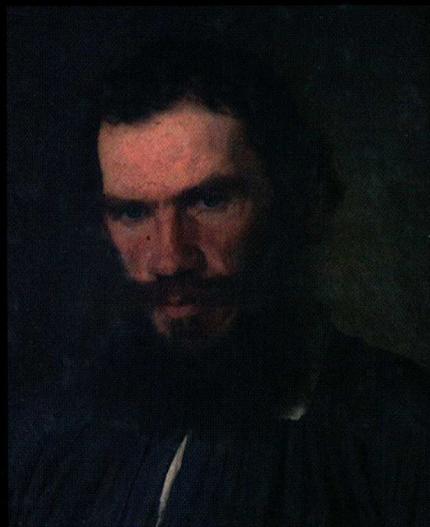


THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO



# TOLSTOY

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*Edited by  
Donna Tussing Orwin*

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TOLSTOY

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DONNA TUSSING ORWIN

*University of Toronto*



 **CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

**CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS**  
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521792714](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521792714)

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First published 2002

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN 978-0-521-79271-4 hardback  
ISBN 978-0-521-52000-3 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2007

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

Leo Tolstoy presents special challenges to the editor of a single volume that seeks in any way to be comprehensive. He wrote steadily for six decades and for at least half that time he was acknowledged by almost everyone as the greatest living Russian writer. He was more than a writer of fiction. He was an indefatigable letter writer. His diaries alone take up many volumes of his collected works and constitute in themselves a unique product of his genius. In his old age he published a controversial book on aesthetics. He studied philosophy in his youth and wrote philosophical tracts in his old age. Later in life he became a social critic, a prophet of Old Testament intensity and doom, a creator of an influential if now largely forgotten social movement (Tolstoyanism), and even the founder of a new variety of Christianity. He rewrote the Gospels, and endorsed William Jennings Bryan in the 1904 American presidential elections. His life, exhaustively documented in his later years, was the stuff of daytime soaps.

Rather than mapping this entire vast terrain, the essays in *The Cambridge Companion to Tolstoy* focus on areas most accessible to the general reader while making brief excursions into more remote territory. Collectively the contributors do justice to the sheer number of works by Tolstoy and to the long time period over which they were written. They concentrate on the fiction, but provide some commentary on other kinds of writing as well. The widely divergent critical approaches of the individual essays help the reader break through the surface illusion of simplicity and "reality" to the complex and beautiful mysteries which dwell beneath the surface of Tolstoy's texts. Each essay stands on its own, of course, but using the index readers can also follow a work horizontally, across chapters. In other words, the aim of this Companion is not to explain Tolstoy in a textbook format, but to introduce him to readers who, having read some or all of the essays in it, will return to the primary texts ready to engage with them on a deeper level.

The subject of the introduction is Tolstoy himself, as author of those ninety volumes within which we devoted scholars toil. In my Introduction I discuss

## EDITOR'S PREFACE

him from three different perspectives on human beings that intersect in his fiction: the psychological, the historico-cultural, and the philosophical. The volume also contains a chronology of Tolstoy's life that is longer and more detailed than any that has appeared before in English. Here the aim is not interpretation, but breadth, and as balanced a picture of the man as possible. Contradictions are allowed to stand and await explanation (or not) from others. Of course I am aware that any biographical material interprets, if only by what it leaves out. The chronology lists the most significant events in Tolstoy's life. It centres narrowly on Tolstoy himself – not, for instance, following the lives of even his closest relatives – but on a few occasions mentions an historical event which Tolstoy himself regarded as immensely important. The comments of or quotations from Tolstoy that supplement the events are characteristic or represent a pattern; throwaway remarks, of which there are very many in so well documented a life, are excluded. The chronology is intended to be comprehensive enough to provide background for the various chapters in this book, as well as starting points for discussion and more detailed investigations.

