

ABSTRACT

THE CIRCASSIAN THISTLE: TOLSTOY'S *KHADZHI MURAT* AND THE EVOLVING RUSSIAN EMPIRE

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The following thesis examines the creation, publication, and reception of Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy's posthumous novel, *Khadzhi Murat* in both the Imperial and Soviet Russian Empire. The anti-imperial content of the novel made *Khadzhi Murat* an incredibly vulnerable novel, subjecting it to substantial early censorship. Tolstoy's status as a literary and cultural figure in Russia – both preceding and following his death – allowed for the novel to become virtually forgotten despite its controversial content. This thesis investigates the absorption of *Khadzhi Murat* into the broader canon of Tolstoy's writings within the Russian Empire as well as its prevailing significance as a piece of anti-imperial literature in a Russian context.

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A Thesis

Submitted to the

Faculty of Miami University

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of History

by

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2014

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Introduction¹

In late-October 1910, Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy died at Astopovo Station, approximately 120 miles from his family estate at Yasnaya Polyana in the Tula region of the Russian Empire. After over fifty years of writing, the author of some of Russia's most famous literature was no more. His works had inspired some and infuriated others, particularly the established Russian Orthodox Church and Tsarist Imperial State. In many ways, however, Russian society was indebted to Tolstoy's life work. Tolstoy's funeral illustrated this in vivid detail:

As Tolstoy's coffin was lowered into the ground...someone shouted, in defiance of the police who had been instructed to impose the Church's excommunication of the writer, 'On your knees! Take off your hats!' Everyone obeyed the Christian ritual and, after hesitating for a moment, the police kneeled down and removed their hats.²

Despite his death, however, Tolstoy had hardly uttered his last word. In his last several decades, Tolstoy's radical turn to Christian anarchism, pacifism, and anti-imperialism alienated him from his own social class, and furthermore, subjected him to the criticism of both established Church and State. After several publications lambasting everything from military conscription to a seemingly lacking government response to widespread famines, contemporary Ivan Turgenev begged Tolstoy, "My friend, return to literature! This gift comes to you from where everything else comes...Great writer of the Russian land, heed my request!"³ While Turgenev would not live to see this plea fulfilled, Tolstoy found it increasingly difficult to repress the creative skills he expressed with such proficiency in novels such as *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. In 1894 therefore, he began work on what would be his final novel, *Khadzhi Murat*, a fictional rendering of a Chechen tribal leader's opportunistic defection to his Russian enemies. The novel was arguably Tolstoy's most controversial, yet he would never hear of its reception: the novel was published in 1912, almost two years after the author's death. Although an integral part of Tolstoy's literary works, it is the purpose of this study to analyze *Khadzhi Murat* as an historical piece, one that speaks not only to the time, place, and central characters within the novel, but also one that has proved historically pervasive, pinpointing the complexities of imperial conquest throughout Russian history.

Although an interdisciplinary inquiry into the nature of a controversial text, this analysis of *Khadzhi Murat* will trace the historical path of the novel, tracing its birth at the hands of Lev Tolstoy as well as its journey through the changing environment of the Russian Empire. The appearance of *Khadzhi Murat* in various forms of censorship over time and its subsequent absorption into the broader collection of Tolstoy's fictional works, rather than obscuring the novel's anti-imperial message, instead serves to highlight the dangerous nature of the text,

¹ Author's Note: With the exception of titles transliterated by their respective authors, all transliterations have been made according to the Library of Congress ALA-LC Romanization Tables for Cyrillic. Although the traditional English-language rendering of the novel under examination is *Hadji Murat*, I have opted when generally discussing both the novel and the historical figure to use the transliterated version of the original Russian: *Khadzhi Murat*. Additionally, unless otherwise noted in bibliographical citations, all translations are my own.

² Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia* (New York: Macmillian, 2002), 354.

³ I.S. Turgenev to L.N. Tolstoy, 11 July 1883. In A.V. Knowles, ed., *Turgenev's Letters* (London: Athlone Press, 1983), 236.

presenting the Russian state with the complicated choice between embracing the full literary catalog of one of its most brilliant writers or facing the brutality of its imperial past and present. The frequent alteration of this often overlooked novel is indicative of an important trend in the history of the Russian Empire. Although the political philosophy of Russia's ruling class changed from tsarist to Soviet, the imperial mission remained intact, allowing for the continued subjugation of the peoples of the North Caucasus and the absorption of their lands as part of the greater Russian State. Despite its frank discussion of a particular historical place and time, Tolstoy's *Khadzhi Murat* remains much like the famous thistle of his novel: an unbending example of strength and defiance in the face of certain destruction at the hands of its enemies.

Chapter I. The Tolstoy Canon: The Missing Avar

Tolstoy's work is often organized by modern scholars based on two distinct phases in the author's life: Tolstoy the fictional writer and Tolstoy the spiritual thinker. This is in many ways justifiable: Tolstoy's spiritual turn in the 1870s marked a distinct break in both his writing style and his public image in Imperial Russia. This complex change in the author's writing has allowed for the academic acceptance of what will be hereafter referred to as "the Tolstoy canon": that is, the works accepted within this dualistic model of Tolstoy's life as an author. It is necessary, therefore, to briefly examine Tolstoy's literary path in order to illustrate the significance of this canon of Tolstoy's writing.⁴

Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy began his literary career in 1852 with the publication of *Childhood*, a fictional account of his own young life as a landowner's son. As a follow up to this critically successful piece, he then crafted *Boyhood* (1854) and *Youth* (1856), officially setting the young Tolstoy on a path as a writer. Still serving in the Russian army in the Caucasus and the Crimea, Tolstoy wrote *Sevastopol Sketches* and a variety of shorter stories such as "The Wood-Felling" and "The Raid," all of which vividly portrayed the life of soldiers and their opponents in far-reaching regions of the Russian Empire. These realist writings, although an often overlooked collection of Tolstoy's works, set the stage for his semi-autobiographical pieces as well as the incredibly realistic passages in *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina*, and later, *Khadzhi Murat*.

Following his departure from military life, Tolstoy primarily wrote a series of short stories, a period only punctuated by two lengthy trips through Europe. In 1862, Tolstoy married Sofia Andreevna Behrs, and subsequently began work on *War and Peace* while settling on his country estate at Yasnaya Polyana. The epic novel was published in a series of installments in the periodical *The Russian Messenger* and in 1869, was bound in full. Tolstoy's historical account of the War of 1812 received mixed reviews. Turgenev for instance, despite marveling over Tolstoy's skills of description, noted, "The historical addition, with which his readers are particularly delighted, is a puppet comedy and charlatanism...forcing one to think that he knows everything because he has gone into even these details."⁵ Despite this, however, the impact of the novel was

⁴ The following brief synopsis of Tolstoy's life and works is based upon the work of several biographers and scholars. The two most extensive biographies of Tolstoy are: Rosamund Bartlett, *Tolstoy: A Russian Life* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011); Aylmer Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). R.F. Christian's extensive introductory chapters to Tolstoy's collected correspondence are also extremely helpful for the periodization of Tolstoy's writings: R.F. Christian, *Tolstoy's Letters, 2 vols.* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978).

⁵ I.S. Turgenev to P.V. Annenkov, 14 February 1868. In A.V. Knowles, ed., *Tolstoy: A Critical Heritage* (London:

sensational and Tolstoy cemented his position as one of Russia's greatest authors.

