



外国文学经典

War and Peace



战争
与
和平

(上)

Leo Tolstoy (俄) 著

Louise & Lilymer Maude (英) 译

外语教学与研究出版社

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS

京权图字：01 - 2005 - 6715

Introduction, Chronology, Select Bibliography, and Notes © Henry Gifford
1983

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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

战争与和平 = War and Peace: 英文 / (俄) 托尔斯泰 (Tolstoy, L.
N.) 著; (英) 莫德 (Maude, L.), (英) 莫德 (Maude, A.) 译. — 北京:
外语教学与研究出版社, 2008.7

(外国文学经典)

ISBN 978 - 7 - 5600 - 7705 - 5

I. 战… II. ①托… ②莫… ③莫… III. ①英语—语言读物 ②长篇小说—俄罗斯—近代 IV. H319.4: I

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2008) 第 117665 号

出 版 人：于春迟

责任编辑：易 璐

装帧设计：林 力 张苏梅

社 址：北京市西三环北路 19 号 (100089)

网 址：<http://www.fltrp.com>

印 刷：北京京科印刷有限公司

开 本：880×1168 1/32

印 张：69.25 (上、中、下册)

版 次：2008 年 9 月第 1 版 2008 年 9 月第 1 次印刷

书 号：ISBN 978 - 7 - 5600 - 7705 - 5

定 价：108.00 元 (上、中、下册)

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物料号：177050001

INTRODUCTION

WAR AND PEACE was not immediately or universally recognized by its readers as a world's classic. It came out by instalments between 1865 and 1869, in a time of fierce controversy; and there were complaints from both left and right about its being tendentious. Tolstoy's contemporaries could few of them stand back and see the grand design of the book; they were distracted by questions of genre — was this a novel of family life, an historical chronicle, not without its distortions, or a panoramic 'poem' like Gogol's *Dead Souls*? Tolstoy rejected all these definitions when in 1868 he published 'Some Words about *War and Peace*' (to be found at the end of this volume). He claimed that the best things in the fiction of his countrymen had never conformed to the known genres. But many of his readers found it difficult to adjust to the changed perspective in a novel that started with the domestic life of a few families and moved steadily into the domain of a national epic. They were even more perplexed when, half-way through it, passages of theoretical argument about history and free will began to grow in frequency, until the Second Epilogue left fiction behind altogether, and hammered out a paradoxical thesis.

Tolstoy tells us in 'Some Words' that he wrote the novel during 'five years of uninterrupted and exceptionally strenuous labour under the best conditions of life'. It was certainly strenuous labour, as the many drafts that have survived witness; and the only interruptions it suffered were those incidental to raising a family—he had married in 1862 — and farming his estate. He claimed in a letter

of 1863 to be at the height of his powers; and never had Tolstoy felt so much at harmony with himself. The 'best conditions of life' meant virtual seclusion on his estate of Yasnaya Polyana. He wanted explicitly in this novel to celebrate the life of the Russian nobility (a term including what we should call the gentry) and the solid agrarian order which found itself under challenge in a new phase of Russian history following the Emancipation of the Serfs in 1861. Yasnaya Polyana and all it stood for was very precious to Tolstoy. The atmosphere of the place is palpable when he writes of the Rostovs and their country pursuits at Otradnoe.

The challenge, of which Tolstoy was keenly aware, to his own cherished traditions came from the so-called 'new men' who began to dominate the intellectual scene after the defeat of Russia in the Crimean War, during which the repressive Tsar Nicholas I had died. The years ensuing were remarkable, even by Russian standards, for their ideological conflict. The leading journal then was *The Contemporary*, edited by the poet Nekrasov, who had been glad to publish Tolstoy's own work from *Childhood* (1852) onwards, and regarded him as a writer of exceptional promise — an opinion shared by Turgenev. But Nekrasov had come increasingly under the influence of two associates, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov, former seminarists whose militant views were odious to Tolstoy. Dogmatically, they put their trust in progress, in the rationality of man once freed from superstition and the constraints of despotism, and in the organization of society on scientific principles. Tolstoy, though himself an unrelenting inquirer, was no friend to intellectuals: we have only to consider his attitude in *War and Peace* to Speransky. In 1863 Chernyshevsky, although in prison, had been able to publish a novel, *What Is to Be Done?*,

which portrayed an emancipated woman who dreams of a radiant future. Tolstoy resented it as an attack on the family, and the many admirers of Chernyshevsky's novel among the intelligentsia could see plainly his polemical intention in *War and Peace*.

