

by often calling him a *Rishi*, or Russian Sage. While I have provided only a sample of what was expressed in two major English-language newspapers, it gives us an idea as to the unique place Tolstoy held and has continued to hold in the minds of the Indian reading public for more than one hundred years.

### Notes

*The editor-in-chief of The Hindu, Ram Narasimhan, and the archivist, Rajendrababu, took special interest in securing the materials.*

Radha Balasubramanian  
University of Nebraska, Lincoln



## The “Invaluable Triumvirate” and the School of Neodidactics: With Whom is Tolstoy?

Tolstoy arrived in Petersburg on November 19, 1855. The Caucasus and the Crimea were already behind him. His life up to this point had been short in terms of time, but extremely rich in events. In Petersburg he entered the circle comprised of I. S. Turgenev, I. I. Panaev, N. A. Nekrasov, and I. A. Goncharov on equal footing. The usual, steady life of the capital’s literary coryphaei was stirred up by the appearance of the “troglodyte,” “başıbozuk,” “redif.” It was not by accident that Turgenev and Druzhinin conferred such Greek, Turkic and Arabic epithets on Tolstoy: The veteran officer, who seemed to the refined residents of Petersburg to be a (translating the above) cave dweller, savage, or reserve soldier, did not really fit in at the salon soirees and dinners. Tolstoy argued, watched attentively, and studied his new acquaintances.

“The general consensus about Tolstoy that can be glimpsed in correspondence from 1856,” writes Eikhnenbaum,

is that he is ‘savage.’ But everyone senses in him an enormous strength (literary as well as moral), vitality, and that is why everyone tries,

each in his own way, to take him under guidance, under dominion. Who will succeed in training this wild ‘savage’ and in turning him into an obedient *intelligent* who shares particular opinions and contributes appropriately to the corresponding journal? (Эйхенбаум 260)

At that time the journal *The Contemporary* entered its twentieth year of operation. Tolstoy arrived in Petersburg at the moment when the question concerning the future development of Russian literature was being debated. Tolstoy’s arrival in the capital also coincided with the literary debut of Chernyshevsky, who had been publishing in *The Contemporary* his *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature*, which became the programmatic handbook of the new, democratic school of literature. He considered Pushkin to be merely an imitator of Byron, Shakespeare, and Walter Scott (Чернышевский 3: 19), and believed that Russia had not known literature until Gogol, that “prose was and continues to be [...] far more productive than verse,” and that “Gogol had given life to this very important [...] branch of literature” (Чернышевский 3: 17). Chernyshevsky’s works continued to develop the theoretical heritage of Belinsky.

Having subjected the form of poetry to criticism, Chernyshevsky attacked the content with even more force and declared that satire should be the necessary component of any work, and insofar as in Pushkin it comprised inadequate depth and consistency, it had completely vanished in the overall impression of pure artistry, alien to the new school. The managing editor of *The Contemporary*, Nekrasov, supported Chernyshevsky. When the journal became the bridgehead of the anti-Pushkin school, the senior contributors began to resign.

Together with P. A. Pletnev, A. V. Druzhinin—a writer of prose and feuilletons, playwright, editor, translator and memoirist—revived *The Contemporary* in 1847. Druzhinin’s articles

appeared in virtually every issue before Chernyshevsky arrived on the scene. In April of 1855, however, Druzhinin left the journal for *Library for Reading* where his articles on contemporary literature began to appear.

The main point of contention with the democratic criticism concerned the role and purpose of art. Druzhinin's formula "pure art for art's sake" was not a declaration of art's exclusiveness or indifference, but an indication of the need to cleanse art of the growing tendency to teach people how to live. Investigating the division between the two schools of Petersburg criticism, Tolstoy settled on the phrase the "invaluable triumvirate" to describe the union of Druzhinin and the two figures sharing his views, B. P. Botkin and P. V. Annenkov.

By this colorful phrase—which was as clear as daylight for the initiated—the writer underscored their advantage in terms of authority, influence on readership and, most importantly, their view of art as a category of eternal, everlasting value.