At the beginning of the 1870s, Tolstoy found himself deeply preoccupied with peasant education. Although first started in the late-1850s, Tolstoy dabbled in the education of young peasant children on his Yasnaya Polyana estate crafting several primers and operating schools based on his own philosophy rather than the rigid educational doctrines of the Russian State.⁶ After a series of famines and the death of a child however, Tolstoy abruptly closed the schools and recommenced with his fictional writing. The result was a second lengthy novel, *Anna Karenina*, which received praise worldwide from authors and critics alike. Dostoevsky – viewed at the time as one of Russia's greatest living writers – noted the following on the novel: “*Anna Karenina* is perfection as a work of art that appeared at just the right moment and as a work to which nothing in the European literatures [sic] of this era can compare.”⁷ Other critics followed suit, and the novel appeared cemented within the canon of the prominent writer's literary catalog.

Yet despite the critical success of this novel, Tolstoy's work changed dramatically in the following decade. At approximately the same time as the publication of *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy underwent a crisis of faith, abandoning any attachments to the traditional Russian Orthodox faith and turning toward what is characterized as pacifist Christian Anarchism. As a result of this spiritual turn, the author began writing predominantly non-fictional works on religion, politics, and the social conditions of the Russian Empire. He wrote very little fiction throughout the next twenty years and decried the very works which had made him famous: Mostly, Tolstoy's fictional compositions at this point consisted of allegorical tales such as *Master and Man* (1895), or works heavily influenced by his own opposition to carnal love and capital punishment such as the short novels *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889) and *Resurrection* (1899).

The late Tolstoy, therefore, came to represent an inseparable connection between spirituality and writing. Tolstoy's spiritual change however, was not limited to his thinking and writing. In the last several decades of his life, the author began dressing in peasant attire, abstained from meat, alcohol, and sexual activity, and refused to participate in any aristocratic activities despite his status. As a result, Tolstoy gained a tremendous following: led by his personal editor Vladimir Grigorievich Chertkov, individuals throughout Russia and the world gathered in pursuit of a life based on the author's pacifist Christian Anarchist ideals. Much to the chagrin of his wife Sofia Andreevna, Tolstoy collaborated with Chertkov to rescind all familial rights to his writings in favor of Chertkov so the editor could disseminate them to the Russian populace. This led to great tension within Tolstoy's family culminating in the author's legendary flight from his estate and death several days later at Astapovo.

The separation of Tolstoy's works into a strict canon - fictional and late-spiritual - is therefore, arguably logical. The dramatic renunciation of his early life and transformation into a sage-like religious thinker serves as not only a physical shift but also as a literary one. Nearly every fictional work written throughout the final decades of Tolstoy's life are unmistakably imbued with religious allegory or symbolism, each with an ideological message no less poignant than his

Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1978), 181.

⁶ For a more lengthy investigation of Tolstoy's work with peasant education see Eric M. Souder, “The Pupil of the People: Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy's Peasant Schools at Yasnaya Polyana” *Vestnik: The Journal of Slavic and Asian Studies* 8, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 22-39.

⁷ F.M. Dostoevsky as quoted in K.A. Lantz, *The Dostoevsky Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004), 440.

non-fictional works of the same period. The notion of a “canonical Tolstoy” however, often causes scholars to overlook or simply avoid his final novel, *Khadzhi Murat*.

In numerous ways, the novel does not “fit.” In purely pragmatic terms, *Khadzhi Murat* was published after Tolstoy’s death. For several reasons - including content, the sheer breadth of Tolstoy’s collected works, and squabbles over publishing rights - the novel was not published until 1912 in Berlin and later, in Moscow under heavy censorship. Additionally however, despite Tolstoy beginning the work in 1896, the novel is a stylistic hearkening back to his Caucasus fiction of the 1860s and 1870s. Although the novel at times features the moral and ethical judgments of the author, *Khadzhi Murat* hardly falls in the same category as his religious writings or his virulently anticlerical late fiction. Rather, the novel is a direct departure from the canonical late-Tolstoy that has proved elusive for scholars of Imperial Russian culture.

Predominantly, *Khadzhi Murat* has been analyzed as a product of Tolstoy the author of sweeping historical epics such as *War and Peace*. In recent years, literary scholars beginning with Susan Layton have analyzed the novel as a both an account and critique of Russian Imperial expansion. Anthropologists such as Bruce Grant have elaborated upon this idea noting the novel’s place in a larger tradition of Russian literary descriptions of captives in the Caucasus. Historians, although generally silent regarding *Khadzhi Murat*, have only focused on the novel as an historical retelling of the Russian mission in the Caucasus. This is an unfortunately limited analysis of what is an incredibly rich piece of Russian historical fiction. Rather than simply accepting the novel, its author, and its content at face value, it is necessary to contextualize it within an extensive network of complexities inherent to the Russian Empire.

In order to adequately perform this task, one must analyze several distinct factors. The novel itself was first published in Berlin in 1912 under the supervision of Vladimir Chertkov. The publication site was hardly arbitrary: due to a rigid system of censorship within the Russian Empire - which Chertkov and Tolstoy had become more than familiar with in the author’s final years - the novel would most likely be heavily edited if not entirely banned. Chertkov’s premonitions proved correct: the first Russian edition of the novel featured several chapters highly edited including one pared down to a mere single sentence by the censor.

The first section of this thesis, therefore, will explore the following question: why was *Khadzhi Murat* a controversial novel? The novel was blatantly censored in the late Russian Empire. It will be the goal of this section to illustrate the reasons for any potential censorship over time including a thorough analysis of what was censored, who was censoring it, and what the causes and repercussions were for such censorship. In addition to the official reactions of the Imperial State, the reaction of the cultural Russian Empire is equally important. As the novel was indeed published within the Empire as well as abroad, what was the literary reaction to *Khadzhi Murat*? What do the reactions of the Russian literary community imply regarding what was evidently a controversial work by a famed author? The second chapter therefore, will explore these questions, focusing largely on literary analyses of *Khadzhi Murat* both in late-Imperial Russian literary journals and various editions of the novel up to and including the extensive Jubilee Edition of *Tolstoy’s Collected Works*.

Finally, this work will focus on the author and his novel in an overarching imperial context. It will endeavor to illustrate that Tolstoy represents a simultaneous product of and opponent to the Russian Empire. The novel *Khadzhi Murat*, as well as its author, therefore, represent in an Althusserian sense a contradiction to the concert of ideology and the State within the Russian

Empire. This final section then, will illustrate the ways in which a novel so seemingly controversial and contradictory to the Russian Empire – both in respect to the Imperial Age as well as the Soviet period and beyond – could remain in publication over time.

Khadzhi Murat is by no means the most famous work in Russian literature. In the extensive canon of Tolstoy's written works, the novel has become an afterthought - a peripheral work in a gargantuan catalog of epic realist literature and pacifist Christian Anarchist nonfiction. Yet a more thorough analysis of the reception of *Khadzhi Murat* reveals a quality extrinsic to many of Tolstoy's earlier writings. The novel serves as a controversial, arguably historical product and critique of imperial expansion. Yet a focus on the response of the Russian Empire and its literary elite to *Khadzhi Murat* presents the reader with the sheer complexity of empire. How does an imperial state handle inflammatory critique from one of its most cherished - albeit controversial – authors? *Khadzhi Murat* requires reevaluation, not merely regarding its rightful place within the accepted “Tolstoy canon,” but as an anti-imperial text in a Russian context.