Donna Tussing Orwin

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It has been an honor and a pleasure to work with the contributors to this volume. I owe a special thanks to Edwina Cruise and Caryl Emerson, who edited the work of the editor. Linda Bree and Rachel De Wachter of Cambridge University Press have been supportive and understanding as various glitches in the making of the volume confirmed the truth of Tolstoy's theory of the unpredictability of history. Penny Wheeler has done an excellent job as copy editor. The Tolstoy Museum at Iasnaia Poliana provided slides for the cover of this book, and I want to thank both the Museum Director, Vladimir Tolstoy, and Head of the Research Department, Galina Alexeeva, for this. I am grateful to Megan Swift for her assistance in preparing the chronology, and Jennifer Olson for her work on the index. I am especially indebted to Edith Klein, Production Editor at *Tolstoy Studies Journal*, who has advised me on all matters relating to form in this project. Finally, I want to thank my husband, Clifford Orwin, for his support and encouragement.

## NOTE ON EDITIONS, CITATIONS, AND TRANSLITERATIONS

There is no standard English edition of Tolstoy's works, so the contributors have been asked to refer, where possible, to editions in print and readily available. The standard Russian edition is the Academy, or Jubilee, in ninety volumes. Within each chapter of this Companion, contributors have keyed all references to Tolstoy's works, first to the specified English edition or editions and then to the Jubilee (abbreviated as *PSS*) by volume and page numbers. In a further complication, some English editions, especially of the long novels, alter chapter divisions. Chapter numbers, where indicated, refer to the specific English edition used by that contributor.

Throughout the volume we have used a modified version of the Library of Congress system to transliterate Russian from the Cyrillic into the Roman alphabet. Exceptions include established English spellings of Russian names (for instance, Tolstoy instead of Tolstoi, Herzen instead of Gertsen) and names like the Russian Marya (instead of Maria), where a "y" is used to indicate proper pronunciation. Where names occur in quotations from English sources, the spelling in the particular source is maintained.

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# Chronology<sup>1</sup>

- 1828 Born August 28, son of Count Nikolai Ilich Tolstoy and Princess Marya Nikolaevich Volkonskaia, at Iasnaia Poliana (Clear, or Ash Tree Glade), an estate inherited from maternal grandfather in Tula Province about 130 miles south of Moscow. As a child known as Lyova-Ryova (Crybaby Lev) because he is so sensitive and cries so easily.
- 1830 Mother dies, leaving four sons – Nikolai (b. 1823), Sergei (b. 1826), Dmitrii (b. 1827); and Lev (b. 1828) – and younger sister Marya (b. 1830).
- 1836 Tolstoy family moves to Moscow to prepare eldest son Nikolai for university.
- 1837 Father dies; Tolstoy children placed under guardianship of his very pious sister, Countess Aleksandra Ilinichna Osten-Saken. Distant relative, T. A. Ergolskaia, Tolstoy's beloved "Aunty," assumes major role in raising the children. Family lives mostly in Moscow, summers at Iasnaia Poliana.
- 1841 Aunt Aleksandra dies, and Tolstoy children move to Kazan (an ancient river port with Tatar as well as Russian cultural influences about 400 miles east of Moscow on the Volga) to live with her sister Pelageia, married to an influential Kazan landowner.
- 1844 Enters Kazan University to study oriental languages intending to become a diplomat. Transfers next year to the Faculty of Law.
- 1847 Begins Franklin journal with daily schedules and records of actual adherence (and most often, non-adherence) to them. Begins diary which, in various forms and with some significant breaks, he keeps for the rest of his life. Daily routine includes physical exercise – riding and gymnastics. Physically active, strong, agile, and good at all sports for his whole life. Hospitalized more than once for venereal disease. Fragments survive of a commentary on the discourses of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and a comparison of Tsarina

## Chronology

Catherine the Great's *Instruction* with Montesquieu's *De L'Esprit des Lois*. Around this time he reads all of Rousseau, "including the dictionary of music," as he later told one commentator. Rousseau is the thinker who most influenced T (see note 1 at the end of this chronology for a list of abbreviations used), who returns to him many times over his life and once said there were many pages in Rousseau that he felt he could have written himself.