The "humaneness that cherishes the soul," as Botkin phrased it in a letter to Belinsky on the foundation of Pushkin's works, formed for them the center of the current art. The "triumvirate," however, did not always prove equal to the task at hand, and their views often differed.

The first study on "free" or "pure art" was Druzhinin's article "A. S. Pushkin and the Latest Edition of His Works," which appeared as a review of the poet's six-volume works edited by Annenkov. In it, the critic opposed Gogol to Pushkin. The author of *Dead Souls* was charged with lacking poetry in his works, with just the satirical tendency predominating. Insofar as the article aimed at stinging an ideological opponent—Chernyshevsky—it arrived at the unexpected conclusion that the "immoderate imitation of Gogol" had been detrimental to literature.

To see Pushkin only as a poet of "pure form" and Gogol as a revolutionary was, at the very least, incorrect. But the terms of battle were accepted,

and the opponents brandished their ideological banners bearing the faces of the two great contemporaries.

Druzhinin characterized the new tendency in literature and criticism, represented by the students of Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and Dobrolyubov, as the "neodidactic school of literature." By this he meant the subjugation of literature to external, social aims, and the current political climate; and the striving of the school's representatives to be the teachers of society. None of the contributors to *The Contemporary* remained indifferent to the problem raised by Druzhinin, and the journal soon split into camps.

Tolstoy's appearance in the capital further agitated the writers of both schools. What he had managed to write in the Caucasus and the Crimea did not fit into the frameworks outlined above. In *Childhood* and *Boyhood* one could find didactic elements, if one wished to, but in these works Chernyshevsky emphasized the high quality of Tolstoy's artistic style, while the topical stories *The Raid* and *Sevastopol in August*, with their tendencies toward exposure, were noted by Nekrasov as being exemplary of a rich poetic art. His distinction from all the other contributors to the journal lay

not only in his being a writer from the military, a participant in the defense of Sevastopol, but also in his entrance into literature from the outside, and in his being completely unprepared to address those questions which were the topic of discussion both at the editorial office and in print. (Эйхенбаум 805)

In Petersburg, Tolstoy became acquainted with all the staff at *The Contemporary*, including Druzhinin. Tolstoy enjoyed Druzhinin's first story *Polinka Saks*, published in *The Contemporary* in 1847, so much that in a letter to the publisher M. M. Lederle regarding books that had made an impression on him at different times, dated October 25, 1891, he mentioned *Polinka Saks* in the

section “From Ages 14–20” with the remark: “Very great [impression]” (PSS 66: 67). On his list of greatest books, Druzhinin’s story is found next to works by Sterne, Rousseau, Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev and Lermontov.

In Druzhinin’s diary entry for February 29, 1856 there is a note about a dinner at Botkin’s where Chernyshevsky was present. Chernyshevsky apparently made Tolstoy’s acquaintance that day.

In the spring Tolstoy went to Yasnaya Polyana and submerged himself in reading the Annenkov edition of Pushkin. On July 2 he sent Nekrasov a letter he called “about viciousness” (PSS 47: 84). He had just read the July issue of *The Contemporary*, and his letter served as a critique, or rather, a crushing blow of that issue.

Chernyshevsky’s latest article on the Gogol period had appeared in the journal, including the critic’s opinion that literature before Gogol had been thoughtless and superficial, that all writers had “parroted the words of others,” that Gogol was great by virtue of his ardent patriotism, etc. (Чернышевский 3: 136).

Tolstoy judges Chernyshevsky’s views from a moral and psychological standpoint:

An opinion has taken hold among us, not only in criticism but in literature, even simply in society, that to be *indignant, acrimonious, vicious* is very nice. But I consider it very vile. Gogol is loved more than Pushkin. Belinsky’s criticism is the height of perfection, your poems are the favorite out of all today’s poets. But I consider it vile because an acrimonious, vicious man is not in a normal state. A loving man is the opposite, and only in a normal state can one do good and see things clearly. (PSS 60: 75)

This letter conveys perhaps most accurately the writer’s stance regarding the new tendencies in literature and their chief spokesman.

