoy could attack the existing order of society with all the eloquence of an Old Testament prophet. Leskov at his best, however, was able to fulfill Tolstoy's own requirements for good art: he was able to "infect" the reader with feelings of unity with all mankind. Moreover, he did this in stories that were suffused with a warmth and humor that have no counterpart anywhere in Tolstoy. Space does not permit the discussion that ought to be given in support of this heretical opinion about these two gifted heretics. I will say only that in addition to the works already mentioned I have in mind such stories by Leskov as "**Pugalo**" ("**The Scarecrow**"), "**Figura**," "**Tomlenie Dukha**" ("**Anguish of Spirit**"), "**Skomorokh Pamfalon**" ("**Pamphalon the Clown**"), "**The Sentry**" ("**Čelovek na časakh**"), "**Pustopljasy**," and "**The Beast**" ("**Zver**").

Toward the end of his life Leskov summed up his own difficult career in a letter that adds support to the evidence presented here about the influence of his English relatives. Writing to M. A. Protopopov, who had just published a study about him called "**A Sick Talent**,"¹⁸ Leskov pointed out the fact that he had naturally been a child of his times.

It was simply a matter of my having to free myself from the fetters that encumber a Russian child of the landowning class from his infancy. In writing about myself I would have called the article not "**A Sick Talent**," but "**Difficult Growth**." The tendencies of the landowning class, ecclesiastical piety, narrow nationalism and statism, glorification of the native land—I grew up in the midst of all that, and often it all seemed repulsive to me, but still—I could not see "where the truth lay." . . . Katkov had a great deal of influence on me, but it was while *Zakhudalyj rod* was being printed that he himself first said to Voskobochnikov: "We are mistaken; this man is not ours!" . . . He was right, but I did not know *whose* man I was. "A thorough reading of the Gospels" made it clear to me, and I at once returned to the free feelings and inclinations of my childhood.¹⁹

The turning point he mentions here took place in 1875, during his second visit to Western Europe. On July 29, 1875, he wrote from Marienbad, in Bohemia, to his old friend P. K. Ščebal'skij:

In general I have become a "turncoat" and no longer burn incense to many of my old gods. Above all I have broken with clericalism, about which I have read to my heart's content in works that are forbidden in Russia. I have had an interview with young Naville²⁰ and—I was shaken in my beliefs. I believe more than ever in the great significance of the church, but nowhere do I see that spirit which becomes a society bearing the name of Christ. If the "reunion" for which our church prays