At the beginning of the 1860s, after having dropped out of literature for a while, Tolstoy made a start on a novel about the Decembrists. These were the liberal conspirators from the aristocracy who on 14 December 1825 rose against Nicholas I on his accession. In 1856 at the beginning of a new reign those who had survived thirty years of exile in Siberia were allowed to return. Tolstoy was interested in these revolutionaries of an earlier generation. He abandoned his novel about the Decembrists, but Pierre in *War and Peace*, as the First Epilogue reveals, took a leading part in one of the circles leading up to the insurrection, and he admits to Prince Andrew's son that his friend too would have shared their ideas. In these two representatives of the aristocracy, before the modern age which he opposed, Tolstoy could realize the life of thinking men who had liberated themselves from ideology. Prince Andrew tired of Speransky's notions, Freemasonry ceased to enchant Pierre.

The novel about the Decembrists was never written. Now Tolstoy turned to the beginning of the century, when Napoleon filled the western horizon of Russia. He began by narrating the fortunes of a few aristocratic families in those years from 1805. The first instalment to appear bore the title *1805*, but it was not until a few months later, in March 1865, that Tolstoy recorded in his diary a new vision of what his novel might be. At one early stage he had thought of calling it *All's Well That Ends Well*, which would

seem to tilt the balance towards the domestic, with the war as a temporary disturbance of its peaceful waters. But now he had become absorbed in reading about Napoleon and Alexander, and the idea that came upon him 'like a cloud of joy and of the consciousness of being able to make something great' was that he would write 'the psychological history of the romance between Alexander and Napoleon'. Alexander puzzled him, so intelligent, sensitive, a potentially great man who wavered between liberalism, when he supported Speransky, and military harshness when he replaced him by Arakcheev. Tolstoy sees 'confusion outwardly' in Alexander, and yet, within, a spiritual brightness. Reading about the two leaders he had come to see 'all the baseness, all the phrase-making, all the senselessness, all the contradictions of the people surrounding them, and of themselves' — particularly of Napoleon, whom already he condemned as insincere, unfeeling, and self-deluded. Napoleon 'is not interesting, but only the people surrounding him and on whom he acted'. All this gave rise to 'great thoughts' and when Tolstoy conceived his work at this stage as a 'poem' he was aware of its epic possibilities.

He had now become a historical novelist in the most profound sense. His readers might complain that he appeared to forget the original characters of his story, as he came more and more to expatiate upon public events and public figures, and later to challenge the historians and argue with military experts. They had expected a family chronicle, of the kind Tolstoy himself had read in Trollope's work, with admiration for the novelist's mastery, though he soon recognized how much Trollope dealt in the conventional. Tolstoy had a good knowledge of the contemporary English novel, and some respect for it. *War and Peace*, however, developed on lines of its own, and

Tolstoy was right when he insisted that it could not be placed in any accepted category.

For the reader in our time, with all the study that has been made of Tolstoy's working methods when he wrote this novel, it no longer perplexes, and the design is fairly simple to see. We know from Russian critics of this century like Shklovsky and Eykhenbaum how he handled his sources, and what transformations the story underwent as it grew in his mind. There is an excellent account of all this in the book by R. F. Christian, Tolstoy's *'War and Peace': A Study* (Oxford, 1962). For many years the English reader, encouraged in this view by Henry James and his disciple Percy Lubbock, failed to perceive the coherence of Tolstoy's novel. It was indeed open to the winds of his time — Tolstoy allowed no barriers between art and daily living. The world of Alexander's era is not distanced by reminders of its pastness as that of the Regency is in *Vanity Fair*, or *Middlemarch* in the late 1820s and early 1830s by George Eliot contemplating it fifty years later. Tolstoy writes of the past (though with some deliberate historical colouring) in terms of the present, and *War and Peace* is a novel of the 1860s like any other of that contentious decade, even if the issues are presented in a wider perspective. For this reason it is a developing work, that deepened with Tolstoy's awareness of moral and historical problems. But the flood through all its branches is channelled and controlled. The ideas of the novel — though it adds up to more than its ideas — are linked in a firm structure.

