
THE CRITICAL HERITAGE

LEO TOLSTOY

Edited by
A. V. KNOWLES



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General Editor's Preface

The reception given to a writer by his contemporaries and near-contemporaries is evidence of considerable value to the student of literature. On one side we learn a great deal about the state of criticism at large and in particular about the development of critical attitudes towards a single writer; at the same time, through private comments in letters, journals or marginalia, we gain an insight upon the tastes and literary thought of individual readers of the period. Evidence of this kind helps us to understand the writer's historical situation, the nature of his immediate reading-public, and his response to these pressures.

The separate volumes in the *Critical Heritage Series* present a record of this early criticism. Clearly, for many of the highly productive and lengthily reviewed nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers, there exists an enormous body of material ; and in these cases the volume editors have made a selection of the most important views, significant for their intrinsic critical worth or for their representative quality— perhaps even registering incomprehension!

For earlier writers, notably pre-eighteenth century, the materials are much scarcer and the historical period has been extended, sometimes far beyond the writer's lifetime, in order to show the inception and growth of critical views which were initially slow to appear.

In each volume the documents are headed by an Introduction, discussing the material assembled and relating the early stages of the author's reception to what we have come to identify as the critical tradition. The volumes will make available much material which would otherwise be difficult of access and it is hoped that the modern reader will be thereby helped towards an informed understanding of the ways in which literature has been read and judged.

B.C.S.

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Preface

Much of the contemporary response to Tolstoy's fiction, especially in his own country, was ephemeral and not unduly enlightening, some of it was not without interest, but only a little of it was of any lasting merit. Because of this, when we read what his contemporaries had to say about him we learn, ostensibly at least, far more about the state of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literary criticism than we do about Tolstoy the writer. That is not to say, however, that the seeds of what was to become the main growth of Tolstoyan criticism are entirely absent; but many of them are in general so well concealed by extraneous wrappings, instructions, exhortations, denunciations and words of caution that they are not readily exposed to the light of day.

The amount of critical comment written in Tolstoy's lifetime is immense; even the early trilogy, 'Childhood', 'Boyhood' and 'Youth', received well over one hundred reviews and notices; and once he had become well known all the critics, and indeed everybody who was anybody (and many more who were not), felt obliged to put pen to paper. Such a vast amount of criticism presents serious problems to an editor of a volume in the present series; consequently some sort of fairly arbitrary limitation has had to be imposed on the selection. In the first place it would be foolish of me to claim to have read everything that appeared, and this sets some limitation at the outset; second, much of it is so lacking in any, even negative, value that it has been rejected out of hand; third, a large proportion of it is hardly more than a recapitulation of the text, or of what fellow-critics wrote, and this has also been excluded. The final choice therefore has been restricted primarily to criticism of Tolstoy's works of imaginative fiction; consequently there is little comment on his writings of a political, social, religious, publicistic, or educational nature *per se*, or his views on art and literature, or on his plays and ideas about the drama. I have started with a number of opinions on

his early works, as these had their influence on the reception of the major novels; the main body of the selection is concentrated on the reception of 'War and Peace' and 'Anna Karenina', and then there is a number of the later, more general, comments. Within this selection I have included a few words from some of Tolstoy's fellow-writers, for in some respects, despite their brevity, they are among the most perceptive; I have also attempted to give fair coverage to Tolstoy's reception outside Russia. Within the obvious limitations of such a scheme, it is to be hoped that a reasonably well-balanced picture of the contemporary response will clearly emerge.

Finally I owe Tolstoy an apology. He would without doubt have hated this book.

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Note on the Text

The extracts printed in this volume from commentators who wrote in English follow the originals in all important respects; I have not standardized the various versions of Russian names, as in some ways they have a period charm of their own. The translations, except for No. 9, are my own. There is always a certain problem with the trans-literation of the Cyrillic script, but I hope the system adopted here strikes the reader as both reasonable and consistent; in my translations feminine surnames, except for Karenina, have been masculinized. Quotations from Tolstoy's works have in general been omitted, although where they are central to the passage they have been retained; where the content of an omitted quotation is not immediately apparent, a short description is appended; three dots..., where printed, are in the original, but four indicate an omission by me. Dates, where they refer to Russian originals, are in the 'Old Style' or according to the Julian calendar, which was in operation in Russia until after the Revolution; it was twelve days behind the Gregorian in the nineteenth century and thirteen in the twentieth. Information on Russian literary and historical references in the text is gathered together in the Appendix.

Introduction

I

If one looks at nineteenth-century Russian history and literature as a whole, there would appear to be a striking similarity between historiography and literary criticism. Literature seems to pose the same almost unanswerable questions to the critics as history does to the historians and thinkers. The latter asked themselves consistently and continuously: What is history? What is Russian history? What is Russia's place in history? What is Russia's historical mission? Is Russian history in general terms similar to that of Western Europe or is it something quite different? Should Russia learn from the West, or does she have something to teach? Such questions lie at the basis of all Russian nineteenth-century historiography, and it would scarcely be a distortion of the facts if, in talking about literature, the words 'history' and 'historical' in these questions were replaced by 'literature' and 'literary'. To the educated Russians, living in a country which cocooned its population in numerous regulations and restrictions, where public political debate was to all intents and purposes impossible, literature was one of the few means through which ideas could be reasonably freely discussed; consequently literature, and the written word in general, was far more important a part of the life of the educated Russians than it was of that of their contemporaries in Western Europe. This goes some way towards an explanation of the remarkable zeal and intensity of many of the critics and the acrimony between them. Had the social and political conditions been different many of Russia's literary critics might well have followed other callings, and Russian literature itself might well have been different.

Both literature and the criticism of it, however, came to Russia comparatively late. In the spring of 1825, some three

years before Tolstoy was born, Russia's greatest poet, Alexander Pushkin, was reading an article by the novelist A.A. Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, in which the latter claimed that Russia had plenty of criticism but no literature. (1) Pushkin started to draft a reply: 'We have criticism? Where is it to be found? What have we critically analysed? Whose literary opinions have been accepted by the whole nation? Whose criticism can we cite? On whose authority can we lean?' (2) At the beginning of June, Pushkin sent a long letter to Bestuzhev-Marlinsky in which he wrote: '*We have criticism but no literature.* Where did you get that idea? On the contrary it is criticism we lack.' (3) The difference of opinion between the two writers might well be explained by asking what each of them meant by 'criticism'. It is clear that Bestuzhev-Marlinsky also bemoans the absence in Russia of those sorts of critics Pushkin so desired—'The Addison, La Harpe, Schlegel, Sismondi'—on this they were agreed. Bestuzhev-Marlinsky had continued, though: 'We see plenty of critics, anti-critics, critics of critics, but few *efficient* critics.' Consequently Russia had no literature. Pushkin refutes this last statement; he modestly declined to quote himself as an example but insisted that Russia had indeed produced literature, with or without critics; he mentions Krylov (4) (who is far superior to La Fontaine) and Derzhavin (5) (who is far superior to Jean-Baptiste Rousseau) as examples of Russian writers, but 'we do not have a single commentary, a single book of criticism. We should rather say: we have some sort of literature, but no criticism'. (6) Indeed it would be hard to disagree with Pushkin if one considers that the first major work of literary criticism was Prince Vyazemsky's biography of the eighteenth-century dramatist Fonvizin (written in 1830, published in 1848), and which Pushkin thought 'well-nigh the most remarkable book to be written since we began writing books here'. (7)

Contemporary disagreements apart, there is no doubt that when Tolstoy began to publish in the early 1850s Russia had both literature and critics. What had happened in the intervening twenty years or so? It would be too simple, however tempting, to reply: 'Belinsky', but he certainly marks a watershed in the Russian reading public's attitudes to literature and its opinions about it. (8) Belinsky has much to answer for, not only on account of what he insisted literature should be and the later critics who took up his call, but also for the opposition he engendered. In short, Belinsky is the originator of the sociological, or 'civic', school of Russian

literary criticism; he demanded that literature should be modern, it should be true to life, and, most importantly, it should be inspired by socially significant ideas. He is usually seen as the true father of the Russian intelligentsia and ‘the embodiment of what remained its spirit for more than two generations—of social idealism, of the passion for improving the world, of dis-respect for all tradition, and of highly strung, disinterested enthusiasm’. (9) But Belinsky and those who followed him can be fairly blamed for the contempt for form and workmanship in literature which had dire effects in the 1860s and 1870s. If he taught that content was more important than form, he was equally responsible for the fact that the Russians tended after him to look for prophecy rather than entertainment in their literature. (10)