In the summer of 1856 *Childhood, Boyhood*, and *War Stories* were published in separate editions. Chernyshevsky, however, was far from

always measuring literature against the yardstick of patriotism, and he gave the following evaluation of Tolstoy’s first works in the twelfth issue of *The Contemporary*:

The distinguishing feature of Count Tolstoy’s talent is that he does not limit himself to depicting the results of the psychological process: The very process itself interests him, and the barely perceptible effects of this interior life [...] are masterfully depicted by Count Tolstoy. (Чернышевский 3: 425–426)

The critic was the first to note the specific character of Tolstoy’s style and to introduce into literary criticism the term “dialectic of the soul,” that is, the “profound knowledge of the mysterious movements of the life of the psyche” (3: 428). But one should not take such high praise at face value. Regarding this article Chernyshevsky wrote, in a letter to Nekrasov dated the beginning of December 1856, that it “was written so that he would like it, of course, while at the same time not violating the truth too much” (Чернышевский 14: 329–330).

Druzhinin offered his own two cents in praise of the writer, noting in his article on “The Blizzard” and “Two Hussars” that “Count Lev Tolstoy appears to us to be one of [...] the representatives of that theory of free creation which alone seems to us to be the true theory of any art” (Дружинин 1988, 161–162). Compared to Chernyshevsky’s article, Druzhinin’s evaluation is superficial and touches only on the form of the texts.

Tolstoy happened to be wrapping up work on *Youth*, and on September 21, 1856, he asked Druzhinin to read and edit the manuscript. Tolstoy soon received a letter back:

Your fate is decided, you must always be a writer. [...] Not one of today’s writers could have grasped and outlined that exciting and confused period of youth in such a way. Your *Youth* will afford mature people a great pleasure, and if anyone tells you that this thing

is worse than *Childhood* and *Boyhood*, you can spit in that person's face (физиогномию). There is a wealth of poetry in your work. (Толстой 1978, 1: 267)

It is not hard to guess whose "face" Druzhinin had in mind. But Druzhinin did not understand the uniqueness of Tolstoy's style, which had all the spiritual and aesthetic parameters of "pure art," and he warned him: "You have a faint proclivity toward excessively subtle analysis which could grow into a large defect" (Толстой 1978, 1: 267).

Druzhinin couldn't do without "taking a dig" at Chernyshevsky in his letter to Tolstoy: "Your *Youth* will be a delicious morsel only for those people who think and can sense poetry" (Толстой 1978, 1: 268).

Tolstoy thanked Druzhinin for his "overly flattering judgment" and complained to him about his well-being which had been spoiled by the bad "taste" left in his mouth by the articles in *The Contemporary*: "Chernyshevsky's disgracefulness, as you call it, has nauseated me all summer" (Толстой 1978, 1: 270).

Not suspecting how badly he was affecting Tolstoy's health, Chernyshevsky in the autumn of 1856 wrote to Nekrasov in Vienna: "In the near future Tolstoy will come and bring *Youth* for the first issue of *The Contemporary*. I visit him sometimes; I don't know if I will succeed in gaining some sort of sway over him, but this would be good, both for him and for *The Contemporary*" (Толстой 1978, 1: 328).

On November 7, 1856 Tolstoy arrived in Petersburg and wrote an entry toward the end of the day: "Druzhinin and Annenkov in the evening, a little difficult with the former" (PSS 47: 98). Druzhinin noticed nothing and in his own diary wrote: "Tolstoy arrived, to my great delight, and for two days we were almost inseparable" (Дружинин 1986, 398). The next day Tolstoy had a new impression: "Was at Druzhinin and Panaev's, the editorial board of *The Contemporary* is repulsive"

