

TOLSTOY IN CONTEXT

Likened to a second Tsar in Russia and attaining prophet-like status around the globe, Tolstoy made an impact on literature and the arts, religion, philosophy, and politics. His novels and stories both responded to and helped to reshape the European and Russian literary traditions. His nonfiction incensed readers and drew a massive following, making Tolstoy an important religious force as well as a stubborn polemicist in many fields. Through his involvement with Gandhi and the Indian independence movement, his aid in relocating the Doukhobors to Canada, his correspondence with American abolitionists, and his polemics with scientists in the periodical press, Tolstoy engaged a vast array of national and international contexts of his time in his life and thought. This volume introduces those contexts and situates Tolstoy – the man and the writer – in the rich and tumultuous period in which his intellectual and creative output came to fruition.

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published *Leo Tolstoy: A Critical Life* (2020), *On the Periphery of Europe: The Self-Invention of the Russian Elite, 1762–1825* (2018, co-authored with Andreas Schönle), *The Emergence of a Hero: Russian Emotional Culture of the Late Eighteenth to early Nineteenth Centuries* (2016, in Russian), *By Fables Alone: Russian Literature and Official Ideology in Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Russia* (2014 in English, 2001 in Russian).

Preface

Lev Tolstoy was not only a very great writer but also – with the rise of new forms of mass media at the end of the nineteenth century – the first to enjoy world celebrity during his lifetime. It would be difficult to overstate the reach of his influence; likened to a second Tsar in Russia and attaining prophet-like status around the globe, Tolstoy made an impact on literature and the arts, religion, philosophy, and politics. His novels and shorter fiction both responded to and helped to reshape the European and Russian literary traditions. His nonfiction incensed readers and drew a massive following, turning Tolstoy into an important religious force as well as a stubborn polemicist in many fields. He was an indefatigable letter-writer in four languages. From his famous correspondence with Gandhi and his impact on the Indian independence movement to his aid in relocating the Doukhobors to Canada, from his correspondence with abolitionists in America to his polemics with scientists in the periodical press, Tolstoy's life and thought engaged a vast array of national and international contexts of his times. The aim of this volume is to introduce readers to those contexts and to situate Tolstoy – the man and the writer – in the rich and tumultuous period in which his thought and creative output came to fruition.

Tolstoy was born in 1828 on his family's gentry estate that ran on serf labor. He died in 1910, less than a decade before the Bolshevik Revolution. This gargantuan life – eighty-two years – was characterized by abundance: wealth and privilege, fecund family with dozens of children and grandchildren, voluminous output of writing, vociferous reading in many fields, and tremendous guilt and self-torment. To fully appreciate Tolstoy's writing and beliefs as well as the impact they had, one needs to be familiar with the historical realities in which he lived – social, cultural, political, scientific – as well as the intellectual waters he swam in through his reading, correspondence, and face-to-face discussions. His contacts were numerous even when he was ensconced on his estate, where the

family hosted a constant stream of visitors from many countries. This breadth of context is a tall order for a single volume to cover.

Tolstoy's life and writing are difficult to separate. Therefore, the volume opens with a section on "The Man" that provides necessary biographical background: an overview of the life, with attention to the way Tolstoy's outlook was shaped by his constant awareness of death. Tolstoy's noble ancestry and the rights and privileges presumed by it were crucial to forming his worldview, as was the experience of family life on his beloved family estate of Yasnaya Polyana.

During Tolstoy's very long life, the structure of Russian society and politics changed radically. Thus, the second section, "Russian Social and Political Contexts," is the longest, introducing the reader to the essential historical, political, and cultural features of the Russian landscape. Tolstoy was at one and the same time a great radical and a great conservative. The chapters in this section contextualize his idiosyncratic views by exploring his fraught relationship with the Orthodox Church, the legal and political systems, and shifting discourse about the "Woman Question." The contexts span from major historical events and institutions, like "War and the Military" or "Emancipation and the Great Reforms," to the more intimate, but no less significant topics of "Clothing" or "The Family." Chapters in this and later sections are designed to help readers better appreciate the references and allusions that appear in Tolstoy's works (e.g. the significance of characters' sartorial choices, mentions of the new *zemstvo* governing bodies, Darwinian theory, or Buddhist ideas).