With the death of Belinsky in 1848 the critical leadership passed on the one hand to those who followed his inspiration—the civic critics, honest, radical, ‘Wester-ner’ as opposed to ‘Slavophile’, people like Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and Pisarev—and on the other to the rather more conservative representatives of the intelli-gentsia—the non-civic, aesthetic critics for whom literature was the ultimate expression of ideas, the writer was to be above such ephemera as the current problems of the day and for whom the ultimate criterion of literary merit was not content but form, critics like Annenkov and Druzhinin. Parallel with this development there was the reaction to it. The rejection of all Western ideas about literature, whether it was a question of the primacy of form as the aesthetic critics maintained or that of the social content as the civic critics demanded, led to a new call: that Russian literature should be *Russian*. All reliance on Western European norms and concepts should be overcome. Inspired in the early 1850 by Grigoriev, these new critics formed a cult of Russian originality, Russian character, Russian spirit. Grigoriev himself is remembered for his theory of ‘organic criticism’ which demanded the necessity of literature being an organic growth from the Russian soil (*pochva*, hence the untranslatable name of *pochvenniki* for his followers). Grigoriev admired everything Russian simply because it was Russian; and the main quality of the Russian character he saw as its meekness, its submissiveness, as opposed to the domineering, arrogant nature of Western European man. His best-known disciple, especially in connection with Tolstoy and Turgenev, was Strakhov. Such trends continued and developed, altered and expanded throughout the century until towards the end there arose new concepts and styles of criticism, the philosophical

and the symbolist, Leontiev, Rozanov, Shestov, Merezhkovsky, and of course, later still, marxist.

Thus the critical ground was well prepared for Tolstoy when he first published in 1852 and critics of all persuasions were to use his works as examples of all that was right or wrong with Russian literature. It is not surprising that the radical critics should attack him for the lack of any social content in his stories and novels, that the ‘aesthetic’ critics should praise him for the sheer artistry of his writing, and that the *pochvenniki* should find in him ‘the great writer of the Russian land’ and admire him for the creation of so many ‘meek’ characters, the essence of whom reached its apotheosis in the whole philosophy behind ‘War and Peace’ as well as being clearly personified in the characters of Platon Karataev and Field Marshal Kutuzov.

In general, though, Tolstoy was not well served by contemporary critics, and even when he became well known in the West from the second half of the 1880s, as will be seen below, he was received as a fairly typical nineteenth-century moralist, which did help throw some light on his writings, but not a lot.

Russian literary journals and the censorship

The usual means of publishing both literature and criticism in Russia was the periodical or, as it was popularly known, the ‘fat journal’ (*tolstyy zhurnal*). Russian periodicals had first appeared in the second half of the eighteenth century but they were few in number and had a precarious existence. Even during the reign of Nicholas I (1825–55) the number of all fat periodicals—political and social as well as literary—was small, between ten and twenty. The ‘fat journal’ came into prominence with the easing of censorship after Nicholas’s death and their number grew rapidly. In 1855 there were about fifteen, in 1860 about fifty, in 1875 about seventy, in 1880 about 110 and in 1885 about 140. (11) Usually a journal would consist of two parts, one literary, the other more general (politics, economics, science, sociology and so on); each journal would have a fairly well-defined political and philosophic line and would be subscribed to by a distinct readership. The number of subscribers varied; for example the most famous of them, the ‘Contemporary’, had just over 3,000 in 1848 and 6,500 in 1861. It would appear that a journal could survive healthily on a minimum of some 2,500. Polemics, often couched in indirect language, were waged

between them. In the 1850s and 1860s the leading radical journal was the 'Contemporary' and when it was closed down in 1866 its role was taken over by the 'Fatherland Notes' and subsequently by 'Russian Wealth'; the pro-Western, generally liberal, opinion found expression mainly in the 'Messenger of Europe' and in the twentieth century in 'Russian Thought'; the nationalist, patriotic view was in the 'Russian Messenger' which owed its great popularity largely to the fact that it was here that Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoevsky and many other writers would be published. As well as these, the leading journals, there were numerous lesser-known ones. (12) Editors would vie with one another to attract the leading authors to their pages; Tolstoy, for example, started with the 'Contemporary', flirted with 'Library for Reading' and 'Fatherland Notes' and published most of 'War and Peace' and 'Anna Karenina' in the 'Russian Messenger'. Indeed most nineteenth-century Russian literature first appeared in one or other of the 'fat journals'.

Throughout the century the journals always had the censorship to navigate. Censorship had existed in one form or another since the introduction of printing into Russia in the middle of the sixteenth century but was not officially instituted until the time of Peter the Great at the start of the eighteenth, and then it was applied mainly to theological writings. Various vague laws were formulated under Catherine the Great later in the century and anti-establishment writers such as N.I. Novikov and A.N. Radishchev were to suffer from them. The first comprehensive laws were promulgated by Alexander I in 1804. At first they were not notably restrictive and they were regarded by contemporaries as a relaxation on previous practices; they grew, however, progressively harsher and were at their most severe during the reign of Nicholas I, especially after the revolutionary year of 1848. A contemporary censor, A.V. Nikitenko, even suggested that the number of officials engaged in censorship exceeded in any given year the total of volumes published. (13) On the whole Russian censorship was negative rather than positive. The various authorities who found themselves in charge of it were more interested in suppressing what they considered undesirable than in inculcating into the readers any officially approved ideas, but it was a censorship on a broad front—religious, political and moral. However much it might vary in severity it was always there and was a continuing problem for everyone concerned, not excluding the censors themselves—they were frequently found wanting, dismissed and even arrested. Some authors, however, were prepared to take on

the difficult task, the most notable being the novelist Goncharov, the poet Tyutchev and the conservative philosopher Leontiev. After 1865 new ‘temporary’ laws (they were to last forty years) were introduced by Alexander II. Their main objective was to lessen the effects of preventive censorship. Previously all material had had to be submitted before publication but now original books of more than ten pages could appear without prior approval. This meant, though, that the journals were subject to stricter control than books, but at least authors and publishers could use their own judgment and risk punishment if it proved faulty.

Tolstoy and his critics

Tolstoy’s attitude to his critics varied from complete indifference to an almost manic contempt. His wife, Sonya, wrote in her diary on 24 February 1870: ‘We receive no papers or journals. Lyovochka [affectionate form of Lev] says he does not want to read any critics. “Pushkin was troubled by the critics; it’s better not to read them” he told me.’ (14) Her brother, Stepan, noted: ‘His attitude to journalists and critics was one of no little contempt... He never read critical reviews of his works and was not even interested in them.’ (15) Tolstoy’s son, Ilya, commented: ‘Papa was in general not fond of the critics and would say that such things occupied only those who could not do anything else. “The stupid judging the clever” was his view of professional critics.’ (16) V.F.Lazursky wrote on 27 June 1894: ‘Tolstoy said that Russian critics were all so superficial. Literature in Russia had always been superior to literary criticism.’ (17)

Despite the fact that what the critics said about him had no effect whatsoever on his writings there were two notable occasions when he did feel the need to state publicly what he had intended, in connection with ‘War and Peace’ and ‘The Kreutzer Sonata’, but these outbursts were caused more by what his friends had told him was being said than by a reaction against what was actually being written in the journals. None the less, Tolstoy was always extremely touchy about the views of those people he liked, and his diaries are full of explanations, rebuttals and self-justifications. The only professional critic for whom he had a good word was Strakhov, and this was as much a result of their friendship as of the fact that Strakhov was almost invariably enthusiastic about his novels. But even these personal comments had no effect upon his works. Criticism, he remarked, is the most

boring thing in the world. (18) He wrote what he wanted to write, and that was that.