Tolstoy's own experience entered deeply into the novel. His family were quick to recognize many of the people and situations, although no character is to be identified wholly with its prototype. He changed more in a character than a letter or two in the surname (the old Prince Nicholas Bolkonsky from his grandfather Prince Nicholas Volkonsky,

or his daughter from Tolstoy's own mother, also Mary, and like her plain and wealthy). Tolstoy's portraits are always subtly enhanced so that, as William James once remarked, 'life indeed seems less real than his tale of it.' Natasha with her extraordinary openness to life is more than an amalgam of Tolstoy's sister-in-law and his wife.

The battle scenes owe much to what he had seen himself in the Crimean War, when at Sevastopol he was present in the dangerous Fourth Bastion. The *Sevastopol Sketches* describing life under siege there have been worked up into the immense and crowded canvas of Napoleon's campaigns in 1805 and 1812. Many years later Tolstoy spoke of his debt to Stendhal who in *La Chartreuse de Parme* depicted the battle of Waterloo as experienced by the bewildered Fabrice, a participant who has utterly lost his bearings. The character of warfare had changed little from Austerlitz to Tolstoy's own time: the weapons had made no striking advance, communications remained slow, intelligence was haphazard; the signals network of a modern army did not exist. The military experts (whom, like experts of every kind, Tolstoy held in contempt) were displeased with his calm dismissal of military science. They could not fail to resent the many gibes at pedantic German theorists (many soldiers of high rank under the imperial regime were German in origin). Prince Andrew, just before Borodino, overhears a brief exchange between the great theorist of war, Clausewitz, and a compatriot. It revolts him by its lack of sensitivity to the suffering in war, which is seen purely in a technical light. However, General Dragomirov, a military critic of *War and Peace* who dissented strongly from Tolstoy's conclusions about the futility of strategic studies, had to admit that his battle scenes could give 'invaluable practical lessons'. Tolstoy, in a way that very few military historians ever did, showed

the experience of war for those taking part in it.

The brush with Clausewitz belongs to a grand strategy pursued throughout the novel. Tolstoy develops his own campaign parallel with Kutuzov's. Each is concerned to repel the foreign invader. Tolstoy's prejudice against Napoleon (and the way he often manipulates his source material exposes the prejudice) is not mere resentment of the national enemy. Napoleon represents the inhumanity that Tolstoy is already beginning to find in modern civilization. Whereas Kutuzov, deliberately set up as the moral opposite to Napoleon, has a natural compassion, it never occurs to Napoleon that war is anything but magnificent theatre with himself in the leading role, that destiny which he has manufactured and wants to serve him. Kutuzov's wisdom is contrasted with Napoleon's delusions of grandeur. And the insincerity, the lack of any real concern for their fellow-men that marks the court circle in Petersburg — so unlike the warm-hearted Rostovs in Moscow — finds its reflection in French manners and its clichés in French speech. Tolstoy knows that for him the genuine is the Russian. The French and the Germans alike are out of touch with actualities. Here, I think, more comes into play than patriotic bias. Tolstoy is pitting the natural against the contrived.

