

Donna Tussing Orwin, ed.
The Cambridge Companion to Tolstoy
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Pp. xv+271 \$65.00 \$23.99
Reviewed by Allan Reid

As the editor reminds us in the preface, any single volume would be hard pressed to comprehensively speak to the ninety volumes, six decades, and multiplicity of genres and subjects that represent Leo Tolstoy's writing career. Nevertheless, this volume lives up to what can be expected from a "Companion" of this size. The Cambridge Companion series—fortunately—appears to have no single template for individual editors, and Donna Orwin of the University of Toronto has designed this one very effectively.

The volume opens with a forty-seven-page "Chronology" of Tolstoy's life that is the most detailed to date, and it will be highly useful in many respects. It can serve as an entry point for someone who is not ready to read one of the major biographies; as a ready reference to the salient events and facts of his long life; as well as offering minor but interesting "stuff," from his nickname as a baby to his illnesses to what he was reading at various times. The "Chronology" is followed by a nicely conceived and well-balanced introduction by Orwin in which she sets out to introduce the man who was the author. The better biographies of Tolstoy are the size of his novels, so her decision to delimit her introduction by discussing him "from three different perspectives on human beings that intersect in his fiction: the psychological, the historico-cultural, and the philosophical" (xiii), is prudent. More importantly, Orwin succeeds in her objective. The remainder of the book consists of twelve essays of approximately fifteen pages each, divided into three sections: "The Three Novels," "Genres," and "General Topics." They are written by leading scholars, all having made significant contributions to Tolstoy scholarship or closely related fields of Russian literary studies. If there is a minor knock to be made, it is that they are all North Americans save one British scholar and one from western Europe. Some direct expression of contemporary Russian views on Tolstoy might well have been afforded a place here.

Part One addresses the major novels. The implied relegation of any number of "longish" works to the category of non-novels jumps out of this heading, but we are all probably willing to accept the grouping of these three works into their own section. In *War and Peace*, Gary Saul Morson delivers a penetrating analysis of the first of the triad. Barbara Lonnqvist explores the "labyrinth of linkages" in *Anna Karenina* through an analysis of "bears, bags, ironworks and stars." While that summary may not convince, the essay itself tells us a great deal about the novel and Tolstoy's novelistic craft. *Resurrection* is not nearly as well known as the other two novels, but Hugh McLean does a superb job of presenting its vitality, apparently in full recognition that contemporary readers will need some convincing. He situates it very nicely within the latter stages of

Tolstoy's life and work and, while not shying away from its shortcomings, elaborates its genuine artistic and philosophical import.

Part Two also contains three essays. Gary R. Jahn presents Tolstoy's contributions to popular literature and gives a very useful delineation of what that genre represented to Tolstoy and his time. In "The Long Short Story in Tolstoy's Fiction," Richard Freeborn explores how three such works ("The Death of Ivan Ilich," "The Kreutzer Sonata," and "Father Sergius") "illustrate the power of [the Tolstoyan concept of art as] infection in remarkable ways through depicting the experience of one individual" (127). His reading of these works is very perceptive, although one might wish the word "later" had been added to the essay's title for the sake of clarification. There are a great many other "long short stories" by Tolstoy! In "Tolstoy Staged in Paris, Berlin, and London," W. Gareth Jones reminds us that Tolstoy was also a dramatist, the author of eight plays. While their quality was uneven, to say the least, Jones demonstrates that his impact on the theater was not insignificant.

The six essays in Part Three deliver much more than its somewhat pragmatic title, "General Topics," suggests. Each addresses a central concern of Tolstoy studies and each in its own way constitutes a valuable contribution to a heightened understanding of his work. While it may be hard to accept Caryl Emerson's conclusions about his aesthetics—insofar as they contain at least as much Emerson as Tolstoy—she still does a superb job of focussing key elements of his position. In "The Development of Style and Theme in Tolstoy," Liza Knapp makes a very convincing case for a greater integration of Tolstoy's early works into our view of "the evolution and the unity of Tolstoy's oeuvre" (161). Andrew Wachtel problematizes the question and nature of "truth" in Tolstoy's work by investigating "History and Autobiography in Tolstoy." The result is tantalizing in its implications for reading the works themselves and for contemplating shifts in Tolstoy's conception of truth. The subjects explored in "Women, Sexuality, and the Family in Tolstoy" are so central to (not only) contemporary readings of Tolstoy that one wonders what can be accomplished in a few pages. Nevertheless, Edwina Cruise takes us as close to the core of the questions around this cluster as we can expect to reach in the brief space afforded her.

Perhaps the most difficult task was given to George R. Clay. In "Tolstoy in the Twentieth Century," he seeks to give a sense of both the impact and relevance of Tolstoy in the modern and postmodern world. (A truly outstanding and highly literate student, of Russian heritage, recently explained to me that she could not understand why anyone would read Tolstoy!) Clay spends most of his time in the effort to establish Tolstoy's "influence" on James Joyce, and given Joyce's unquestioned centrality to subsequent literature, thereby on that literature. What he says about Joyce and Tolstoy will be new and fascinating to many readers, but he refers to many other writers and artistic and cultural

concerns as well, and along the way contrasts Tolstoy's artistic reality with the cacophony of a world that seems more in tune with Dostoevsky, for example. In doing so, he mistakenly refers to John Cage's famous "4:33" as his "Silent Piece," but this is hardly a devastating slipup. This volume came out before Oprah made *Anna Karenina* into a best-seller again, something which may or may not have rendered his task redundant. Nevertheless, Clay establishes a context that may last longer than Oprah's transitory influence. Donna Tussing Orwin's examination of "Courage in Tolstoy" is not only an excellent examination of this specific topic, but provides the basis for a deeper understanding of the tension between reason and sentiment, philosophy and religion, and praxis and theory in Tolstoy. It might have been interesting to see an engagement with Harold Bloom's work on the same topic, although perhaps nonengagement is engagement in this case.

The volume contains a well-designed bibliography that leads the reader to the most important works on Tolstoy, and for anyone who wants to go further, the signposts are all there and the door is open. The index, as Orwin indicates in her preface, will assist the reader to navigate not only individual essays, but themes and references along various axes throughout the volume. *The Cambridge Companion to Tolstoy* will be an important addition to libraries, scholars' bookshelves, and existing reference texts for university courses on Tolstoy.

Sophie Kinsella

Can You Keep a Secret?

New York: Dial, 2004. Pp. 210. US \$21.95

Reviewed by Nora Foster Stovel

The human race is divided into two kinds of people: those who can keep a secret and those who cannot. Our heroine, Emma Corrigan, belongs to the latter category. On a flight from Scotland to London, when turbulence causes the aircraft to shudder and lurch, Emma grasps the hand of the perfect stranger seated next to her and proceeds to spill all her secrets—from her G-string to her G-spot. She even tells him that her boyfriend, Connor Martin, looks like a blonde Ken doll, that she secretly feeds her colleague's plant orange juice to make it sick, and that she loathes Kerry, the orphaned cousin who was raised as a sister and whose Midas touch has made her the apple of Emma's parents' eye.

As an ironic fate (with the initials SK) would have it, the stranger turns out to be the owner of the company for which she works. Currently serving as general dogsbody, Emma aspires to become a marketing executive for Panther Products—whose slogan is "Don't Pause"—as soon as she learns the meaning of the term "multi-logistical," that is. Her boss, it turns out, is good at keeping his