Chapter II. Inevitable Editing: The Publication and Censorship of *Khadzhi Murat*

In her 2004 work *Russia's Dangerous Texts*, Kathleen Parthé states that “over the course of a century and a half from Pushkin's time until the late Soviet period, intense interaction between literature and state power became a distinctive feature of Russian civilization...reinforcing the widespread belief in the power of texts to move history.”⁸ Perhaps no author was more aware of this power than Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy. In the last forty years of Tolstoy's life, Russian censors paid increasingly close attention to the author's writings. Beginning with the publication of *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy's works took a turn for the controversial, slowly adopting a more critical tone than his early fictional works. Particularly in his final years when the majority of his nonfictional works concerned his anti-hierarchical and anti-imperial moral beliefs, Tolstoy's writings served as a constant affront to the religious and political systems of Imperial Russia.

Tolstoy's *Khadzhi Murat* was a blatant and virulent critique of the Imperial State in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Russia. It is necessary however, to elaborate upon this point. The novel itself – including its publication, creation, and the reaction of the imperial censor – must be analyzed in more thorough detail in order to establish the controversy of Tolstoy's poignant posthumous work. Furthermore, the Russian literary community's reaction to the text – or lack thereof – is emblematic of the complexities of the final years of the Empire – a period in which Tolstoy played a significant role even after his death

Khadzhi Murat begins with an unnamed narrator's walk through a field of thistles surrounding his home.⁹ The thistles – referred to colloquially as “Tatar” – are described as prickly and resilient – a struggle to uproot. Nearing his home, the narrator comes upon recently-tilled field, devoid of plant life except for one solitary “Tatar” thistle plant. The plant is primarily destroyed except for one branch. The narrator muses, “It still stood erect and had not surrendered to man, who had destroyed all its brethren around it...Man has conquered everything and destroyed millions of grasses, but this bush has still not surrendered.” This causes the narrator – who is most

⁸ Kathleen F. Parthé, *Russia's Dangerous Texts: Politics Between the Lines* (New Haven: Yale, 2004), 1.

⁹ The following is the author's summary of Tolstoy's *Khadzhi Murat* assembled from the reading of numerous uncensored editions of *Khadzhi Murat* including the 1912 Berlin edition, the first English translation in 1912 by Aylmer Maude, and a more recent 2011 translation by Kyril Zinovieff and Jenny Hughes.

likely meant to be viewed as Tolstoy – to recall the tale of Khadzhi Murat.¹⁰

The narrator's recollection of Khadzhi Murat starts with the Avar leader's flight from Daghestani leader Imam Shamil. Due to inter-tribal conflicts, Shamil captured Murat's family and held them for ransom, causing Murat to seek aid from their mutual enemy, the Russian Empire. Murat finds brief solace in the *aoul* of Sado, a close ally. Shortly thereafter however, Murat must again flee the small village as various locals loyal to Shamil discover his whereabouts. Khadzhi Murat finally succeeds in contacting the Russians at a nearby fort.¹¹ The first encounter with the Russians is nearly marred by a short skirmish with the Circassian tribesmen during which a single Russian soldier is killed. The narrator offers a lengthy aside regarding the soldier, Petrukha Avdeev. While a good soldier, Petrukha had little success in starting a family with his wife and instead opted to join the army. His father regretted this decision as Petrukha had always been a good worker in the family home. When the family receives notice of Petrukha's death, the entire family mourns his loss extensively. Avdeev's wife however, takes some joy in this news as she realizes that she is pregnant with another man's child.

Murat's tale continues as he gradually increases contact with the Russians at the fortress, Vozdvidzhenskaia. Prince Semen Vorontsov and his wife befriend Murat, and gradually learn more about him, garnering him the favor of the family and many of the local soldiers. The Russians collectively are fascinated by Murat, glorifying his famous cunning and strength in battle. Loris-Melikov, an adjutant to the governor-general, begins to record Murat's biography, offering the reader further background information on the early life and conflicts of the Avar leader. Murat is attracted in his early life to what Russians referred to as "Muridism" - a construct inspired by militant Sufi resistance to imperialism - and as a result, comes in contact with Imam Shamil, a leader of the armed Muslim resistance against Russian incursion in the Caucasus. The two eventually become rivals however, predominantly due to a series of controversial political moves by Shamil that resulted in the death of Murat's brother.¹²

Prince Vorontsov, having heard the story of Murat's life, sees their interaction with the leader as an excellent opportunity for the Russian army to move on Shamil, a significant threat to the imperial project in the Caucasus. Unfortunately however, Vorontsov's plans are thwarted by a rival prince, Chernyshov, who works directly with Nicholas I, the tsar. Rather than utilizing their contact with Murat as a method to capture Shamil, Chernyshov instead convinces the tsar that Murat is a spy, leading him to order an attack on the *aoul* of Sado. The town is razed to the ground and many of its citizens are slaughtered by Russian troops. Meanwhile, Shamil moves Murat's family to an alternate location for increased security.

Murat, still in Vozdvidzhenskaya, realizes the purposeful delay of his Russian guards after

¹⁰ L.N. Tolstoy, *Hadji Murat*, trans. Kyrill Zinovieff and Jenny Hughes (Richmond: One World Classics, 2011), 18.

¹¹ An *aoul* is a fortified village typical to the Caucasus region, Daghestan in particular.

¹² As it is a term constructed by the Russian Empire to describe the armed Muslim resistance movement within the Caucasus, "Muridism" is a complicated term when referring to Khadzhi Murat's religious inclinations. "Murid" describes "one who follows," a derivation of the term "Murshid," which means "one who leads." Both of which are nothing more than basic descriptions of roles of believers within Sufism (this is also considered the Shaykh-Murid relationship). While various Russian sources came to describe numerous, non-related Sufi resistance groups as subscribing to Muridism, the term itself does not describe a specific sect or order of Sufi Islam. See, for example, the following: Lesley Blanch, *The Sabres of Paradise: Conquest and Vengeance in the Caucasus, Revised Edition* (London: Tauris Parke, 2006), 58-9; Lowell Tillett, "Shamil and Muridism in Recent Soviet Historiography," *American Slavic and Eastern European Review* 20, no. 2 (April 1961): 253-69.

several days of captivity and next to no mention of any aid in rescuing his family. Khadji Murat plots his escape, and slips out of the fortress with the help of his lieutenants. The Russians quickly receive word of his escape and ride out after Murat and his men. Although initially successful in thwarting the Russians, the Circassian tribesmen soon notice their approach and opt to confront them rather than continuing to flee. In the ensuing skirmish, all of Murat's men are killed. After fighting valiantly and seemingly defying death multiple times, Murat is killed as well and a tribesman loyal to the Russians decapitates him as a trophy. The author concludes by reiterating that the strong thistle, the "tatar," reminded him of the capture and death of Khadzi Murat.

Despite the novel's brevity, Tolstoy's writing process began more than a half century prior to its publication. In 1851, Tolstoy wrote the following to his brother, Sergei, while serving in the Caucasus: "If you want to boast of news from the Caucasus, you can tell people that Shamil's number two, a certain Khadzi Murat, went over to the Russian government the other day."¹³ The historical memory of the Avar leader's 1851 defection to the Russians would remain with Tolstoy for almost fifty more years. In July 1896, Tolstoy would note the following in his diaries:

Yesterday I walked through a twice-ploughed, black-earth fallow field...there grew a bush of burdock...the third shoot stuck out to the side, also black from the dust but still alive and red in the center. It reminded me of Hadji[sic] Murat."¹⁴

With only minor alterations, this scenario served as the introduction to *Khadzi Murat*. Tolstoy's symbolic tale of the thistle set the framework for what would become one of his most controversial and heavily-censored fictional writings.