Tolstoy's point of view, consistent and at times heavily stressed, does lead to some tampering with sources. Although he claims in 'Some Words About *War and Peace*' to have 'accumulated a whole library of materials', his reading was somewhat narrowly selective and, in the way of genius, desultory. He made use of two standard Russian histories, by Mikhaylovsky-Danilevsky (1844) and Bogdanovich (1859-1860); also of Thiers's *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire* (1845-1862), which for twenty years held the field against other French accouths of

Napoleon. All three works could make available for him vividly recorded scenes. But he explains in 'Some Words' that 'the tasks of artists and historians are quite different'. The historian is dominated by his single idea of a character (though we might argue that Tolstoy is dominated by a single idea of Napoleon); whereas the artist, aware that nothing in life is answerable to tidy schemes, has to approach the historical event from another side (and people show new aspects of themselves under the force of events). 'Either from his own experience, or from letters, memoirs, and accounts, the artist realizes a certain event to himself....' Tolstoy began his preparations for *War and Peace* by seeking out the reminiscences of those who had witnessed his chosen period, their letters and diaries — whatever would help him to 'realize to himself' how it had actually looked and felt. This intimate approach was not approved of by all critics.

Turgenev, who made many objections to *War and Peace* that qualified his admiration, thought he could see a deliberate sleight of hand in the method. 'Tolstoy,' he wrote, 'astonishes the reader by the pointed toe of Alexander's boot, by Speransky's laugh, making one assume that he must know *everything*....' The way in which Tolstoy claimed intimacy with his characters and the period as a whole offended the survivors of that age. Old Prince Vyazemsky, long before the friend of Pushkin, himself the son of a leading figure in Catherine's reign, and witness (much like Pierre) of Borodino, was not alone in thinking that Tolstoy had impugned the patriotism of the aristocracy in 1812. There were complaints from others who had known the time that Tolstoy failed to catch the tone and the manners. The son of the egregious Count Rostopchin, Governor-General of Moscow in 1812, was among those who protested at Tolstoy's distortions.

The most memorable episode concerning Rostopchin is that when, shortly before the abandonment of Moscow, he sets the mob on to lynching the unfortunate Vereshchagin, who is to be punished as 'the villain who has caused the ruin of Moscow'. Viktor Shklovsky has carefully examined Tolstoy's narrative in relation to his sources. The actual event is little changed by Tolstoy. He does not put into Rostopchin's mouth words that contradict what eyewitnesses heard, though the scene is made more vivid by repetitions: thus (in the Russian text) Rostopchin four times gives the order 'Cut him down!' In the same way, Tolstoy constantly reminds the reader of Vereshchagin's appearance — 'the young man in the fur-lined coat'; he emphasizes the 'long thin neck', and shows how in Vereshchagin's terror 'A vein in the young man's long thin neck swelled like a cord and went blue behind the ear, and suddenly his face flushed.' Tolstoy brings out magnificently the human pathos of the scene, with the unwilling crowd that 'moaned and heaved forward, but again paused', Vereshchagin's 'timid yet theatrical voice', the worse theatre of Rostopchin's incitations to 'cut him down', and the moment at which 'the barrier of human feeling, strained to the utmost...suddenly broke.' Vereshchagin's 'plaintive moan of reproach' — his cry when struck by the blunt side of the soldier's sabre — is fatal to him, and it is 'drowned by the threatening and angry roar of the crowd'.

The account of Rostopchin's confused feelings in his carriage as he leaves the mob is, of course, wholly of Tolstoy's invention. At the memory of Vereshchagin's words 'Count! One God is above us both!' — Tolstoy tells us 'a disagreeable shiver ran down his back. But this was only a momentary feeling and Count Rostopchin smiled disdainfully at himself. "I had other duties," thought he. "The people had to be appeased..."'. There is no knowing whether Rostopchin entertained such thoughts. Yet the

situation would seem to demand them, if he is to live with himself now this outrage has happened. The imaginative truth of this scene is irresistible.

Tolstoy's treatment of Napoleon, as we have noted, is hostile from the beginning, when he had first set down his impressions of the 'romance between Alexander and Napoleon'. Tolstoy felt an antipathy to Napoleon, as he did to the able minister Speransky, because they were plebeians (and no doubt his aversion to Chërnyshevsky and Dobrolyubov can be felt here), but even more because they were, in Tolstoy's view, unreal. Napoleon in *War and Peace* appears as a stage emperor, surrounded by burlesque kings of his own creation, and nullified by his own rhetoric. It is hard to believe that Pushkin should have called this mountebank a 'sovereign of our thoughts', or Manzoni have written at Napoleon's death in 1821: 'two centuries/The one armed against the other,/ Submissive turned to him/As if they waited on destiny.' Tolstoy denies him all military skill (though it is true that Napoleon lacked his usual flair at Borodino). Since Napoleon has not the root of the matter in him, he is worthless.