II

Publication history of Tolstoy's works

Tolstoy began to write his first work, 'Childhood', in 1851 and he had completed it the following summer. In July 1852 he sent the manuscript to N.A.Nekrasov, editor of the leading St Petersburg journal, the 'Contemporary'. Nekrasov was impressed and agreed to publish it; it appeared in September, albeit with some changes insisted upon by the censor and entitled, much to Tolstoy's annoyance, 'A History of my Childhood'. Tolstoy's next nine stories also appeared in the 'Contemporary': 'The Raid', 1853, no. 3; 'Boyhood', 1854, no. 9; 'The Memoirs of a Billiard-marker', 1855, no. 1; 'Sebastopol in December', 1855, no. 6; 'Sebastopol in May' (as 'A Spring Night in May', much mutilated by the censor who did not like its critical comments on the Russian high command) and 'The Woodfelling', which was dedicated to Turgenev, both in 1855, no. 9; 'Sebastopol in August', 1856, no. 1; 'The Snow Storm', 1856, no. 3 and 'Two Hussars', 1856, no. 5. 'Childhood' and 'The Raid' were signed simply L.N., the next five L.N.T., but from 'Sebastopol in August' the author emerged from behind his initials and admitted publicly to being Count L.N.Tolstoy.

These early stories had all been written while Tolstoy was in the army and when he returned to St Petersburg from active service in the Crimean War in December 1855 he was greeted with acclaim and entered the literary circle of the capital and of the 'Contemporary' with zest. So proud was he of his fame that he offered contributions to other editors with gay abandon, which explains why 'Meeting a Moscow Acquaintance in the Detachment' (the clumsy title is a result of the censor's distaste for the original 'Reduced to the Ranks') appeared in 'Library for Reading' and 'A Landowner's Morning' in 'Fatherland Notes', both 1856, no. 12. So popular had Tolstoy become that, even at this early date, he considered bringing out his collected works in book form and in September 1856 'The Raid', 'The Woodfelling' and the three stories of Sebastopol were published together as 'Military Tales' and in October 'Childhood and Boyhood' appeared as a book; by 1897 the latter had run to ten editions. The three Sebastopol stories were issued separately in 1884, both in Moscow in an edition of 6,100 copies (which had

reached its sixth reprinting by 1886) and in St Petersburg with an edition of 20,000, reprinted in 1890 also in 20,000 copies. The two books of 1856, however, received little notice (although some of it was of no mean quality) and sold slowly and this was Tolstoy's first literary disappointment. When 'Youth' appeared in the 'Contemporary' in January 1857 his star seemed to be on the wane. Discharged from the army in November 1856 he decided to travel abroad and for the first seven months of 1857 he was in France, Switzerland and Germany. During this period he worked intermittently on various stories. 'Lucerne' appeared in the 'Contemporary' in September 1857 and 'Albert', although completed first, in August 1858. Neither of these two stories made any impression, except to prove to many people that their belief in Tolstoy's early high promise had been unjustified; this view was only confirmed with 'Three Deaths' in 'Library for Reading' in January 1859 (although between 1870 and 1900 the book version of this tale ran to seven separate editions with more than 77,000 copies in all). Chastened by his apparent loss of talent Tolstoy worked lethargically on both 'Family Happiness', his first conventional novel, and on 'The Cossacks'. So dissatisfied was he with the former that when he read the completed manuscript he thought of publishing it under a pseudonym; it appeared, however, fully signed, in the 'Russian Messenger' in April 1859. None the less, Tolstoy began to believe that his literary career was over and began to devote himself more and more to a new interest—the education of peasant children. His pedagogical notes and theories appeared in a special magazine he published himself called 'Yasnaya Polyana', named after his estate on which he established his school. Twelve numbers appeared between February 1862 and March 1863. The only literary works of this period (which was interrupted by his second trip abroad when he visited France, Germany and England to examine the school systems there) were, first, 'The Cossacks', which he had started some ten years before while in the Caucasus and was forced to complete in 1862 to pay off some gambling debts and which appeared in the 'Russian Messenger' in January 1863, and, second, 'Polikushka' which came out the following month. In 1864 the Moscow publisher Stellovsky brought out a two-volume edition of Tolstoy's collected works.(19)

On 23 September 1863 Tolstoy married Sonya Behrs, the eighteen-year-old daughter of a neighbouring family he had known for years, and there began the period of his life in which, he stated, he lived a correct, honourable family life.

The fruit of this early settled happiness was 'War and Peace'. It took six years to complete and went through many changes; it was not until March 1867 that he finally decided upon its title. It began to appear, entitled '1805' in the 'Russian Messenger' in 1865, nos 1 and 2, and was continued the following year in the February, March and April editions. In June all these sections were published separately as a book, still called '1805'. Towards the end of 1867 it was reprinted with some additional material and given the title 'War and Peace'. In March 1868 the fourth volume was published separately in Moscow, the fifth a year later and the sixth and last in December 1869. On the whole it was a literary sensation and quickly went into a second edition.

After completing 'War and Peace' Tolstoy devoted himself once again to education and wrote numerous stories in simple language with the aim of helping children to learn to read. Two of these appeared separately in 1872: 'The Prisoner of the Caucasus' in 'Dawn', no. 2, and 'God Sees the Truth, but Waits' in 'Conversation', no. 3. Between 1883 and 1901 there were at least twenty-four editions of the latter story with some 250,000 copies. All the other stories of this nature appeared in four 'Readers' which ran to innumerable editions; they were later to be adopted throughout the Russian educational system; there was also his 'ABC Book' of 1872 which contained a complete curriculum for the initial teaching of children. Also in 1872 an eight-volume collection of his works began to appear in an edition of 3,600 copies per volume. From this time onwards his 'Collected Works' continued to appear, increasing in size with each year and in the numbers of copies printed; for example, the fourth edition of 1880 had eleven volumes of 5,000 copies, the sixth, 1886-7, twelve of 6,000, the eighth, 1889-91, thirteen of 10,000 and the tenth, 1897, fourteen of 16,000 copies each.

Tolstoy began to work on 'Anna Karenina' in March 1873 but his life was full of problems—religious, educational, family and personal—and his work on the new novel was often interrupted; also his passion for writing fiction had considerably lessened. In December 1874 he sold the serial rights to Katkov, the editor of the 'Russian Messenger', for the quite remarkable sum of 20,000 roubles and 'Anna Karenina' started to appear in the first four numbers for 1875; further instalments were published the following year, nos 1-4 and 12, and the next year, 1877, nos 1-4. Katkov refused to print the final, eighth, part because of Tolstoy's adverse comments on the Russian volunteers (of whom Vronsky was one) who were

then leaving Russia to help the Serbs in their fight to rid their country of Turkish domination. Part VIII was printed separately. The whole novel, revised with the assistance of his friend, the critic Strakhov, appeared as a book in 1878.

While at work on 'Anna Karenina' Tolstoy became increasingly concerned with the metaphysical torments which he was to describe in 'Confession' (banned by the censor in 1882). Following his rejection of the Orthodox Church and his adoption of the rational elements of the Sermon on the Mount, he devoted the rest of his life to philosophical, religious, social and political problems, both practical and theoretical, rejected all his imaginative literature as worthless, and wrote comparatively little fiction afterwards which did not bear a didactic message of one sort or another. 'The Death of Ivan Ilich' (1886), 'Strider' (1888), 'The Kreutzer Sonata' (banned 1890), 'Master and Man' (1895, and more copies of which were printed in Tolstoy's lifetime than any other of his works) and 'Resurrection' (1899) are the most 'literary' of his later works and in many respects show no falling off of his artistic talents whatsoever. 'Hadji Murad', which he completed in 1904 but which was not published until after his death, is pure literature as it were, with no 'message' at all; Tolstoy was even a little ashamed to be writing it when there were so many more serious matters to attend to. But by this time Tolstoy was so famous, not only in Russia, but internationally as well, that everything he wrote sold in enormous quantities; this was helped by the fact that in 1891 in accordance with his new principles he had renounced the copyright on all his writings, and publishers the world over were not slow in taking advantage.

III

The critical reception

(a) Before 'War and Peace'

In 1865 the April number of the 'Contemporary' carried a valedictory notice on Tolstoy written by the critic Pyatkovsky. The year before a two-volume edition of Tolstoy's collected works had appeared in Moscow shortly after 'The Cossacks' had been given a mixed reception; Tolstoy had fallen silent, or was, as far as the public was concerned, still pursuing his interests in educating the children of the peasants on his estate at Yasnaya Polyana; to the outside world he had stopped writing fiction altogether and apparently for good.