Tolstoy's metaphor of the thistle is worth exploring. In Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky's 2009 translation of *Khadzi Murat*, they note the following: "As he was crossing the fields that day, he came upon a Tatar thistle that had been broken by the plow. 'It made me think of Hadji[sic] Murat.'"¹⁵ In the context of *Khadzi Murat*, this may simply serve as a convenient mnemonic device. Tolstoy was no stranger to events in his personal history inspiring significant portions of later works. A.N. Wilson noted, "Memory...is the mother of all muses...there was the incident in January 1872, only a few *versts* away from Yasnaya Polyana, when Anna Stepanovna Pirogova ran up the local railroad and threw herself under a train."¹⁶ This occurrence led to one of Tolstoy's most memorable – albeit shocking – scenes in *Anna Karenina*, when the novel's eponymous protagonist commits suicide following a perceived slight by her lover.

Yet the tale of the thistle is arguably the defining metaphor for the entire novel. Although later critics viewed the author's mnemonic device as Tolstoyan moralistic pandering, the thistle offers the reader a literary rendering of Tolstoy's very real feelings toward the Russian Imperial project in the North Caucasus. The thistle serves as both Khadzi Murat and the Circassian peoples of the embattled region. The former metaphor becomes obvious throughout the novel: Khadzi Murat, despite his strength and resilience, is quite literally "mowed down" amongst his fellow

¹³ L.N. Tolstoy to S.N. Tolstoy and M.M. Shishkina, 23 December 1851, in R.F. Christian, ed. *Tolstoy's Letters, Volume 1, 1828-1879* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 17.

¹⁴ L.N. Tolstoy, *The Journal of Leo Tolstoy*, Vol. 1 (1895-1899), Rose Strunsky, trans. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), 61-2.

¹⁵ L.N. Tolstoy, *Khadzi Murat*, Translated by Larissa Volokhonsky and Richard Pevear (New York: Vintage, 2009), ix.

¹⁶ A.N. Wilson, *Tolstoy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 271.

countrymen. When focusing on the latter metaphor, however, Tolstoy appears to marvel at the ability of the “Tatar” peoples to withstand the efforts of the outside world to destroy their society. Although the Empire continued its mission in the North Caucasus, attempting to force the tribesmen of the region to assimilate or be wiped out entirely, the Circassian people remained against all odds.

Although Tolstoy was previously aware of Khadzhi Murat’s existence as an historical figure, the author – famed for his elaborate character constructions and epic, interwoven plots – did not intend to create a purely fictional work. Rather, he proceeded to perform the same thorough historical research he had relied on when writing *War and Peace* nearly a half-century earlier. Regarding the research of *War and Peace*, Dan Ungurianu notes that “the corpus of Tolstoy’s sources is well defined and includes about fifty titles of memoirs, document collections, and histories...not to mention periodicals, private archives, and historical accounts.” As a novelist, therefore, Tolstoy went to great lengths to establish at least some degree of historical accuracy if only to serve as a framework for a fictional creation.¹⁷

Tolstoy’s writing process for what would be his last piece of fiction is typically rendered as beginning in 1896 shortly after the author’s recounting of the allegorical tale of the thistle in early July. It is more appropriate to note that despite Tolstoy’s creative epiphany in 1896, the research and writing of the novel did not begin to occur until the early 1900s. The first several years of this writing process consisted of a series of fits and starts, mostly brief sketches and moments in which Tolstoy simply discarded what he wrote due to his prose not matching his intent for the novel. There was of course, due cause for these fits and starts. Throughout 1898, Tolstoy – along with his assistant Vladimir Gregorievich Chertkov among others – assisted with the emigration of the Dukhobors to Canada. Due to his controversial religious writings, in February 1902, Tolstoy was publicly excommunicated by the Orthodox Church. Later that year, owing to severe illness, Tolstoy moved for nearly a year to Gaspra on the Crimea to recuperate. The author would not officially begin any substantial writing of *Khadzhi Murat* until the middle of 1902, six years after he had his encounter with the thistle.¹⁸

During his time in the Crimea, Tolstoy made a chance acquaintance with the Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovich, the grandson of Tsar Nicholas I and an author of several historical works on the reign of Alexander I.¹⁹ Upon returning to Yasnaya Polyana, Tolstoy quickly contacted the Grand Duke, requesting research assistance with his newest project: “I am now busy finishing an episode from Caucasian history of the years 1851-2...I wonder if you could help me by indicating where I might find the correspondence [of Nicholas I and several of his advisers for those years]?” The Grand Duke proved extremely helpful, offering Tolstoy even more than he expected,

¹⁷ Dan Ungurianu, *Plotting History: The Russian Historical Novel in the Imperial Age* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 113.

¹⁸ For more on the early stages of Tolstoy’s writing of *Khadzhi Murat*, see the following: P.A. Bulanzhe, “Materialy po istorii russkoi literatury i kultury: Kak L.N. Tolstoy pisal ‘Khadzhi Murata,’ *Russkaia Mysl’* 6 (June 1913): 69-93; L.N. Tolstoy, *The Journals of Leo Tolstoy*, Rose Strunsky, trans. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1917), 158-230. The Dukhobors were a sectarian, pacifist, Christian Anarchist group that suffered significant persecution from the Russian government after their resettlement in the Southern Caucasus.

¹⁹ See for example, Veliki Kniaz Nikolai Mikhailovich, *Imperator Aleksandr I* (Moskva: Zakharov, 2010); *General-ad”iutanty Imperatora Aleksandra I* (S-Peterburg: Ekspeditsiia zagotovleniia god. Bumag, 1913); *Kniaz’ia Dolgorukie, spodvizhniki imperatora Aleksandra I v pervye gody ego tsarstvovaniia: biograficheskie ocherki* (S-Peterburg: Ekspeditsiia zagotovleniia god. Bumag, 1902).

including materials from the Tiflis Archives on the Caucasus. Simultaneously, Tolstoy also came in contact with Anna Korganova, the widow of an officer who had personally guarded Khadzhi Murat during his captivity. Tolstoy frequently corresponded with Korganova, asking extremely detailed questions regarding Murat's behavior and overall demeanor. Korganova's responses proved vital to Tolstoy's novel, and within two more years, Tolstoy had completed *Khadzhi Murat*. Tolstoy requested that all proceeds from the novel would go to the peasants at Yasnaya Polyana – a wish he would never see fulfilled in his lifetime.²⁰

Lev Tolstoy died in late-November 1910, leaving behind a half-century of published writings. Despite Tolstoy's completion of *Khadzhi Murat* in roughly 1904, the novel would not see the light of day until the beginning of 1912. This was due in no small part to the series of conflicts between Tolstoy's wife, Sophia, and his assistant, Chertkov. In the final years of Tolstoy's life as he began to pursue his heightened spirituality, Chertkov became Tolstoy's closest confidant, serving as the chief organizer for the Tolstoyan movement and the series of communes that formed throughout Russia and abroad in honor and pursuit of the writer's religious philosophy.²¹ This interaction with Chertkov often overshadowed – or completely eclipsed – Tolstoy's relations with his wife and children. The Countess Tolstoy remarked in her diaries, "I prayed a long time on my knees, asking God to turn my husband's heart from Chertkov to me."²² Their son, Sergei, confirmed the strenuous relationship between the two: "In her opinion Chertkov was guilty of preventing her participation in her husband's activity and having the care of his manuscripts... and as in her eyes it was also [Chertkov's] fault that Tolstoy made a will... her unfriendly relation toward him amounted to hatred."²³

The Countess's disinclination toward Chertkov from a familial perspective was perhaps justified. In the final years of his life, Tolstoy drew up numerous wills and testaments at Chertkov's request, each offering a different method for the posthumous distribution of his works. Sergei L'vovich noted the following:

[His] first formal will was drawn up on September 18, 1909... [authorizing] anyone who wished to do so to republish any of his works printed after 1880... he wrote a second will nominating his younger daughter Alexandra legatee of the copyright... The last version of it he wrote on July 22, 1910... [definitively placing his] literary inheritance in the hands of V.G. Chertkov.