Here the philosophy that shaped the novel must be considered. Tolstoy, as we have seen, brought to the interpretation of this history the weight of his own experience. He had become convinced that the outcome of a battle hangs on the plain soldier who does what instinct tells him is right in a moment of crisis. In this way Captain Tushin with a single battery is able to save the army from defeat at Schön Grabern—and is afterwards blamed for abandoning a gun, until Prince Andrew speaks up for him. Later in the book Tolstoy formulates the principle: 'Only unconscious action bears fruit, and he who plays a part in an historic event never

understands its significance.' The point of view, as so often in Tolstoy's maxims, is exaggerated; but Tolstoy is able to illustrate this time and again in his account of action — particularly in the experience of Nicholas Rostov. And the submission to events, so unavoidable for the soldier in the thick of an engagement, is something that generals must understand, if they are to fulfil the role that Tolstoy allows to them. Thus Bagration at the same battle does not issue orders, except to confirm what is really happening, but 'owing to the tact Bagration showed, his presence was very valuable'. He is an excellent commander, because he concerns himself with the one thing he can influence, the morale of his troops.

The supreme example of this quality is, of course, Kutuzov, who, worldly and self-indulgent old man that he is, yet remains devoted to the mission he has been chosen to carry out. Kutuzov had been appointed commander-in-chief, after Barclay de Tolly was forced to give up Smolensk, by an unwilling Alexander who bowed to popular pressure. When Pushkin, a strong partisan of Barclay, argued his case in 1836, he did not deny that Kutuzov was the man necessary at the moment.

Only Kutuzov could propose the battle of Borodino; only Kutuzov could yield Moscow to the enemy; only Kutuzov could continue in that wise active inactivity, lulling Napoleon to sleep when Moscow burned and awaiting the fatal moment; because Kutuzov alone was invested with the people's confidence, which so marvellously he justified.

Pushkin's testimony is valuable, because it shows the popular view of Kutuzov, which Tolstoy was right to trust, whatever the quibbles of historians. He probably exaggerates the degree of 'wise passiveness' (to use Wordsworth's term) that Kutuzov displays, but essentially the truth was such. Kutuzov in *War and Peace* dozes

through the councils of war, ignores the voices dissenting from him, gives every sign of senility; but all the time he is listening to the groundswell of what the Russian people, soldiers and partisans, have to tell him about the war. He becomes the spokesman of Russian instinct, and it triumphs against all expectation.

Napoleon was no truly great man, because greatness cannot exist 'where simplicity, goodness and truth are absent'. Pierre has long searched for these qualities, which are, of course, manifested in Kutuzov. But Pierre finds them in a common soldier (more accurately, a very uncommon one), Platon Karataev. Whereas Tolstoy's Kutuzov convinces, Platon has not impressed many readers as he did Strakhov, Tolstoy's critic and confidant, for whom this holy fool symbolized 'the strength and beauty of the Russian people'. Tolstoy wanted Platon to be so taken, but whether he achieved the artistic triumph that Strakhov claimed is questionable. Platon represents the very opposite of Prince Andrew, whose pride of intellect and readiness to censure have to be purged in suffering. It is as if Tolstoy sought relief through the conception of Platon from the wearisome struggle with ideas that engaged Prince Andrew and Pierre. This meek peasant is able to give Pierre 'that tranquillity of mind, that inner harmony, which had so impressed him in the soldiers at the battle of Borodino'. Platon lives entirely in the moment, babbling and inconsequential. Yet he is always wise in his unreason. At this time Dostoevsky had just created the image of the 'underground man', set up like Platon (whose name, Plato, could not be more ironically chosen) to counter a life-denying logic. But while the 'underground man' takes obstinate satisfaction in his own meanness, Platon knows nothing of himself; and his love for his neighbour, though unfailing, is involuntary and quite

impersonal. Most readers are embarrassed by what they consider to be a rare case of Tolstoy caught faking.