Consequently Pyatkovsky thought it not amiss to attempt to evaluate what Tolstoy had given to Russian literature and at the same time take a few shots at 'Family Happiness' and 'Lucerne' (see No. 20). Tolstoy was clearly talented, had notable powers of observation and was capable of acute psychological analysis; he was truthful and straightforward; he did not strain after literary effect. None the less his works did suffer from a certain idealization and some occasional tendentiousness, although he was a wonderful portrait painter and landscape artist, if somewhat old-fashioned in his style and general outlook on life. Such was Pyatkovsky's view; it is not unbalanced or untypical; it does summarize much of what was usual in contemporary criticism of Tolstoy, but not everything; other critics had noticed further aspects, both positive and negative. The early views of Tolstoy's fellow-countrymen are intrusive because they were to colour much of the later criticism, especially of 'War and Peace' and 'Anna Karenina'.

The early fiction, from 'Childhood' in 1852 to 'Sebastopol in August' in 1856, was met by general acclaim and in some cases with great enthusiasm; not for Tolstoy an early struggle for recognition, indeed he was to find it difficult to live up to his early fame. Some of the favourable opinion on his first works was to affect what was said about 'The Snow Storm' (1856) but by the end of the decade his stories passed all but unnoticed, and when 'The Cossacks' which Turgenev as late as 1874 still thought Tolstoy's best work, appeared in 1863 it did little to enhance his reputation. The reasons for the change in critical opinion is explained partly by the fact that the stories after 'Sebastopol' were less artistically successful, partly because everyone knew Tolstoy had turned himself into a pedagogue, and partly because the attitude of the critics to Tolstoy the man was having too great an influence over their opinions of Tolstoy the writer. The literary set of the 1850s in St Petersburg was an inward-looking and small group, writers doubled as critics and vice versa, and everyone knew everyone else. Their activities tended to centre on the 'Contemporary' with its editors Nekrasov and the less-talented Panaev, and their outlook was in general terms radical, especially after the accession of the 'reforming tsar', Alexander II, in 1855. There were, however, varying shades of opinion within the circle which in time coalesced into two distinct camps; on the one hand were the generally younger, non-noble people like Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov with their insistence on the social purpose of literature, and on the other the aristocratic liberals such as Turgenev and the 'art for art's sake' critics like

Annenkov and Druzhinin. When Tolstoy arrived in the capital he was courted by both sides, something which flattered his vanity no end. The 'aristocrats' took his support for granted; he was a count, would naturally gravitate towards them and join the attack on the likes of Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov (the snake and the rattlesnake, as Turgenev called them). (20) The younger element expected 'the lion of Sebastopol', (21) with his clear anti-establishment opinions, to lend them his support. Tolstoy, though, was to disappoint both sides; psychologically and socially antagonistic to the younger group and even daring at one point to attack their oracle Alexander Herzen, he was equally scathing of aristocrats attempting to be liberals; Turgenev's democratic pretensions he found particularly distasteful and it is from this time that their long love-hate relationship dates. Everyone in St Petersburg came to the conclusion that his was a great literary talent but that he was also his own man. He was always to remain so. Indeed something of the cool reception afforded to 'Two Hussars', 'Lucerne', 'Albert', 'Family Happiness' and 'The Cossacks' must be attributed to the reaction of the critics he had earlier offended.

'Childhood', however, was an immediate success, with the readers, the critics and his friends. Nekrasov had earlier written to Tolstoy with encouragement (see No. 1a) and he had ordered Turgenev to read it, telling him that they had found a new and possibly great talent. (22) Turgenev replied with his congratulations. (23) In one of the earliest reviews of the story Dudyskin praised it for its feeling, nobility and sympathy with reality; (24) an anonymous critic commented favourably on its verve and charm; (25) B.N.Almazov commented on the warmth of its descriptions: (26) Turgenev wrote to a friend about his enthusiasm and tells the story of Panaev being shunned by his friends on the street for fear they would be button-holed into listening to him reading whole passages out loud; (27) and Dostoevsky from exile in Siberia was to admit liking the story although he did not think the author would write much more, hastily adding that he might be wrong. (28) Almost alone in not being totally favourable were F.A.Koni, who, while finding it an amusing little tale, said it was quite without inspiration, (29) and A.A.Grigoriev who wondered if it was only some psychological exercise, and he became the first in a long line of critics to accuse Tolstoy of having no plot in his works. (30) Nine years later, however, Grigoriev was to write some of the most original criticism on Tolstoy of the whole century (see below).

When Tolstoy's second story, 'The Raid', appeared it was received as warmly as 'Childhood', even though it had suffered at the hands of the censor. Nekrasov wrote to Tolstoy (6 April 1853) telling him not to be discouraged by this sort of thing as it was the fate of all great authors, and Dudyshkin (see No. 3) was full of praise, seeing the way Tolstoy described ordinary soldiers as something quite new in that they appeared as real living people and not some relics of the past in the style of the jingoistic Bestuzhev-Marlinsky. The reaction to 'Boyhood' was the same; Annenkov (see No. 2) congratulated Tolstoy on avoiding the usual pitfalls of the first person narrative form and commended his penetrating analysis of feeling and the successful manner in which he had depicted the awakening of reason in a young boy. Nekrasov spoke of its general success with the public (see No. 1c) and both Dudyshkin (31) and Almazov (32) continued where they had left off with 'Childhood'.

'The Memoirs of a Billiard-marker', although Nekrasov thought it weak because of the poor language Tolstoy had used (see No. 1b), and 'The Woodfelling', which Tolstoy had dedicated to Turgenev, only furthered his reputation. Turgenev wrote: 'Nothing in my literary career has ever flattered my self-esteem so much', but he added: 'the military life is not for you. Your weapon is the pen not the sword.' (33)

However, using his experiences with the latter as ink for the former, Tolstoy wrote three stories about the life of the Russian army during the siege of Sebastopol during the Crimean War, and it is these that mark the unambiguous peak of his early fame.

On 19 May 1855, soon after the first of them, 'Sebastopol in December', had appeared, Panaev wrote to Tolstoy that so good was it that 'all of us who love Russian literature are praying God may spare you'. Turgenev wrote to Panaev (10 July 1855) that the story was wonderful and he cried when he read it, and the novelist and playwright Pisemsky commented on 'Sebastopol in May' that its pitiless honesty made it hard to read. (34) The critics were as enthusiastic as his friends. 'Nowhere does the author express his admiration, but he forces us to admire. We are astonished at every turn.' (35) 'Sebastopol is the work of a master; there is vigour and concision' and Tolstoy's chief value was his severe truth. (36) It was rumoured that Tsar Nicholas I was so impressed with the first story that he ordered it to be translated into French, and it did indeed appear in 'Le Nord', a French-language Russian newspaper published in Brussels. (37) 'Sebastopol in May' had alarmed the censor and once again the editor of the

‘Contemporary’, who had been told to print the story with its changes, had to write to Tolstoy telling him it was what had to be expected in the circumstances. (38) The ‘St Petersburg News’ found it full of sincerity, warmth and lyrical characters (39) and ‘Fatherland Notes’ praised its vividness, feeling and sheer poetry. (40) Nekrasov told Tolstoy that the truth of what he was writing was exactly what Russia needed (see (No. Id) and commented that ‘Sebastopol in August’ showed accurate powers of observation, a deep penetration into the heart of things, a wealth of poetry and the rare ability to touch the readers’ hearts (see No. le). Other critics suggested it was by far the best thing written on the last days of the siege especially because the soldiers were so well drawn, their conversations and their jokes were so full of the very stuff of life. (41) Druzhinin while admitting, for example, that Russell’s dispatches to the London ‘Times’ were obviously the work of a talented author claimed they could not be spoken of in the same breath as Tolstoy’s stories. (42) Adverse comments were few and far between. An anonymous critic (see No. 5) seemed determined to swim against the general tide and attacked Tolstoy for writing less and less well, the more serious the events he was describing became; looking at the three stories together he accuses Tolstoy of simply painting pictures and his main fault is that there is no action.

When ‘Childhood and Boyhood’ and ‘The Military Tales’ appeared in book form they drew from Chernyshevsky a remarkable essay (see No. 6a); it is without a shadow of a doubt the best piece of literary criticism to come from his pen and was to influence much subsequent Tolstoyan criticism. Chernyshevsky summarizes what other critics have seen in Tolstoy but accuses them of failing to differentiate what makes Tolstoy remarkable; everything they have seen in him is certainly there but so is it in many of his illustrious predecessors. What really marked Tolstoy’s originality was his successful and idiosyncratic use of ‘interior monologue’ and his ability in his psychological analysis to get through to the psychic process itself, which Chernyshevsky termed ‘the dialectic of the soul’.