(PSS 47: 98). Tolstoy had just read the eighth article of *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature* where in the opening lines Chernyshevsky, reinforcing his conclusions with copious citations from Belinsky, gives the "triumvirate" a dressing down. He calls them shallow people engaged in the "rhetorical dissemination of banal phrases" (Чернышевский 3: 264). As Eikhenbaum notes, the *Essays* of the young critic is

not an academic but rather a topical work [...]. Scanning the history of Russian journalism and polemics, Chernyshevsky studies the methods of struggle and lends his own assault the double valence of literary and social struggle. (Эйхенбаум 263)

Druzhinin decided to intercede on behalf of the beleaguered "pure art," and so the November and December issues of *Library for Reading* featured his article "Criticism of the Gogol Period of Russian Literature and Our Views of It." On December 7 Tolstoy wrote: "Read Druzhinin's second essay. His weakness is that he will never question whether this is all nonsense" (PSS 47: 104). Tolstoy did not like the tone of his essays because

Druzhinin's position suffers from the fact that his attack on Chernyshevsky is personal and is accompanied by allusions to his 'lack of talent,' whereas Chernyshevsky [...] aims at an entire social class, against the influence of which he protests. (Эйхенбаум 265)

Turgenev and Nekrasov, both abroad at this time, received letters from the capital in which Tolstoy's friendship with Druzhinin was discussed. On December 8 Turgenev wrote to Tolstoy: "I see that you have gotten along well with Druzhinin and that you are under his influence. That's a good thing, just see that you don't gorge yourself on him" (Тургенев 3: 54). To Tolstoy's sister Maria Nikolaevna he wrote:

He [Tolstoy] is now in very close contact with Druzhinin. I would have hoped for a different

comrade for him, but then getting on with your brother is difficult. [...] Druzhinin is a very good person, [...] but not for your brother. (Тургенев 3: 66)

Nekrasov, too, was worried about this friendship and wrote in a letter to Turgenev:

It is painful to see how Tolstoy projects his own dislike of Chernyshevsky, a dislike which Druzhinin and Grigorovich support, onto a movement which until now he has served and which every honest man in Russia serves.” (Перепуска Некрасова 1: 460)

Tolstoy’s meeting with Chernyshevsky took place in December, and the latter impressed Tolstoy as being “kind” (PSS 47: 105). *Youth* was published in the January 1857 issue of *The Contemporary*, and Chernyshevsky treated it as an example of “pure art.” He wrote to Turgenev:

Read his *Youth*. You will see what rubbish, what thin gruel it is [...]. A pity, because the man does have talent. But it is perishing since he has taken on board the banal ideas on which that literary circle bases its judgments. (Чернышевский 14: 332)

He finished his letter with words needing no commentary: “You are not some Ostrovsky or Tolstoy—you are our honor” (Чернышевский 14: 334).

Nevertheless, Chernyshevsky spent some time at Tolstoy’s on January 11, the eve of the latter’s departure from Petersburg. Despite his having read to Tolstoy a long lecture on literature, Tolstoy wrote about him: “Clever and hot-tempered” (PSS 47: 110).

Tolstoy’s stay in the capital during the winter of 1856–57 allowed him to examine his literary colleagues more closely. Druzhinin wrote: “Botkin, Annenkov, myself and Tolstoy comprise the kernel of our union, which is joined by Panaev, the Maikovs, Pisemsky, Goncharov and so forth” (Дружинин 1986, 399). Further interaction with

Druzhinin began to alter Tolstoy’s stance toward him personally and his ideas.

On January 2 Tolstoy informed his brother S. N. Tolstoy: “Although I sincerely love these literary friends, Botkin, Annenkov and Druzhinin, all their clever conversations are starting to bore me, though they were truly helpful to me” (Перепуска Толстого 203).

At the beginning of Tolstoy’s creative path Russian literature was going through a period of change. New figures demoted literature to the status of societal maidservant. Apologists of the high style put it in the same category with spiritual, moral and eternal values. The efforts of the “triumvirate” to reinforce its ranks with the talent of the young Tolstoy resulted in a complete fiasco. Chernyshevsky alienated Tolstoy both with his disingenuous reviews and all the more so with his unjust attacks. Subsequently, whenever Chernyshevsky’s name was mentioned, Tolstoy would say that he had always found him unpleasant.