The final will was kept secret from the Countess for several months, owing primarily to her fear that Chertkov would receive the rights to Tolstoy's works. Tolstoy's children split with one another as well, each taking a different side with either the Countess or Lev Nikolaevich and Chertkov.

²⁰ L.N. Tolstoy to the Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovich, 20 August, 1902. In R.F. Christian, *Tolstoy's Letters, Vol. 2*, 623, 628, and 642fn. See also, G.B. Bebutov, ed., *L.N. Tolstoy i Khadzhi Murat: Neopublikovannoye Pis'mo L.N. Tolstogo* (Yerevan: Knigoizdatelstvo "Germes", 1928). The latter of these documents contains the correspondence of Tolstoy and Korganova with references to the sections of the novel which correspond to Tolstoy's research questions.

²¹ The Tolstoyan movement was an organized following (started predominantly by Chertkov) focused on Tolstoy's teachings as a Christian Anarchist and pacifist thinker. Chertkov started a publishing house – *The Intermediary* – and numerous communes, all of which centered on the popular author's religious and philosophical beliefs.

²² Sofya Andreevna Tolstoya, *The Final Struggle: Being Countess Tolstoy's Diary for 1910, with Extracts from Leo Tolstoy's Diary from the Same Period*, Aylmer Maude, trans. (New York: Oxford UP, 1936), 209.

²³ Sergei L'vovich Tolstoy, "Preface," In, S.A. Tolstoya, *The Final Struggle*, 27,

Much of this tension arguably led to Tolstoy's October 28, 1910 flight from Yasnaya Polyana preceding his death.²⁴

This struggle continued even after Tolstoy's death. Although eventually overruled by the Imperial Senate in 1915, Chertkov and Alexandra L'vovna proceeded to publish Tolstoy's posthumous works with next to no regard for the Countess's interests regarding her husband's literary productions.²⁵ Tolstoy's English translator Aylmer Maude noted the following regarding Chertkov's publishing activities:

[At no time] after [Chertkov] obtained control of Tolstoy's literary inheritance did he at all strictly carry out the undertaking he had given to deal with the works as Tolstoy had wished. [He] had bitterly reproached the countess for wishing to avail herself of copyrights, which he himself...repudiated as immoral.²⁶

With that said however, Chertkov wasted little time publishing the author's unpublished final works. Maude recounted that Chertkov mentioned that there was "little in the way of fiction worth publication." Despite the battles over publication rights, it is likely that Chertkov's statement appeared in light of the intense censorship that Tolstoy's fictional works were bound to undergo in the Russian Empire. He admitted however, one major exception to this statement: *Khadzhi Murat*.²⁷

Khadzhi Murat would prove to be one of the first posthumous fictional works published by Chertkov. The actual publication however, is worth careful analysis. In 1912, Chertkov had the novel published in two separate locations simultaneously: the publishing house of I.D. Sytina in Moscow and the Russian publishing house of J. Ladyschnikov in Berlin. The decision was by no means arbitrary. Chertkov feared – or perhaps more appropriately, expected – that the novel would undergo significant edits by the Imperial censor. As Tolstoy's assistant for several decades, Chertkov was well aware of the significant censorship Tolstoy endured throughout the course of his life as a writer of fictional works.

The censorship began following the final 1877 publication of Tolstoy's epic novel, *Anna Karenina*. The novel was published in serial form over two years, largely in the literary periodical *The Russian Herald*. In the issue published in May 1877 however, Tolstoy noticed a particularly glaring issue with the publication of his novel: the final chapters had been completely omitted – a fact which the publisher openly admitted in a simple footnote.²⁸ Tolstoy responded to this censorship in an open letter to the editor of *The New Times*, another Russian periodical. He noted:

²⁴ Ibid., 32-3.

²⁵ Sergei L'vovich notes that between January 28-9, 1915, the Countess retrieved Tolstoy's manuscripts from Chertkov's holding place for them in the Moscow Historical Museum and transferred them to what is now the Lenin Library in Moscow for custody. See *The Final Struggle*, 44.

²⁶ Aylmer Maude in S.A. Tolstoya, *The Final Struggle*, 260fn. Maude served as the first official English translator of Tolstoy's collected works.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ The final chapters of *Anna Karenina* consist of Anna's lover, Vronsky, volunteering to go to war in Serbia. This section includes an extended critique – voiced through the character of Konstantin Levin among others – of the choices of the Slavonic committee in participating in a foreign war based on the notion of a shared sense of Slavic brotherhood.

The masterly exposition of the last unpublished part of *Anna Karenina* makes one regret the fact that for three years the editor...gave up much space in his journal. With the same gracefulness and laconicism he could have recounted the whole novel in no more than ten lines.

He continued to reproach the editor of the journal for initially agreeing to publish the chapters with slight omissions and then, changing his mind and simply leaving out the chapters entirely.²⁹

These omissions, however, proved to be some of the most lenient censorship of Tolstoy's fictional works. Regarding the 1891 publication of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Tolstoy confided to colleagues in his correspondence that at best, he hoped the novel would pass by the censor with only limited cuts. The frank discussion of sexual mores throughout the novel scandalized the Orthodox Church, causing it to be immediately banned from publication. The only saving grace proved to be the intercession of the Countess. Tolstoy noted: "My wife returned from Petersburg yesterday where she saw the Emperor and spoke to him...He promised her to allow [the novel] to be published...which doesn't please me at all."³⁰ *Resurrection* – often considered the "last" of Tolstoy's major novels – underwent similar scrutiny. Maude, who served as the first American translator of the novel, commented, "All through the book whole chapters, as well as parts of chapters and many stray sentences here and there, fell under the strokes of the executioner with the red pencil...On the whole, Russian readers wonder that the book got through the censor's hands as well as it did."³¹ With the publication of *Khadzhi Murat*, therefore, Chertkov assumed in advance that the government reaction would progress in a similar fashion.

With careful analysis of both editions, one can deduce that Chertkov was presented with the censored version of the Moscow edition slightly before the publication of the Berlin edition. Chertkov notes on the final page of the edition that "Everything that is omitted by the censor in the upcoming Russian addition appears here in square brackets." Additionally, Chertkov published a short work – originally intended as a longer chapter on Tsar Nicholas I – entitled "About Nikolai Pavlovich," which was about Nicholas I, and was omitted by Tolstoy himself for reasons not indicated by the author.³²

The Moscow edition omits numerous sections with little effort to obscure the censorship of the novel. The front matter of the third volume of the Moscow edition includes a lengthy appeal from Tolstoy's daughter, Alexandra, for the complete publication of her father's works in accordance with his final wishes. Furthermore, censored sections were not made to appear as if gaps in the story were the author's own. The seventeenth chapter, which in its original form contained a lengthy portrait of the brutality of a Russian raid on a Circassian village, is printed as merely the first sentence: "The *aoul* destroyed in the raid was the same one in which Khadzhi Murat had spent the night before defection to the Russians." The remainder of the chapter is simply marked with a series of large dots, extending for several lines.³³

Observing that censorship did occur, therefore, is a simple task only made easier by the

²⁹ L.N. Tolstoy to the Editor of 'New Times,' 10 June, 1877. In R.F. Christian, *Tolstoy's Letters, Volume 1*, 306-7.

