

***Leo Tolstoy and Russian Peasant Sectarian Writers: Selected Correspondence.* Edited and with an introduction by Andrew Donskov. Correspondence translated by John Woodsworth. Ottawa: Slavic Research Group at the University of Ottawa, 2008. 298 pp.**

It is no secret that the great innovations of Leo Tolstoy's fiction works have earned themselves a recognized place in the upper echelons of world literature. Interest in Tolstoy on the part of both readers and scholars today is as high today as ever. A new 100-volume edition of Tolstoy's complete works is being issued by the Russian Academy of Sciences, and new memoirs and letters by his contemporaries are constantly being published. Scholarly researchers are plunging headlong into their investigation of pertinent museum archives.

A prime example of Tolstoy's continuing influence on the spiritual and cultural life of present-day society is the recent publication of his correspondence with four Russian peasant sectarian writers, edited and published by the Slavic Research Group at the University of Ottawa.

This book is arranged in a multi-part format, bringing together the letters exchanged between Tolstoy and four of his peasant sectarian correspondents: T. M. Bondarev, F. A. Zheltov, P. V. Verigin, and M. P. Novikov. The letters have been meticulously prepared and published over the last decade in Russia, Canada, and Germany under the editorship of Andrew Donskov (the only foreign scholar to sit on the editorial board of the new Academy edition of Tolstoy) and carefully translated at various stages by John Woodsworth. While some of the translations were previously published in either Canada or America, Bondarev's letters were translated especially for this volume, making Donskov's new book an exceptionally valuable find for English-speaking readers.

The preface aptly states that Tolstoy's correspondence with Bondarev, Zheltov, Verigin, and Novikov "offers a unique insight into the minds of five spiritual thinkers as they engage in an earnest discussion on a wide spectrum of religious, philosophical and social questions." In fact, the multi-layered and multi-dimensional exchanges of letters allow us a significant glimpse into the distinctive character of each of these thinkers. The correspondence bears eloquent witness to the basic commonality of their views and their mutual influence on questions of the peasantry and historical events, art and artistry, church and state, religion and philosophy, the place of private property and society's moral values.

We are reminded, for example, of Tolstoy's reference to Bondarev following the appearance of the latter's *The Triumph of the Land-Tiller, or Industriousness and Idleness*: "I owe more to two Russian peasants [Sjutaev and Bondarev]—simple, barely literate peasants—than to all the scholars and writers in the world." And Tolstoy writes in a similar vein about the self-taught writer Novikov: "He is simply an amazing writer. I've tried my whole life to write like that and couldn't..."

Donskov's ninety-three page critical essay "Leo Tolstoy and Russian Peasant Sectarian Writers" is a historico-sociological exegesis. It gives the reader vital information about the place of the peasant class in the context of the social and economic life of nineteenth-century Russia, the unfolding portrayal of peasants in nineteenth-century Russian drama, as well as how the common people were perceived by such figures as A. N. Radishchev, N. M. Karamzin (pre-reform period), I. S. Turgenev, A. F. Pisemskij (the 1861 reforms), and A. P. Chekhov (in his story "The Muzhiks").

We are given in-depth analyses of Tolstoy's views on the Russian people, his educational activities, his mutual relations with the peasants of Yasnaya Polyana, his organization of rural schools

and the teaching of peasant children, his publication of the *Yasnaya Polyana* journal, his role in the Posrednik (Intermediary) publishing house, and his writing of *Stories for the People*. Donskov probes the role of the peasantry at large in the development of Tolstoy's philosophical views as representatives of the common people who symbolized the qualities of honesty, simplicity and naturalness which Tolstoy admired. The description of Tolstoy's involvement with Posrednik and the self-taught peasant writers it published—F. A. Zheltov, I. G. Zhuravov, V. F. Krasnov, V. S. Morozov, N. A. Polushin, F. F. Tishchenko, and others—is most instructive.

It is interesting to read about the origins of two representative groups of “spiritual Christians” (the Dukhobors and the Molokans), as well as the historical survey of the *raskol* (schism) within the Russian Orthodox Church, which burst onto the stage of history following the reforms instituted by Patriarch Nikon. There is a sensitive portrayal of the complexities of Tolstoy's attitude to the official church, the specific issues of faith which informed both his writing and his personal worldview, and the interrelationships between the religious perceptions of the upper and lower classes in Russian society of that period. There is no question that Tolstoy's spiritual seekings found expression in both his fiction and non-fiction writings.

The subdivisions of the introduction—“Leo Tolstoy and Timofej Bondarev,” “Brief Outline of the Molokans,” “Leo Tolstoy and Fedor Zheltov,” “Brief Outline of the Dukhobors,” “Leo Tolstoy and Petr V. Verigin,” and “Leo Tolstoy and Mikhail Novikov”—are most helpful, as is Zheltov's summary of Molokan beliefs outlined in his treatise “On Life as Faith in Christ,” reproduced in full in this volume.

The selections from Tolstoy's correspondence with these peasant writers are presented in the same professional literary style that characterizes the book as a whole. A word must also be said

about a few valuable ancillary features, such as the note on calendar dates, the index of Tolstoy titles, and the index of names. The extensive bibliography also deserves special mention as it covers a broad spectrum of scholarly literature on a variety of related topics: Tolstoy's communication (both personal and epistolary) with Bondarev, Zheltov, Verigin, and Novikov; the mutual influence among their worldviews; the pacifism, spiritual outlook, and lifestyle of the Molokans and Doukhobors; the history of Russian religious sects, Russian ethnography, Tolstoy's life and work, and his relationships with the peasantry.

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Orwin, Donna Tussing. *Consequences of Consciousness: Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy*. Stanford University Press, 2007. xvi + 238 pages. ISBN: 9780804757034.

In the nineteenth century, westernized Russians “began to think about themselves” (181). Worried, perhaps, that they were off to a late start, they went about the business of thinking about themselves with a peculiar and distinctively modern intensity. One of the momentous consequences of this sudden and heightened self-consciousness was the flowering of mid-nineteenth-century Russian psychological prose, which examined the complex inner lives of relatively ordinary people with unprecedented boldness and depth. Donna Orwin, in this challenging and intricately argued new book, offers an extended meditation on the ways in which the three greatest representatives of Russian psychological prose variously defended, explored, and represented the rich “reality of subjectivity” (5).

Orwin's title is modest and open-ended. Working more in the spirit of Turgenev than Tolstoy, she places no definite article before “Con-