May: withdraws from university without graduating and returns to Iasnaia Poliana. Philanthropic work among his peasants with mixed results.

1848 Moves to Moscow, where frequents high society and does little else.

1849 Moves to St. Petersburg, plans to enter civil service, then studies briefly in the Faculty of Law at the university there. Thinks of joining an élite guards unit. Returns to Iasnaia Poliana, where opens a school for peasant children. This year and the next spends much time thinking about music and playing piano. Fragmentary writings on music survive. Plays piano and loves music passionately his entire life. Favorite composers include Weber, Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, Schumann, Bach, Chopin, and early Beethoven; also folk and gypsy music. His Russian favorites are Glinka and then Tchaikovsky. Even in old age he never once speaks of abandoning music or music-making, although he claims at times that his tastes in music have changed. Applies to civil service and in 1850 is accepted at beginning rank in Tula province.

1851 More socializing in Moscow, and heavy gambling at cards. Various ideas for fiction recorded in diary. Writes the unfinished "History of Yesterday," first surviving artistic work.

April: returns with his artillery officer brother Nikolai to the Caucasus, Russia's southern frontier. Translates part of Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, and begins to write *Childhood*.

July 3: conceives idea of never-completed novel called *Four Epochs of Life*. (The four stages are childhood, adolescence, youth, and young manhood.)

November: begins to read Plato's dialogues in French translation of Victor Cousin. Of these, *Symposium* and *Phaedo* are his favorites. He rereads these and other Platonic dialogues several times in his life.

1852 Hunting, gambling, and womanizing. Recurrent venereal disease. Reads Plato and various works by Rousseau, especially "The

## Chronology

Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar” (from *Emile*). Finishes *Childhood* and works on *The Raid*. Conceives idea for *Novel of a Russian Landowner*.

January: takes an exam for the rank of cadet and joins the artillery as a “bombardier fourth class” stationed in the North Caucasus.

February: nearly killed in action by a shell that shatters the wheel of a cannon he is aiming.

August 3: “In my novel [*Novel of a Russian Landowner*] I will lay out the evil of the Russian government, and if I find that satisfactory, then I’ll devote the rest of my life to the construction of a plan for an electoral monarchic and aristocratic government based on existing elections. This is truly a goal for a virtuous life. Thank you, Lord, give me strength” (d).

September 2: reading Dickens’s *David Copperfield* for the second time, pronounces it “delightful” (d).

November 30: “Four epochs of life will be *my* novel up until Tiflis. I can write about it [that is, my own life], because it is far from me. And as the novel of an intelligent, sensitive and erring person, it will be instructive, though not dogmatic. The novel of a Russian landowner – that will be dogmatic” (d).

PUBLICATIONS: *Childhood*. Well received by both public and literati.

1853 Recommended for promotion to ensign. Sends in letter of resignation from army, but all leaves forbidden until the end of the Russo-Turkish War (declared on June 14). Gambles at cards and womanizes. Works intensively at times on *Novel of a Russian Landowner*, and comments frequently on writing by himself and others.

July 27: intimidated by Ivan Turgenev’s *Sportsman’s Sketches*: “It’s somehow hard to be writing after him” (d).

August 28–30: works on “The Fugitive,” the first, incomplete version of *The Cossacks*.

September 13–17: Writes and sends off story *Notes of a Billiard Marker* in a white heat, “so carried away that it’s even hard for me: I feel faint” (d).

October 6: Applies for active service against the Turks.

October 18: “don’t forget to look at it [each composition] from the point of view of the most narrow reader, who is seeking nothing in a book but entertainment” (n).

November 26: asks brother Sergei to send him *David Copperfield* in English.

December 1: "Literary success, satisfactory in and of itself, is achieved only by means of developing a subject from all angles. But the subject itself must be an elevated one if the labour is always to be pleasant" (d).

PUBLICATIONS: *The Raid*.

1854 Promoted to ensign for distinction in action in the Caucasus. Gambling and womanizing. Reads voraciously: Goethe, Schiller, Lermontov, Pushkin, Harriet Beecher Stowe, George Sand, contemporary Russian playwright Ostrovsky, and others. Reaches Bucharest in March, takes part in the siege of Silistria and the retreat, at the end of June, back to Bucharest.