³⁰ See L.N. Tolstoy to V.G. Chertkov, 15 April, 1891. In R.F. Christian, ed., *Tolstoy's Letters, Volume 2*, 1880-1910 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 478.

³¹ Aylmer Maude, *Tolstoy and His Problems* (London: Grant Richards, 1901), 137-8.

³² V.G. Chertkov in L.N. Tolstoy, *Khadzhi Murat* (Berlin: J. Ladyschnikow, 1912), sec. *Primechaniia*, note. 1.

³³ L.N. Tolstoy, *Khadzhi Murat* in *Posmertniia Khudozhestvenniia Proizvedeniia L'va Nikolaevicha Tolstogo, Tom III* (Moscow: Izd-vo. I.D. Sytina, 1912), *front matter*, 79.

total lack of editorial subtlety in the extraction and omission of given sections of the text. The question becomes however, *what* was censored and furthermore, for what reason? Without physical documentation regarding the censor's legalistic decisions, one must deduce through contextual evidence the reasoning behind omissions and censorship-based editing. The deconstruction of the novel's blatant anti-imperialism speaks volumes regardless of the official reasoning of the state. Proper analysis of the censored 1912 Moscow edition – in lieu of the original manuscript of the novel – requires the side-by-side analysis of this edition with Chertkov's annotated 1912 Berlin edition. Despite Chertkov's debatable and arguably contemptuous interactions with the Tolstoy family regarding publication and copyright, his annotated edition serves as the Russian version initially translated by Aylmer Maude in 1912 which laid the groundwork for future English translations in circulation throughout the last century.

At first glance, the first edition of the novel appears uncensored. The first fourteen chapters progressed with no censorship whatsoever. Tolstoy's tale of the Avar's defection to the Russians remained completely unscathed. Beginning with the fifteenth chapter, however, when Prince Vorontsov's rival, Prince Chernyshov approaches Tsar Nicholas I, the censor quickly went to work. In the Moscow edition, only the phrase "Chernyshov's plan did not succeed" appears. In the uncensored version, Tolstoy continued to mention Nicholas' ill temper that day and in particular the fact that Nicholas "[looked upon Chernyshov] as a blackguard [for his] endeavors at the trial of the Decembrists to secure the conviction of Zachary Chernyshov and of his attempt to obtain Zachary's property for himself." Tolstoy cited this as the reasoning for Khadzhi Murat's continued safety in the Caucasus.³⁴

This section primarily aroused suspicion due to its critique of the tsar as "ill-tempered" and having a direct aversion to one of his subordinates due to his meddling in the government response to the Decembrist Revolts of 1825. The Decembrist Revolts served as the first major challenge to the imperial authority of Nicholas I. Following the death of Nicholas's older brother, Alexander I – the tsar preceding him – various members of the Russian military and ruling elite fractured over supporting Nicholas as tsar, or Nicholas's other brother, Constantine. Many of the officers who had served under Alexander – and were thereby exposed to the constitutional ideologies of Western Europe during the Napoleonic Wars – favored Constantine as the successor most likely to adopt more liberal policies of rule. Their brief revolt however, was quickly suppressed by Nicholas, who assumed the throne and sentenced numerous officers to death by execution or exile in Siberia.

Despite Nicholas' intense suppression of the revolts, the Decembrists and their cause rapidly became a popular topic among the liberal intelligentsia, particularly in the creative realm of literature and poetry. Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin – arguably Russia's most famous poet – was briefly suspected of being a conspirator due to his close association with many of the elite officers involved in the revolts. Tolstoy himself was fascinated with the Decembrists whose revolt had only occurred three years before his birth. In the epilogue of *War and Peace* (which Tolstoy initially conceived of as a novel about the group), for instance, Tolstoy implied that two of his characters –

³⁴ Throughout the remainder of this section – which refers to three separate editions of *Khadzhi Murat* – each will be cited. The first will be Chertkov's Berlin edition for annotation of specific sections which were censored. The second will be the 1912 Moscow edition for confirmation of Chertkov's accuracy. The final will be Maude's 1912 English translation in order to maintain one specific translator's prosaic style. See, therefore: L.N. Tolstoy, *Khadzhi Murat*, V.G. Chertkov, ed. (Berlin: J. Ladyschnikow, 1912), 83; L.N. Tolstoy, *Posmertnyia Khudozhestvennyia Proizvedeniia, Tom III*, izd. A.L. Tolstoya (Moskva: I.D. Sytina, 1912), 70; L.N. Tolstoy, *Khadzhi Murat*, Aylmer Maude, trans. (London: Oxford UP, 1912), 167.

most notably Pierre Bezukhov - were most likely conspirators in the anti-imperial movement. Popular mention of this revolt – and any critique of its suppression – was therefore not allowed, making Tolstoy’s critique noteworthy in its public nature.³⁵

The remainder of the fifteenth chapter is scattered with omissions. Tolstoy, in introducing Nicholas I, found it necessary to chronicle the Tsar’s sexual indiscretions, noting that “the cause of [his] bad mood was fatigue. The fatigue was due to the fact that he had been to a masquerade the night before...he again met the mask who at the previous masquerade...had aroused his senile sensuality.” Tolstoy went on to describe their affair later that evening, indicating that the girl involved was received where “Nicholas normally had rendezvous with women.” In addition to this candid discussion of Nicholas’ extramarital relations, Tolstoy frequently notes the Tsar’s weight, referring to his “overgrown stomach” and “big, well-fed body.”³⁶ Considering the fragility of the Russian Empire at the time of the publication, an open critique of the monarch – the “true tsar of peasant and Cossack folklore...a combination of benign grandfather and messianic deliverer” - was considerably unwelcome in the eyes of the censor.³⁷

The inflammatory implications of this segment are perhaps obvious. Despite a succession of very debatable rulers throughout Russian Imperial history, one did not simply critique the tsar in such a manner. Stating that Tsar Nicholas I not only had one, but several extramarital affairs – which historian W. Bruce Lincoln substantiates in his 1989 biography of the Tsar – would hardly register as something fitting for publication and mass consumption in an era when tsars still ruled Russia.³⁸ Furthermore, describing the Tsar as overweight, ill-tempered, or as one who was pleased with inspiring terror in his subordinates was also in poor taste. As Richard Wortman argues in his exemplary work *Scenarios of Power*, the tsars and the imperial court went to great lengths to establish particular modes of illustrating their power to the Russian elites. Tolstoy – a member of Russia’s elite class despite his anarchical beliefs – deliberately contradicting the image of an all-powerful tsar by vividly depicting his flaws was a distinct remove from the intent of the Russian ruling class.³⁹

It is worthwhile to note, however, that Tolstoy’s negative depiction of Tsar Nicholas I was hardly deemed the most grievous offense within the novel. This was no doubt a direct result of what Orlando Figes has referred to as “the desacralization of the monarchy.” What Figes examined in his 1999 work *Interpreting the Russian Revolution: The Language and Symbols of 1917* was the unique shift in Russian public opinion regarding the tsar prior to the downfall of the Russian Empire. As he notes, “The Russian monarchy had always based its power on divine authority...he

³⁵ See, for example, Anatole G. Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1937); Patrick O’Meara, *The Decembrist Pavel Pestel: Russia’s First Republican* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004); L.N. Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Aylmer and Louise Maude, trans. (New York: The Heritage Press, 1938); Liudmila Trigos, *The Decembrist Myth in Russian Culture* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

³⁶ L.N. Tolstoy, *Khadzhi Murat*, V.G. Chertkov, ed., 85-88; L.N. Tolstoy, *Posmertnyia Khudozhestvennyia Proizvedeniia*, 72; *Khadzhi Murat*, Aylmer Maude, trans., 169-176.