Tolstoy’s next three stories show the first signs of some reaction in the critics to their earlier fulsome praise. ‘The Snow Storm’ was certainly seen by the early reviewers as more poetry than prose in its tonalities and structure and Turgenev was as usual carried away.(43) S.T.Aksakov agreed, attempting to capture some of Tolstoy’s glory; after all he had been caught in snow storms too and knew exactly what they were like.(44)

Herzen called it a marvel (45) and Druzhinin thought there had been nothing better since the days of Pushkin and Gogol. (46) The praise for 'Two Hussars' and 'A Landowner's Morning' was, however, more muted. Younger people saw the former with its contrast of two generations as an attack upon them (and this was not the last time Tolstoy was to be accused of favouring the old over the new; indeed he can be seen as looking askance at everything in Russia which post-dates Peter the Great), although Druzhinin ('Library for Reading', 1856, no. 139) defends the author from such comment, and 'A Landowner's Morning' which is a semi-autobiographical description of an attempt to improve the peasants' lot was hardly liked at all; even Turgenev, while praising the language, complained of the awful picture of Russia which it gave (see No. 8a).

It was 'Youth', the sequel to 'Childhood' and 'Boyhood', which really marked the change in Tolstoy's reputation. Druzhinin (see No. 4) wrote that it was good and Tolstoy should not pay any attention to people saying it was weaker than the previous two parts; but some of the chapters were too long, he must guard against excessive analysis, and he must look to his style which was heavy and often ungrammatical. Panaev told Tolstoy (letter, 5 December 1856): 'your phrases are too long and the same words keep recurring', and to Turgenev (letter, 6 December 1856) he was less restrained: 'Tolstoy simply does not know how to write. His sentences are all two yards long. The thought is admirable but its expression is quite obscure.' The 'Fatherland Son' complained that it was over-long and in places carelessly written, although the portraits of the students were excellent as was the description of the awakening of intellectual development;(47) Chernyshevsky lost patience and accused Tolstoy of simply preening himself like a peacock (see No. 6b) and Bastrov said that to present the hero as typical of all Russian youth was an insult not only upon the young but upon the whole of Russian society. (48) In a general review of Tolstoy's works K.S.Aksakov found time to praise 'Youth' but warned him to beware of excessive detailization, of putting certain facets of the soul under a microscope, thus making them out of proportion to everything else (see No. 7).

A visit to St Petersburg in the autumn of 1857 added to Tolstoy's dejection. Talking to Nekrasov and other writers on the 'Contemporary' he persuaded himself that his talent was declining. His latest stories had not been bad but they were certainly a disappointment to the admirers of 'Sebastopol'. Tolstoy wrote to Botkin on November 1857: 'I must say that

as a result of the new trend in literature most of our old friends, including myself, no longer know where we stand.' His bewilderment might be partially explained by Nekrasov's attitude to 'Albert' which led to Tolstoy's final break with the 'Contemporary'. Nekrasov had returned the manuscript to Tolstoy suggesting that he should not bother to publish it; he pointed out the tendentiousness and banality of the story and said that the morally sick and drunken hero needed a doctor rather than the sympathy and understanding of society. Tolstoy changed it a little but it was hardly noticed. (49) Perhaps the didactic nature of the discussion of the true essence of Art was not to the taste of the literary critics at the end of the 1850s, a time when Russia was embroiled in the turmoil leading up to the Emancipation of the Peasants in 1861. 'Lucerne' was greeted coolly in the 'St Petersburg News'; (50) it was thought by another critic only to show the sick mood of the author, and Turgenev, Botkin, Annenkov and Panaev all disliked its overt moralizing and attacks on Western civilization. (51) Pisarev, as was to be expected, poured scorn upon it in his long article, *Downfall of Unripe Thought*, although he did find some ironic praise for the fact that never had the type of its philosophizing hero been drawn in such a wonderfully ridiculous and sad light. His ironic style took on a gentler hue when reviewing 'Three Deaths' for the lady subscribers of the magazine 'Daybreak' (see No. 10) and indeed he was not antagonistic although Turgenev was not the only reader who could find no connection between the death of the oak tree and the other two. (52) Everyone was sure Tolstoy had said all he had in him to say.

In 1858 Tolstoy was working on 'Family Happiness' and, true to his mood of the time, as soon as he had finished it he became convinced that it was worthless, but on the insistence of Botkin he sold it to the 'Russian Messenger'. Botkin read the proofs and wrote to Tolstoy (15 May 1859) :

To my amazement the result was entirely different from what I had expected. Not only did I like the second part but I found it all beautiful. In the first place it has dramatic appeal; in the second it is an excellent psychological study; the descriptions are very life-like; in a word the whole thing is admirable, full of meaning, and talented.

On the whole very few critics bothered with it, but those who did concurred with Botkin's opinion. 'Northern Flower' hailed the story of a young woman's marriage to an older husband and ultimate happiness as a poetic idyll, (53) the 'St Petersburg

News' put it on a par with 'Childhood' (54) and the 'Fatherland Son' declared that the psychology was extremely accurate and that the author was clearly a connoisseur of the human heart. (55)

Despite this relative success Tolstoy continued to be dissatisfied with it and returned to 'The Cossacks' which he had started six years before, but he did not really believe he would ever finish it. Druzhinin had written asking for a story for the 'Library for Reading' and Tolstoy replied (9 October 1859) :

I'm not much use as a writer any more. I've written nothing since 'Family Happiness' and I do not think I shall write again. Life is too short for me to fritter it away making up books like the ones I write which are a source of embarrassment to me afterwards.

Even Khomyakov's public praise for him (see No. 9) failed to excite him and he took himself abroad for the last time in his life.

During the three weeks he spent in Brussels on this trip he wrote 'Polikushka' which went unnoticed except by his friends; they were unenthusiastic (see No. 8c).

In 1862 the perceptive and original critic Grigoriev wrote two articles on Tolstoy for Dostoevsky's journal 'Time' (see No. 11). What he had to say was to prove as seminal as Chernyshevsky's earlier review, if not more so. Much of what Grigoriev wrote has been taken up (usually without too much acknowledgment) by later critics. He takes the theme that Tolstoy accepts nothing on trust, everything is examined by a profound analysis; but so profound is that analysis that Tolstoy is led to denying everything and seems to be heading for an absolute intellectual nihilism. This even applies to those phenomena in Russian society of which he most obviously approves; by concentrating on their negative sides in order to accentuate the positive the latter are in danger of being swamped. Grigoriev, who put forward theories of 'organic' literature, literature that had its roots deep in the Russian soil, down to which the best authors dug, and Tolstoy deeper than most, analyses the traditions of the 'meek' personality as opposed to the 'domineering' one. Tolstoy clearly favours the former, in his simplicity, his submission to life and his gentleness. Those who recall Platon Karataev in 'War and Peace' and Tolstoy's idealization of him will surely take Grigoriev's point.

The last story of the period before his first great novel was 'The Cossacks'. It had a mixed reception. Countess Alexandra

Tolstoy wrote: 'My friends were en-chanted; others criticized it for a certain crudeness which they say inhibits the aesthetic response' (56) and Tolstoy was not disposed to disagree. Turgenev (see No. 8b) disliked the hero Olenin, but Fet wrote (letter to Tolstoy, 4 April 1863),

How many times I hugged you from afar as I read 'The Cossacks' and how many times I laughed at your derogatory remarks about it. You may write other books that are just as good but it is a sort of *chef d'oeuvre*.

But the poet Tyutchev was terse (see No. 14) and the critics were dubious. Polonsky praised Tolstoy for capturing the very breath of the Caucasus but thought Olenin only a pale copy of characters of Pushkin's day and complained that several of the episodes were just stories within a story.(57) Golovachov in the 'Contemporary' thought he was a good storyteller but no thinker at all;(58) Evgeniya Tur (see No. 16) expressed her indignation at Tolstoy for daring to romanticize drunkenness, piracy, theft and blood lust and allowing Olenin 'the representative of civilized society' to be debased, degraded and defeated; but on the other hand what could be expected from a character like Olenin?