It is only with Platon that he fails to convince in his insistence on the value of 'unconscious' action. The term 'unconsciousness' is disputable, since Kutuzov, for instance, may be called in a deeper sense conscious of what was happening. Tolstoy everywhere places his trust in the primacy of feeling, in the capacity for acting on the spur of the moment when the moment is properly understood. Thus, Nicholas at Voronezh forgets his pledge to Sonya (not spontaneously given) and falls in love with a transformed Princess Mary, when 'a new life-force takes possession of her.' Thus Natasha, who had been so busy organizing the conveyance of the family possessions from Moscow, suddenly insists that the carts should be unloaded to take wounded men. These, and a hundred episodes like them, are persuasive because the decision seems to flow inevitably from the character's awareness.

However, in his quarrel with the historians Tolstoy has not the same authority. We can understand what Turgenev meant when he spoke of 'our genius and crank [taking] the bit between his teeth'. Tolstoy distrusted the historians (who fell under his general ban on specialists) because in the first place they relied upon written reports of warfare which he knew from experience to bear little relation to the facts. Nicholas, called without irony 'a truthful young man', finds that he has to make up a story of what he might have done at Schön Grabern, because his hearers would not have accepted the literal truth. Tolstoy's scepticism spreads also to the explanations that historians give of all human affairs. He is very high-handed, and inaccurate, in his account of historical procedures in the Second Epilogue, because his knowledge of the subject was somewhat hastily gathered. But the underlying

question still has to be answered: How are we to account for the upheavals of 1812, that drove millions of men to the east, plundering, burning and slaughtering on their way, and then as suddenly drove them back to the west? Tolstoy was aware of the vast labyrinth of connections that lead up to and flow from every action. Perhaps this is especially a novelist's awareness, since for the novelist the world is made up of countless arresting particulars. There are good reasons, as Isaiah Berlin has shown in *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, for attending seriously to Tolstoy's arguments. Their tone may be brutally dogmatic, yet these are matters of great importance that he discusses, and his attention to them added profundity to his novel, even though the way in which they are presented throws the book to some extent out of balance.

Tolstoy's prejudices, to which his contemporaries were so sensitive, cannot be said to have warped the essential truth of *War and Peace*. Even if, as Konstantin Leontiev complained, his characters think the thoughts of Tolstoy's day rather than their own, there is in the book that permanent truth of feeling which Wordsworth believed to be the concern of poetry. Tolstoy has no rival among the novelists in his capacity to realize life, to reveal human beings in their egotism and their ability at times to fulfil themselves innocently and in harmony with the world. *War and Peace*, though depicting cruelty and disaster on a huge scale, can be fairly described as an essay in harmony. It affirms that man is inescapably a moral creature, and that he achieves his fulfilment in unpretentiously being himself.

HENRY GIFFORD

NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

AYLMER MAUDE and his wife Louise, the translators responsible for the *Centenary Edition of Tolstoy's Works* (Oxford, 1928-1937), knew both Tolstoy and Russia intimately. Louise was born in Moscow and lived there for forty years; Aylmer Maude spent two years at a Moscow school, and stayed in Russia for twenty-three years. He met Tolstoy in 1888, and became a friend and a disciple, though with some reservations. Tolstoy often expressed his gratitude to them both for their service as translators, because they were fully competent in both languages, meticulous throughout, and devoted to his work. Maude's *Life of Tolstoy* (Oxford, 1930) remains a valuable account by one who understood him well, and had played a useful part in one of Tolstoy's most cherished projects — the resettlement of the Dukhobors in Canada.

The Maudes' translation has appeared hitherto in three volumes, consisting in all of fifteen books and two Epilogues. These have now been aligned with the standard Russian text in four books and fifteen parts, after a few minor adjustments.

The translation was accompanied by footnotes, and other more detailed notes at the end of each of each volume. Many of these have been preserved, some augmented, others altogether replaced, and certain new notes have been written. Of particular interest are the original notes on Russian manners and customs, from Maude's long familiarity with the people.