The third section covers "Literature, the Arts, and Intellectual Life," arguably Tolstoy's primary profession. This section looks at education, Russian literary evolution, European literature, and also at other art media about which Tolstoy had passionate opinions, from theater to music to the visual arts. It is followed by a closely related section on "Science and Technology." Tolstoy wrote a series of articles that treated art and science together, and his critiques of both were based on the same principles.

The final two sections of the volume pan out in space and time, first to the broader world context in "Beyond Russia," and then to "Tolstoy's Afterlife." Tolstoy actively corresponded in several languages with famous persons and causes around the world, so the "Beyond Russia" chapters explore both what he absorbed from these contacts and also what he contributed to various international movements. And finally, "Tolstoy's Afterlife" attends to Tolstoy's words and ideas as they reach us today. It begins with the colossal Soviet project of creating a "Complete Works," which resulted in the ninety-volume scholarly edition that Tolstoy scholars

rely on for accessing Tolstoy's writings. It then turns to translation and the challenge facing those who create English-language versions of Tolstoy's texts. Yet text is not the only means of engaging with the creative legacy of Tolstoy. The final chapters explore Tolstoy's evolving position and stature in world culture as his works are adapted into different media – film, opera, musical, etc. – and as he, in turn, becomes the subject of films, biographies, and artworks.

Readers may be surprised not to find a section devoted specifically to religion. This is by design, and is in keeping with Tolstoy's own views. Tolstoy saw religion as integral to all aspects of life. Focusing primarily on its moral and ethical components, he believed religious convictions should inform the projects of science and art and the shaping of societal institutions. Several chapters – “The Russian Orthodox Church,” “Eastern Religions,” “English Varieties of Religious Experience” – are explicitly about Tolstoy's relationship with various world religions, but his religious views also feature prominently in the chapters on the Tolstoyans, Pacifism, and the Doukhobors, India, science, and the arts. Indeed, the religious quest is present in all chapters of this volume as they address the basic Tolstoyan questions: how must I live? and what must I do? The answer is always informed by the context.

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Anna A. Berman

Note on Citations, Translations, and Transliterations

Unless otherwise noted, all citations of Tolstoy's texts in Russian are from the Jubilee Edition, whose history is described in Chapter 35: *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii (iubileinoe izdanie)*, 90 vols. (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo "Khudozhestvennaia literatura", 1928–59). They are included parenthetically in the text with volume and page number (e.g. 19:348). For the long works – *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* – the volume, part, and chapter number are also indicated to facilitate locating passages in different editions.

There is no universally agreed-upon standard English translation of Tolstoy's works, so contributors have made their own choices when citing from translations. These are indicated in the chapter endnotes.

Transliterations in the body of the text and notes follow the Library of Congress system, except in the case of proper names, for which we are using a modified system to make them more familiar to anglophone readers. The –y ending is used instead of –ii and –ya instead of –ia (e.g. Volkonsky, Tolstaya) and Ya/Yu is used instead of Ia/Iu at the start of names (e.g. Yasnaya Polyana). At the end of names, –ai/–ei is used instead of –ay/–ey (e.g. Nikolai, Timofei). The letter ë is transliterated as yo (i.e. Fyodor, Pyotr). In the middle of names x is used instead of ks (Alexander). Soft signs are omitted (e.g. Nikolenka, not Nikolen'ka). Well-known spellings are used for famous names (e.g. Tchaikovsky instead of Chaikovsky), and Tsars' names are anglicized (Nicholas II, Peter the Great).

Chronology

This chronology is designed to place Tolstoy's life and works in the context of Russian and world history and literature. The left column provides key events in Tolstoy's life and writing. The center column provides the Russian historical and literary context, and the right column expands to the wider world. Entries are highly selective, focusing on the events most important to Tolstoy and the topics covered in this volume. For a more detailed chronology of Tolstoy's life without the wider world context, see *The Cambridge Companion to Tolstoy*.