Annenkov (see No. 17) declared the work one of the best achievements of all Russian literature and said that it told you more about the Caucasus than a score of ethnographical articles, while Edelson wrote that Tolstoy was contrasting civilization with unspoilt Nature to the apparent disadvantage of the former (see No. 15); Markov thought Tolstoy had described the various types found in the area remarkably well (see No. 19). The public by one account was, however, raving about it although it had been thought by some indecent and impossible to give to young girls to read.(59) All in all, though, the novel was thought to be somewhat old-fashioned; but whatever its contemporaries thought about it, it still manages to cast its spell: even Ernest Hemingway has admitted to its attractions.

Thus the critical battle-lines for the reception of 'War and Peace' were drawn up. On the one hand Tolstoy was known for his great ability as a painter of pictures, the charm, vigour, concision and poetry of his style, his great powers of observation and the capacity to use them, his extremely acute psychological analysis, his honesty and straightforwardness and scorn for literary effects for their own sake and for the fact that he wrote about people and events as they really were; on the

other hand he was accused of being old-fashioned, tendentious and didactic, he often took his psychological analysis to perverse lengths, his outlook on life tended to be purely negative, he suffered from an over-detailization, his stories had no plot or action and his use of the Russian language left much to be desired. All in all, both sides were to find further evidence for their case in his subsequent works.

(b) 'War and Peace'

Tolstoy began writing 'War and Peace' without a clear idea of what exactly the finished work would be. He first thought of a novel about the Decembrist Revolt of 1825, but his examination of the reasons behind it led him back to the war against Napoleon in 1812, and in looking at that he was driven further back, to the beginning of the century. He decided to write a sort of historical novel about upper-class life, and with this rather vague plan in mind he wrote the first two parts which appeared under the title '1805'. (60) Tolstoy was excited about the book's publication and was particularly anxious about the reactions of his friends, but supposed that it would in general pass unnoticed. (61) He was right, for reviews only began to appear in the second half of 1866, some fifteen months after the start of the serialization in the 'Russian Messenger'. His friends, however, immediately began writing to each other with their opinions, and continued to do so for years to come. It was to be expected that they would be generally sympathetic in their reactions and essentially they were; yet in praising its good points, they found it rather slow-moving, too digressive, weighed down by excessive detail and having a superfluity of French. The critic Botkin wrote to Fet (see No. 21) about how subtly Tolstoy described the inner movements of the soul, but that, although he had read more than half of it, he could not find the main thread; he saw a mass of details and assumed they formed the background for what was coming but there were certainly too many of them; Tolstoy also, he thought, was still a little careless with his Russian. Turgenev wrote to Botkin (25 March 1866): 'The second part of "1805" is weak. Where are the traits of the time? The historical colour? There is no background at all.' So both Botkin and Turgenev saw too many details, while the former saw them all as background and the latter could not even see that. Soon afterwards Turgenev complained to Fet (letter, 8 June 1866): 'The novel is bad because Tolstoy has not studied anything; he does not know anything, and under the name of Kutuzov and Bagration he

describes modern generals.' When he had read the fourth volume, he found parts of it wonderful and others unbearable. On the whole he preferred the third volume which he thought 'almost all a chef d'oeuvre' (see No. 36b). Botkin informed Fet (letter, 26 March 1866) that everyone was reading the book, they were in ecstasies over it, although he was not unaware that the professional critics and the army men were finding fault: 'The latter especially say Borodino was not the way Tolstoy describes it at all.' Turgenev told the critic Annenkov that he found parts of the novel marvellous but that the 'historical addition' was a 'puppet comedy' (see No. 36a); yet when Tolstoy forgets his philosophizing and gets back to basics he is incomparable.(62) By the time the last part appeared Botkin was enthusing that everything in the marvellous novel aroused the deepest interest, even Tolstoy's ideas about war. He called it a real *Russian* book. (63) Pogodin, editor and publisher and the centre of literary Moscow, told Tolstoy (letter, 3 April 1868) that when he read it he melted, wept, rejoiced, and on the following day he continued: 'You've done for me. You've turned me in my dotage into—Natasha. And Pushkin not here to see it! How he would have applauded, how happy he would have been, how he would have rubbed his hands with glee.' A few months later, however, he wrote in the journal 'Russia': (64)

What the novelist absolutely cannot be forgiven is his offhand treatment of such figures as Bagration, Speransky, Rostopchin and Ermolov who belong to history. To study their lives and then judge them on the basis of the evidence is all well and good, but to present them without any reason as ignoble or even repellent, the mere outlines and silhouettes of men, is in my opinion an act of unpardonable irresponsibility and provocation, even in an author of great talent.

Suvorin, the founder of the paper 'New Time', was at something of a loss and he could not explain why; there was nothing spectacular or strained and the 'gifted author' had not resorted to any tricks. He gave up trying to write a criticism of the work by stating that it was a smooth-flowing epic by a painter-poet. (65) Leskov, the short-story writer and novelist, wrote some unsigned reviews for the 'Stock Exchange News' in 1869–70; of 'War and Peace' he wrote: (66)

Long periods elapse between the publication of each volume in the series during which, as the saying goes, reeds are broken on the author's back; he is called this and that, a

fatalist, an idiot, a madman, a realist, a troll; and he, in the following instalment, remains what he is and what he intends to be... He paces along, a massive charger borne up by solid legs and iron-shod.

The novelist Goncharov yawned to Turgenev: ‘You speak of the appearance of “Peace and War”’ (Goncharov took delight in such mistakes—Dostoevsky’s novel was retitled ‘Crimes and Punishments’); not surprisingly he admitted to not having read it ‘but those who have say the author has colossal power’. (67)

The professional critics, though, were in general less tolerant than Tolstoy’s friends and fellow-writers; they admired his great skill as a writer but they expressed a distaste for his philosophizing and many of his ideas and ideals. Although there was some praise for Tolstoy from them the majority showered him with abuse and denigration. The political views of the critics were taking increasing precedence at this time over their literary judgments. The right wing extolled Tolstoy for his artistry, the left wing attacked him for his failure to deal with contemporary problems. Indeed some people have seen ample justification for the truth of the former in the vehemence of the latter: so well did Tolstoy write that the attacks on what he said just had to be violent. So beautiful was the form that the unsuspecting would not notice the vile-ness of the content; consequently both the novel’s philosophy and its artistic presentation came in for equal shares of negative comment.

Despite the fact that there were hundreds of critical reviews and articles on ‘War and Peace’ most, if not all, the critics were at a loss when dealing with the work. The immense physical size, the scope of its events, the multitude of characters, the ideas, the philosophy of war, the glorification of the family, the idealization of the peasant, all proved rather too much. So bemused were they that they began to ask themselves what exactly Tolstoy was trying to write. ‘What is “War and Peace”?’ became as much a ‘question of the day’ as the position of the peasantry, the reorganization of local government, the reforms of the legal system and the place of women in society. A brief notice in ‘Voice’ inquired: ‘What is this? To which literary genre can we ascribe it? What is it? Fiction, pure creation, or reality?’ (68) In 1866 the anonymous critic of the ‘Book Messenger’ (see No. 22) found it impossible to fit into any accepted genre; ‘it is not a novel; it is not a story; it is rather an attempt at a military and aristocratic chronicle of the past, wonderful in places, but in others dry and tedious’. The following year Akhsharumov found himself

in similar perplexity (see No. 23); 'It is neither a chronicle nor an historical novel', he wrote; it was an essay on Russian society some sixty years before. The anonymous critic of the 'Affair' (see No. 27) could not make up his mind whether the novel, or whatever it was, had even actually started, but whatever Tolstoy was trying to do, he had failed.

In reply to such widespread confusion Tolstoy made one of his rare public statements about his writings and tried to explain what he was doing in 'War and Peace' (see No. 26). His article, A Few Words about the Book 'War and Peace', is a poor defence against the criticisms being levelled against it. Quite simply it is 'what the author wanted to and could express in the form in which it was expressed'. His comments on historians do not bear scrutiny and his suggestion that most 'novels' from Gogol to Dostoevsky were difficult to fit into the genre is at best extremely dubious. In a discarded foreword to the work Tolstoy said that Western European literary forms were unsuitable for expressing artistically the Russian mind, and consequently he had to find new ones. (69) But what these were no one seemed quite sure. Even Annenkov, who wrote what was probably the best contemporary critique of the artistic side of the book (see No. 24), failed to understand it fully. He spoke of its naturalness and simplicity; Tolstoy had done well to concentrate on *petite histoire*, the details of which gave him the right background for his ideas in the form of personified and dramatized documents; he found there was poetry and imagination and a wonderful grasp of life and the depiction of it; but on the other hand he discerned a lack of any dramatic development, of any 'intrigue', and in Annenkov's opinion Tolstoy had erred in making the historical facts not the backdrop to his story but the very foreground; he also found many of Prince Andrey's opinions uniquely ahead of their time.