July 11–12: reads Dickens's *Bleak House*, published in translation in *The Contemporary*.

September 6: promoted to second lieutenant. Arrives in Kishiniev on September 9, and applies for transfer to the Crimea where allied siege in the Crimean War is taking place.

September–October: sale of main house at Iasnaia Poliana – it is dismantled and carted away – for 5,000 roubles to raise money after heavy gambling losses.

November: transferred to the Crimean front, and arrives at Sevastopol November 7.

November 21: receives rejection by Tsar Nikolas I of proposal submitted by group of artillery officers to publish a popular journal for soldiers.

PUBLICATIONS: *Boyhood*.

1855 Takes part in defense of Sevastopol, sees action on the notorious fourth bastion (in April), fights at fall of Sevastopol in August. Reads Goethe, Thackeray (*Vanity Fair*, *Henry Esmond*, *Pendennis*), Balzac, and others. Works on *Youth*, the continuation of *Childhood* and *Boyhood*.

January: gambles away all 5,000 roubles received for sale of house.

January–February: works on several plans for military reform.

March 4: records plan to found new religion: "in accordance with the development of humanity, the religion of Christ, but cleansed of faith and mystery, a practical religion, not promising future bliss, but giving bliss on earth [...] To act *consciously* to unite people by means of religion – here is the foundation of a thought that will, I hope, captivate me" (d).

March 11: "A military career is not for me, and the sooner I get out of it to give myself utterly to literature, the better" (d).

## Chronology

Mid-November: arrives in St. Petersburg, moves in with Turgenev. Makes friends with leading literati, all anxious to meet L. N. T., celebrated author of enormously popular war stories. Generally regarded as best young Russian writer, especially admired for gifts of psychological analysis and moral power. Carouses, gambles, loves gypsies and gypsy music.

Later November: meets distant, somewhat older relative A. A. Tolstaia, a lady-in-waiting at the Court, who becomes a lifelong friend and confidante. By mid-December is fighting bitterly with Turgenev, loves to *épater* his new, cultured friends by claiming to despise such cultural icons as George Sand, Homer, and Shakespeare.

December: introduced by friends to poetry of F. I. Tiutchev. Along with Pushkin and A. A. Fet (with whom he became friends in early 1856), Tiutchev becomes his favorite Russian poet.

PUBLICATIONS: *Notes of a Billiard Marker*, *Sevastopol in December*, *Sevastopol in May*, and *The Wood-felling*.

1856 Participates in both Petersburg Westernizer and Moscow Slavophile circles. Quarrels and reconciles with Turgenev, whom he sees frequently. Under influence of Petersburg friends, especially aesthete V. P. Botkin, indulges and explores all forms of sensuality, from physiological to aesthetic and musical. Attends theatre, concerts, and operas. Keeps a mistress for a few months. Reads Shakespeare, Pushkin, Dickens (*The Pickwick Papers*, *Little Dorrit*), Thackeray (*The Newcomes*), Goethe, Molière, and Homer. In literary polemics, chooses the side of sympathetic portrayal, which he associates with Pushkin and Dickens, over that of satire, associated with Gogol. Briefly courts neighbor Valeriia Arsenieva. Works intensively on and completes part one of *Youth*. Begins two comedies, *A Noble Family* and *A Practical Man* (which remain unfinished), continues *Novel of a Russian Landowner* and *The Cossacks* and begins the novel *The Decembrists*. Remains interested his entire life in the 1825 Decembrist revolt of gentry army officers. Conceives and works on a story called "The Distant Field," never finished and related in subject matter to *War and Peace*.

February 2: hears of death from tuberculosis on January 18 of brother Dmitrii.

March: Poet N. Nekrasov, T's editor, intervenes to prevent a duel between T and one Longinov.

March 26: Promoted to lieutenant for "outstanding bravery and courage" at Sevastopol.