³⁷ Billington, *The Icon and the Axe*, 198.

³⁸ Lincoln notes the following: “[Nicholas took a mistress] at a time when he was himself beginning to show the signs of age...he feared the onset of impotence. To console himself, in an effort to recapture his lost youth, to find the physical solace...he turned to one of [the Empress’] young maids-of-honor.” See W. Bruce Lincoln, *Nicholas I: Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois, 1989), 158.

³⁹ See Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, 2 vols. (Princeton UP, 1995).

was god on earth.” Following Bloody Sunday in 1905, however, the image of the “benevolent tsar” was all but obliterated. Notions of tsarist sexual purity would receive similar destruction as rumors of court-wide infidelity spread throughout the course of World War Two. Figes analysis, therefore, offers at least one explanation for the intense censorship of latter chapters despite Tolstoy’s open critique of Nicholas I.⁴⁰

Following this section, several pages worth of material were omitted, particularly concerning Russia’s relations as an imperial power. Tolstoy remarks in particular on the Empire’s interactions with Prussia and its present imperial holding, Poland. He notes that “Nicholas could not forgive the King of Prussia for granting a Constitution to his people after the events of 1848...he considered it necessary to keep an army near the frontier in case of need...as he had used troops to suppress the rising in Hungary.” When then presented with a case concerning a Russian officer of Polish descent who attacked a school examiner, Nicholas can barely contain his desire to punish the officer, not due to his crime, but due to his nationality. Tolstoy writes, “He had done much evil to the Poles...he was now thinking how most fully to satisfy the feeling of hatred against the Poles which this incident stirred up within him...it pleased him to be ruthlessly cruel and it also pleased him to think that we have abolished capital punishment in Russia.”⁴¹

These sections – short of the following chapter which was almost entirely omitted – represent the most thoroughly edited and censored throughout the entire 1912 Moscow publication of the novel. Tolstoy’s open discussion of the troubles between Russia and Prussia came at an awkward time for both empires. When Tolstoy finished the novel in 1904, both countries were in constant competition for industrialization. Three years later, due to significant economic disputes – and Russia’s own financial and social troubles following the catastrophic Russo-Japanese war and Revolution of 1905 – Russia proceeded to ally with England and France in the Triple Entente. The alliance only increased tensions between Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Germany on the brink of the First World War. Direct reference to these tensions – even in an historical context – was a sensitive subject to approach. Much as how Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* provided an historical critique of contemporary issues of nationalism, *Hadji Murat* accomplished a similar framing of the events of the early-1900s in a fictional account of the past.

An additional source of trouble was the question of nationalism – particularly in the context of Poland. Throughout the course of the first half of the nineteenth century, Russian authority in partitioned Poland was continually challenged by a series of uprisings in the capital of Warsaw. Despite Alexander I’s relatively distant relations with Poland, his brother Constantine was appointed as a viceroy of the region, thereby effectively ignoring Polish rights to constitutional rule. Nicholas I would continue similar policies, crowning himself as King of Poland in 1829. These policies were met with considerable disdain from the Polish people, culminating in two separate revolts – the first in November 1830 and a second during the reign of Alexander II in 1863. Following the quelling of these revolts, Poland remained an integral part of the Russian Empire, not regaining its independence until the armistice following World War I.⁴²

⁴⁰ Orlando Figes and Boris Kolonitsky, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution: The Language and Symbols of 1917* (New Haven: Yale, 1999), 9.

⁴¹ L.N. Tolstoy, *Posmertnyia Khudozhestvennyia Proizvedeniia*, 73; L.N. Tolstoy, *Khadzhi Murat*, V.G. Chertkov, ed., 89-93; L.N. Tolstoy, *Khadzhi Murat*, Aylmer Maude, trans., 179-183.

⁴² See, for example, Norman Davies, *God’s Playground: A History of Poland*, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia UP, 1982; David Ransel and Bozena Shallcross, eds. *Polish Encounters, Russian Identity* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2005).

Tolstoy's biting analysis of the reactions of the Russian government to its imperial holdings proved to be the most objectionable feature of *Khadzhi Murat*. The only remaining section that the censor deemed worthy of not merely editing, but omitting entirely, was the seventeenth chapter. In the fifteenth chapter, Nicholas remarks that Chernyshov should order Prince Vorontsov "to keep firmly to my system of destroying the dwellings and food supplies in Chechnya, and to harass them by raids." Tolstoy follows this with a seemingly-detached explanation of the raid itself. Contrary to his later detailed and violent descriptions of Khadzhi Murat's final skirmish and execution, the raid of the Chechen village is depicted as a basic military maneuver with little mention of the horrors of warfare. The bulk of the chapter revolves more around the camp life following the raid, describing the drunken revelry of the Russian troops.⁴³

The seventeenth chapter is markedly different. The 1912 Moscow edition, however, offers no indication of this fact, reading simply: "The *aoul* which was destroyed during the raid was the same one in which Khadzhi Murat had spent the night before going over to the Russians."⁴⁴ In reality, this was Tolstoy's most biting chapter, recalling the brutality of Russia's activity in the Caucasus. He begins, noting the destruction to the *aoul* of Sado: "The roof [had] fallen in, the door and the posts supporting the penthouse burned... His son... was brought dead to the mosque... He had been stabbed in the back with a bayonet." He continues describing the extreme mourning of Sado and his wife, the latter wailing endlessly as the former dug his own son's grave. The food source of the villagers – as demanded by the Tsar – was burned entirely by the Russian soldiers. The wells were poisoned and the mosques defiled.⁴⁵

In perhaps Tolstoy's most poignant section, he states the following:

No one spoke of hatred of the Russians. The feeling experienced by all the Chechens, from the youngest to the oldest, was stronger than hate. It was not hatred, for they did not regard those Russian dogs as human beings; but it was such repulsion, disgust and perplexity at the senseless cruelty of these creatures, that the desire to exterminate them... was as natural an instinct as that of self-preservation.

Tolstoy portrays the Chechens as noble people, even in moments of extreme anguish in reaction to the wanton violence of their enemies. Although their children lay dead, they continue to rebuild and withstand the cruelty of individuals they had never personally harmed. He continues, noting that the elders of the *aoul* unanimously decide – after contemplating the options of submission to the Russians or seeking outside assistance – to contact Imam Shamil in an attempt to ally with a powerful tribesman working to thwart the imperial incursion into the Caucasus region.⁴⁶ Tolstoy's critique, therefore, inverts the contemporary narrative of Russia's Orient: rather than portraying the Russians as civilized and the Chechens as brutal and uncultured, the roles are reversed in the Tolstoyan narrative.

Considering the debatable content in the previous chapters, the likelihood of this particularly inflammatory chapter being published in the Russian Empire was considerably low. It

⁴³ L.N. Tolstoy, *Hadji Murat*, Aylmer Maude, trans., 183-4.

⁴⁴ L.N. Tolstoy, *Posmertnyia Khudozhestvennyia Proizvedeniia*, 79.

⁴⁵ L.N. Tolstoy, *Khadzhi Murat*, V.G. Chertkov, ed., 102; L.N. Tolstoy, *Khadzhi Murat*, Aylmer Maude, trans., 201.