In his dealings with the aristocracy Tolstoy was accused of a certain idealization. Pisarev in his unfinished article, The Old Landed Gentry (see No. 25), stated this criticism in no uncertain terms and stressed his point by dealing with two of the less important heroes, Boris Drubetsky and Nikolay Rostov. The satirical writer Saltykov-Shchedrin found the whole philosophy distasteful because Tolstoy had praised elements of the so-called highest society. (70) Tolstoy was especially fiercely attacked for his depiction of the Russian aristocracy and the emotive year of 1812 by people from the more reactionary sections of the nobility and by military historians. In their opinion Tolstoy was misrepresenting the facts and denigrating the unwavering patriotism of past generations. Norov (see No. 30), who had

served in the army towards the end of the campaign and had later been minister of education, said the novel was in fact painful to read and that the nobility, the Guards' officers and the Russian generals just were not as Tolstoy had depicted them. Vyazemsky was no less pained. (71) Like Norov, he had participated in 1812 and in the 1820s and 1830s he had been a liberal but had grown increasingly conservative with the years. He saw 'War and Peace' as a 'protest against 1812'; he particularly disliked Tolstoy's portrayal of the empty lives of the nobility in their salons or on their estates and their apparent indifference to the fate of their country. Tolstoy had found only Famusovs and Bobchinskys (72) in society and like Griboedov had seen fit to satirize the upper classes. Vyazemsky felt obliged to defend Tsar Alexander and Rostopchin from Tolstoy's portrayal of them, and Rostopchin's son wrote to the journal which published Vyazemsky's article with his thanks for putting the record straight about his father. (73) General Dragomirov, who wrote by far the most searching analysis of the novel from a military viewpoint (see No. 32), although deprecating Tolstoy's philosophy of war, was generous enough to give the author his due as a writer of immense talent; indeed 'War and Peace' could form a useful part of any soldier's training. And Liprandi (see No. 31), another participant in and historian of the campaign, admitted that it was difficult for any one man to come to any conclusions about the period (even though, of course, Tolstoy had) but that if Tolstoy had sinned against history 'then it was no bad thing'. Liprandi was in some respects justified, for although Tolstoy had to bear much criticism of this nature from the conservatives (who were really suffering from hurt pride) he was attacking only the false patriotism of certain elements in the society of the period; the patriotism of the ordinary people, as Soviet critics will never tire of pointing out, is not satirized at all and indeed it is quite the contrary, for everything that is praiseworthy in the Russian character is personified in Platon Karataev.

If he found little support from conservative circles, Tolstoy found even less from the radicals. In their view he failed on two main counts—in idealizing the nobility he had not depicted the intelligentsia and in praising the landowners he had not attacked serfdom. Bervi-Flerovsky, a politico-sociologist of no mean influence, in reducing Prince Andrey's father to size (see No. 29), said that if he really was one of the best men of the time it must have been because of his success in managing to make tens of thousands of peasants unhappy. A woman critic (see No. 28), M.K.Tsebrikova, sees the fact

that Prince Andrey is the hero only as proof of the poor social position of women, for all the three women in his life—Princess Liza, Princess Maria and Natasha—play a markedly secondary role in his affairs, and the family life, which Tolstoy so extols and which is based upon the devotion of the mother, is but further proof. Shelgunov (see No. 35) accused Tolstoy of being socially and politically reactionary and of propounding a philosophy of Eastern fatalism as the only answer to Russia's many problems, while Skabichevsky (see No. 37) sees Tolstoy going the way of Gogol in that he appears to be paying less attention to literature and is descending into a hopeless mysticism and a desire to change the world in line with his own rather obvious misconceptions.

In some ways the radicals were not so much pouring their scorn upon Tolstoy as upon their political opponents, especially the neo-Slavophiles. The views of the latter group are best expressed by Tolstoy's friend and correspondent over many years, Nikolay Strakhov, who wrote two long articles on 'War and Peace' for the journal 'Dawn' in 1869 (see No. 33). He saw the book as the best possible expression of the *pochvenniki's* 'meek Russian personality' beloved of Grigoriev (see No. 11), Tolstoy is given boundless praise (and the minor faults which Strakhov finds pale into insignificance), but it is ultimately for the most conservative elements in the novel. Even Dostoevsky (see No. 34) could not bear (or understand) Tolstoy's historical fatalism, and in some ways he found what Tolstoy was saying old-fashioned and second-hand.

Most of the contemporary comments on 'War and Peace' in Russia do have their justification but they seem in retrospect to have been made from false premises. Tolstoy is indeed a writer of the first rank; he is indeed in many ways conservative, even on occasion reactionary; he does indeed prefer the gentry and their foils, the peasants, to the intelligentsia; and he does tend to denigrate all innovations in Russian life and society; and it is no difficult matter to take Tolstoy's ideal in 'War and Peace' to be the landowning aristocracy who can run their estates efficiently and humanely and base their lives on strong family ties and a general Christian ethic—his whole philosophy of history and human free will leads to this conclusion. But that is not the whole story, although his contemporaries had their reasons for thinking it was.

In a word 'War and Peace' was not understood; its critics were ill-equipped to deal with it, and that is something which applies equally, if not more so, to 'Anna Karenina'.

(c) 'Anna Karenina'

'Anna Karenina' deals with many problems—the question of love and marriage, the attitude of parents to their children, the effects of the breakdown of marriage on the parents, the place of women in society, the question of the land and the peasantry, and the more usual Russian preoccupations with man's purpose in life; it is certainly much more than the commonplace Soviet criticism of it as dealing primarily with the contradictions in Russian society caused by incipient capitalism, although Tolstoy's own attitude to the latter's manifestations is clear and unambiguously negative—but for reasons diametrically opposed to those of critics in Russia since 1917. Contemporary critics, however, were at a loss when faced with the novel. 'War and Peace' might have caused them difficulties and argument but 'Anna Karenina' aroused in most writers only non-comprehension. It evoked far more political and ideological criticism than literary. Every side used it to support their own particular viewpoint. Conservative critics can always find more to their taste in Tolstoy than can radicals but 'Anna Karenina' proved even more problematical than 'War and Peace'. Furthermore Tolstoy's own conservatism, snobbism and puritanism stand out far more clearly here than in his earlier masterpiece. 'Anna Karenina' was poorly served by contemporary critics in Russia because the vast majority of them dealt with it politically or socially—and even abroad it was not fully appreciated because of its critics' concentration on questions of morality. Neither approach managed to explain why it should still be read with pleasure and interest today when the political, social and moral climates are very different from those in Russia in the 1860s and 1870s.

The reading public, however, was by all reports exceedingly enthusiastic. Strakhov, who was to be slightly less ecstatic in his own review (see No. 70) than he was about 'War and Peace', sent Tolstoy a series of encouraging letters throughout the novel's serialization. 'It is nothing less than delirium. I have seen solemn old men jumping up and down in admiration' (13 February 1875). 'Excitement keeps mounting' (21 March 1875). 'There is a roar of satisfaction as if you were throwing food to starving men' (5 March 1876). 'Everyone is taken up with your novel. It's incredible how many people are reading it. Only Gogol and Pushkin have ever been read like this' (February 1877). Confirmation came from Countess Alexandra Tolstoy; on 13 June 1877 she wrote that society was in uproar and that there was no end to the comments, praise, gossip and

arguments. Everyone seemed to be affected personally. Fet declared that Tolstoy was beyond peer; ‘What artistic daring in the description of the childbirth. Nobody has done anything like it before, and nobody will ever do it again’ (letter, April 1877) .