In September 1855, when the opposition between the two literary poles was just coming to a head, Nekrasov in a letter to Botkin defined the only true path of literature:

It seems to me that in this matter only one theory is correct: love truth unselfishly and passionately, more than everything else and, among other things, more than yourself, and serve it, and everything will turn out fine: if you begin to serve art, you will serve society, and vice-versa, if you start to serve society, you will serve art. (Перепуска Некрасова 1: 193)

The two muses, truth and love, were indistinguishable in Tolstoy, and it was precisely with them that he enriched world literature with the eternal, inexhaustible treasure of his art.

**Works Cited**

- Чернышевский, Н. Г. *Полное собрание сочинений (в 15 томах)*. Москва: Художественная литература, 1939–1951.
- Дружинин, А. В. *Повести. Дневник*. Москва: Наука, 1986.
- , *Прекрасное и вечное*. Москва: Современник, 1988.
- Эйхенбаум, Б. М. *Лев Толстой. Исследования. Статьи*. Санкт-Петербург: Факультет филологии и искусств СПбГУ, 2009.
- Переписка Л. Н. Толстого с сестрой и братьями*. Москва: Художественная литература, 1990.
- Переписка Н. А. Некрасова в двух томах*. Москва: Художественная литература, 1987.
- Толстой, Л. Н. *Переписка с русскими писателями (в 2 томах)*. Москва: Художественная литература, 1978.
- (PSS) Толстой, Л. Н. *Полное собрание сочинений в 100 томах, академическое юбилейное издание*. Москва: Государственное Издательство Художественной Литературы, 1928–58.
- Тургенев, И. С. *Полное собрание сочинений и писем (в 28 томах)*. Москва-Ленинград: АН СССР, 1960–1990.

E. V. Belousova  
Yasnaya Polyana Museum  
Translated by David Houston



### “Your wretched native country...” Finnish visitors to Leo Tolstoy

In part seven, chapter twenty-five of *Anna Karenina*, there is a word that the main character cannot force herself to speak out loud, namely “Gelsingfors.” While conversing with his officer comrade Jashvin, Prince Vronsky refers to some romance Yashvin has had in Helsingfors

(Helsinki). The name of Finland’s capital city becomes repulsive to Anna because it is uttered specifically by Vronsky, with whom she has been quarrelling. In her subconscious she associates the word “Gelsingfors” with betrayal.

When writing *Anna Karenina* in the 1870s, Tolstoy as of yet had no personal contacts with Finland,<sup>1</sup> nor was he either recognized or read in Finland at the time. However, Finland became more familiar to him over time and the word “Gelsingfors” never appeared in a negative context again. “Finland, a wonderful country! I have never been there, but I have heard so much about it...” stated Tolstoy in an interview in 1897 after finding out that the interviewer, Aksel Germonius (1860–1912) was of Finnish extraction (Гермониус-Финн 117).<sup>2</sup> A year later, Tolstoy was even planning to escape to Finland from his domestically burdensome life. He mentioned this plan in a letter to a Finnish kindred spirit, the writer Arvid Järnefelt. Among the Finns it was Järnefelt who became his closest friend, though there were also many other contacts. By 1887, Tolstoy had been corresponding with a Finnish lieutenant-general, the religious thinker Carl Robert Sederholm (1818–1903). Tolstoy was struck by the similarity in their views of the essence of God and the teachings of Jesus (Хеллман, “Совпадение”; Gothóni 69–70; Nokkala 31–35). During his last twenty years Tolstoy became well-known and admired in Finland and not only as a writer of fiction. Along with the letters from Järnefelt and Sederholm, the archive of the Tolstoy Museum in Moscow contains around thirty letters sent to Tolstoy by Finnish correspondents. Topics vary from pleas for money to requests for guidance in life. Close to twenty Finns visited either Tolstoy’s home in Moscow or his estate Yasnaya Polyana. This essay is an attempt to identify these Finnish travellers and the nature of their visits to Tolstoy.<sup>3</sup>