But not all Tolstoy’s acquaintances and fellow-writers were as pleased. Saltykov-Shchedrin, who described its atmosphere as genito-urinary (which was even more offensive than Skabichevsky’s saying it was full of the fragrance of babies’ nappies (see No. 58)), wrote to Annenkov (9 March 1875) that ‘Anna Karenina’ saw the conservatives in Russian life clearly triumphant; the novel had become their political flag. He considered concocting a satire to be called ‘The Enamoured Bull’, which is a theme taken up by Tkachov (see No. 56). Nekrasov, who had been the first person to appreciate Tolstoy’s artistic qualities in the early 1850s, thought its ‘message’ was simply that married women should not take lovers (see No. 60), and Suvorin agreed: it had no social significance and was basically concerned with a description of Anna’s love affair. (74) Even Turgenev, although relations between him and Tolstoy were at one of their frequent low ebbs, was luke-warm. Tolstoy, he thought, had taken the wrong road; the book was burdened by the influence of Moscow, the Slavophiles, aristocrats and old spinsters, and lacked real artistic freedom. Despite the fact that, he admitted, parts of it were quite wonderful—the race, the mowing, the hunt—Tolstoy had sunk in the bog of high society. (75) Dostoevsky (see No. 64) was hesitant, yet it is not untypical of him to see the best qualities of the book in the atmosphere of love and forgiveness that surrounds the ‘death-bed’ scene after Anna had given birth to Vronsky’s daughter.

But what of the professional critics? Why was their response in the main so hostile? Some of the adverse comments are explained by the length of time between the appearance of the various instalments. Reviews were published after each part came out but the long gaps when the ‘Russian Messenger’ had nothing further from Tolstoy led some to suggest endings of their own, most of which were of ironic scabrousness; others grew tired of waiting and expressed their irritation in satire and general denigration and one critic even suggested that Tolstoy was in cahoots with Katkov, the editor of the ‘Russian Messenger’, and was stringing the narrative out simply to fill the journal’s empty pages and earn himself some extra money (see No. 58); not for Skabichevsky an ironic ending; no, Tolstoy could go on writing it for ever; after all, was he not a past master at psychological analysis and the depiction of numerous superfluous details?

The one overriding reason for the low level of critical response to 'Anna Karenina' in Russia is that the novel's publication coincided with one of the more vehement manifestations of the continuing discord between the various journals. (76) There were three principal camps, differentiated in the main politically. Conservative writers and critics tended to appear in the 'Russian Messenger', liberals in the 'Messenger of Europe', 'Voice' and the 'Northern Messenger', and the radicals in 'Fatherland Notes' and the 'Affair'. The vast majority of critics tried to see in 'Anna Karenina' what they wanted to see or regretted what was missing. It is not without significance that most of the novel appeared in the 'Russian Messenger' or that most of the very few laudatory notices should be printed on its pages. As a generalization, the conservatives liked the novel, the liberals liked most of the form but little of the content, and the radicals were antagonistic towards the whole thing.

Of the conservatives, Avseenko (see No. 57) saw the novel as a protest of the best elements of the upper classes against the inroads being made into society by the new middle and professional classes. Although he bemoaned the fact that the theme was banal and that there was neither plot nor character development, Avseenko believed that the readers would not object because Tolstoy possessed that great ability to depict feelings. This opinion was supported by the anonymous critic of the 'Citizen' (see No. 62) who added that the 'Levin' story would probably be of more lasting interest than that dealing with Anna. The 'Russian News' (see No. 61) agreed with Avseenko in that in some ways it was a pity that a marvellously talented author like Tolstoy should waste his time on such petty subject matter as the love of a society lady for an army dandy, but the psychological analysis of even these characters was so penetrating that the reader is won over. Such critics generally saw Tolstoy as a 'pure artist' and consequently right not to concern himself with current social and political questions. This view has echoes of the earlier 'art for art's sake' critics like Dudyskin, Druzhinin and to some extent Annenkov; consequently the fact that Tolstoy did not deal with such questions was a positive point in his favour. When Tolstoy did deign to be contemporary such critics were at best bemused, at worst horrified. After all Katkov, the editor of the 'Russian Messenger', did refuse to print part VIII with its adverse comments on the Serbs and the Russians who were rushing off to give them assistance against the Turks.

Liberal critics, on the other hand, complained that the novel was notable for a marked absence of elements from the intelligentsia and that the latter therefore would find it quite without interest. (77) Tolstoy was attacked for the lack of intellectual content and also for his misrepresentation of the upper classes whom he portrayed, in their eyes, as only vulgar and petty. 'War and Peace' had earlier shown that he knew better. Tolstoy's powers of psychological analysis received praise equal to that which the conservatives gave, yet, just as in 'War and Peace', his preoccupation with a mass of apparently useless detail was again regretted. The 'Northern Messenger' praised Tolstoy for disdainning current obsessions and dealing with the more general questions which concerned mankind; his solutions, however, were not well received: how could he allow Levin to place more trust in the beliefs of the simple Russian peasants than in the writings of the great philosophers? It was pure affectation on his part. (78) Other critics, including Chekhov (see No. 94a), saw no solutions at all. E. Markov accused Tolstoy of writing about life without any ideal, (79) and the 'Odessan Messenger' agreed, in that it saw 'Anna Karenina' as the culmination of what happens with an author completely devoid of ideology. (80) One of the more gentle of the liberal critics was Chuyko (see No. 54); in comparing Tolstoy with Stendhal, to the former's advantage in that Stendhal begins with a psychological theory and builds his characters around it, whereas Tolstoy introduces psychological traits in succession which ultimately form a theory, Chuyko did find the development of the action rather slow. Tolstoy also had to overcome the fact that there was little or no interest to be found in the affairs (and more particularly the *affaires*) of aristocratic characters, but Chuyko does say that the very choice of a milieu where social problems play no part whatsoever in people's lives actually works to Tolstoy's advantage in that it provides a neutral background against which psychological problems can be successfully examined and solved—and even in the empty Vronsky, he adds, there are indeed psychic processes worthy of our attention. The writer and journalist Boborykin, whom his enemies on both sides saw as a typical liberal in that he never seemed to agree with them on anything, wrote that 'Anna Karenina' dealt with all kinds of problems, not only social, but moral and political ones too; the novel had its foundations in reality and was clearly didactic; nevertheless both Tolstoy's treatment of his subject matter and his conclusions were one-sided. (81) Vsevolod Solovyov, a brother of the philosopher, wrote a series of reviews on the novel as each part appeared and

his opinion of it changed from favourable to antagonistic (see No. 55). He began praising it for its sublime ordinariness, something it took a writer of genius to fashion into a work of art—we all recognize Stiva Oblonsky as someone we know, and like—and Tolstoy obviously writes about all his characters with love. But then Solovyov suggests that the more of the novel you read, the more you become convinced that you have read it all before—and you have, in ‘War and Peace’. He sees all the leading characters as but younger versions of those in the earlier work, Kitty of Natasha, Levin of Pierre, Vronsky of Anatole, Stiva Oblonsky of Count Rostov. Furthermore he finds Anna boring (Dolly is far more alive) and accuses Tolstoy of having written himself out: he was just going through the motions. The famous art critic Stasov, however, saw ‘Anna Karenina’ as a definite development of Tolstoy’s talent and claimed that it was a novel with which Russians could at long last stand side by side with their European counterparts without a shadow of any feeling of inferiority. (82)

Tolstoy’s wife, Sonya, wrote in her diary (3 March 1877) that Tolstoy had told her that as in ‘War and Peace’ he loved the idea of his country, so in ‘Anna Karenina’ he loved that of the family. The novel can indeed be seen as supporting the sanctity of the family as the only stable social unit, but V. Markov (see No. 67) thinks the morality as expressed is not only old-fashioned but also outlived; to propound the idea through a heroine as empty-headed and frivolous as Anna casts serious doubts on the validity of the argument; in his view the whole tone of the novel is quite squalid. On the other hand Stankevich (see No. 66) asserts that Tolstoy is quite right to deal with such questions, the position of the family in society is, after all, extremely important; nevertheless Stankevich is not pleased with Tolstoy’s solutions. In being one of the first critics to see the novel as really two—one about Anna, the other about Levin—which are poorly integrated (despite Tolstoy’s own pride in its construction (see No. 65)) and in defending Karenin from attacks on his emotional coldness and bureaucratic formalism, Stankevich is one of the more original of the contemporary commentators; but he is still of his time in that he complains of Tolstoy’s concentration on detailization, something which he sees as a purely aristocratic pursuit. And Veynberg (see No. 63) when ostensibly defending Tolstoy from his critics agrees with this view, but because Tolstoy is writing a novel and not a pamphlet this is no real criticism.

In receiving praise from the conservatives—largely for the wrong reasons—and a mixed reception from the liberals, whose