⁴⁶ L.N. Tolstoy, *Khadzhi Murat*, V.G. Chertkov, ed., 102-3; L.N. Tolstoy, *Khadzhi Murat*, Aylmer Maude, trans., 202-3.

is important to recognize the complexities of the year in which the novel was published. The Russian Empire, as has been previously noted, had only recently suffered an extreme loss in the Russo-Japanese War. Additionally, the Empire experienced its first major revolution in 1905. After a series of workers strikes, peasant revolts, and overall unrest throughout the Russia and its imperial holdings, Tsar Nicholas II – along with advisers such as Sergei Witte and Pytor Stolypin – worked for the creation of a constitution and the State Duma in an effort to offer some representation to the various peoples of the Russian Empire. Finally, in 1913, the Tsar and the Imperial Court planned a massive celebration of the Romanov Tercentenary, establishing the brilliance of exactly three hundred years of Romanov rule in Russia.⁴⁷

The year 1912, therefore, was an opportunity for the Tsar to reassert his power in an era of extreme military failures and rapidly building domestic strife. Tolstoy's recounting of the random and brutal violence of the Russian military in one of its imperial holdings would have been objectionable at best. Implying that all of these acts were performed following the direct orders of the Tsar was perceived in an equally negative light. As Maude noted, "[The readers] are made to feel [antipathy] for the pedantic, stupid cruelty of Nicholas I."⁴⁸ In an empire attempting to reassert the importance of the tsar and dynastic rule, a pointed diatribe against a tsar who ruled only a half-century prior was simply not proper and more importantly, illegal.⁴⁹ Tolstoy's direct diatribe against the supremacy of the imperial system, therefore, proved his most heinous crime as a writer.

Additionally however, Tolstoy's rendering of the Chechen people in this particular episode is also quite unique. Tolstoy's *Khadzhi Murat* was hardly the first work published in Imperial Russia on the topic of the Caucasus. Beginning with Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin's *Prisoner of the Caucasus* (1820-1) and Mikhail Lermontov's series of Caucasus poems and short stories, the region and its people served as a point of fascination for the Russian Empire which had absorbed the region in 1801 following the annexation of Georgia. This period of literary obsession with the Caucasus saw the creation of a series of stories which anthropologist Bruce Grant has referred to as "the captive cycle," each concerned with the notion of the Russian soldier as a prisoner of a given Circassian tribe. Tolstoy, for instance, authored his own contribution to this cycle also entitled *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*, utilizing his own knowledge of the Caucasus Wars to create a lengthy fictional narrative version of Pushkin's 1820 poem.⁵⁰

Khadzhi Murat, however, was a distinct departure from this captive cycle – not necessarily in style, but in the author's subjectivity and choice of content. Whereas previous works on the Caucasus such as Pushkin's and Lermontov's – often considered the cultural output of Russia's Orientalist experience – approached the region as an exotic space, receiving some sense of Western civilization from the Russians in their captivity, Tolstoy's *Khadzhi Murat* represented one of the first works to effectively "side" with the tribal peoples.⁵¹ These earlier works offer no

⁴⁷ For more on the Tercentenary and the early stages of the Revolution see Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy* (New York: Penguin, 1998). Additionally, for more on the year 1913 in the Russian Empire, see Wayne Dowler, *Russia in 1913* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012).

⁴⁸ Maude, "Preface" in *Hadji Murat*, 15.

⁴⁹ See, for instance, Charles Ruud, *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804-1906* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

⁵⁰ See Bruce Grant, *The Captive and the Gift: Cultural Histories of Sovereignty in Russia and the Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

⁵¹ See also Daniel Brower and Edward Lazzarini, eds. *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997); Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the*

attempts to portray the Russian people as more hostile than or inferior to the Circassian mountaineers. The reality is quite to the contrary: as Grant notes, “Russian actors used negative plotlines to generate a symbolic economy of belonging in the Caucasus...The tale of the archetypal long-suffering Russian benefactor could be told and retold...suggesting that the peoples of the Caucasus were misplaced or that the Russians were displaced.”⁵²

Tolstoy, therefore, despite maintaining a “captive narrative” in which Khadzhi Murat – rather than a Russian soldier – was the prisoner, offered a vision of Russian Imperialism at its darkest and most brutal. The exclusion of the aforementioned sections merely offers the reader a tragic alternative to the captive cycle, in which Khadzhi Murat, attempting to escape from the very Russians he had just defected to, becomes the victim of his own “exotic desires.”⁵³ The inclusion of these censored segments however, illustrates Tolstoy’s explicit distaste for the brutality and stupidity of the Russian Imperial project in the North Caucasus and the dehumanizing nature of the violence of the Empire. His historical interpretation of these events was a stark contrast from the historiographical work of his contemporaries: Sergei Soloviev, the author of over twenty volumes documenting Russia's history viewed the country's past as “the story of the continuous, triumphant unfolding of the Russian state as it incorporated and ordered the vast lands of Eurasia.”⁵⁴ Instead, Tolstoy sided with the native population of the Caucasus, preferring the seemingly reckless actions of the daring Khadzhi Murat to the ignorant abuses of power of the Russian Empire.

The censor’s omission of these sections – as well as the foreign publication of the uncensored edition – is quite revealing of the complexities of the Russian Empire at this time. Considering the Russian exposure to the works of Tolstoy and the blatant omission of large portions of Tolstoy’s narrative in the 1912 Moscow edition of *Khadzhi Murat*, it is necessary to explore the popular reaction to this inflammatory novel in greater detail.

Chapter III– Historiography and Appropriation: The Critical Response to *Khadzhi Murat* “Criticism is the most boring thing in the world.” – Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy⁵⁵

The critical response to *Khadzhi Murat* following the initial publication of the novel was relatively limited. The works themselves attracted far less attention than the process of their publication. In an article anticipating the release of the first volume of posthumous works, a correspondent of *Russkie vedomosti* noted the following: “Tolstoy’s daughter appears extremely interested in fulfilling societal demands for her father’s works, but producing them in such a short period of time would be difficult, if not entirely impossible.” The author further noted delays due to squabbles between the Tolstoy family and foreign publishers “grabbing for any and all of

Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Harsha Ram, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006); David Shimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

⁵² Bruce Grant, *The Captive and the Gift: Cultural Histories of Sovereignty in Russia and the Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2009), 94-5.

⁵³ The description of Khadzhi Murat as “exotic” is the author’s attempt to capture the Russian opinion regarding the Circassian tribesmen’s seemingly reckless behavior and bravado.

⁵⁴ Catherine Evtuhov, et al., *A History of Russia: Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 440-1. See also S.M. Solovyov, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen, 48 vols.* (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 1974).

⁵⁵ L.N. Tolstoy to N.N. Strakhov, April 9, 1876.

Tolstoy's works" which typically resulted in "coarse and unpleasant translations." Despite the author's fears regarding such "translation issues" with the two most prominent fictional works – the barely mentioned *Khadzhi Murat* and *Father Sergius* – he anticipated a relatively rapid release of the previously unpublished fictional works.⁵⁶

With the eventual publication of the third volume which contained *Khadzhi Murat*, however, the critics began their gradual analysis of the novel. The first reviews of *Khadzhi Murat* started to appear within the first several months after the novel's publication. As the first Russian edition of the novel was thoroughly censored, critics naturally did not comment on the controversial material analyzed previously herein. Rather, the early critical analyses of the novel focus predominantly on Tolstoy's artistry as well as his historiography. These critiques of the novel primarily illustrate a later sense of disenchantment with Tolstoy's late works due to his frequent moralism. Furthermore, his penchant for strenuously researching the historical details of his fictional works allowed later critics the ability to view the novel simply as a product of its time. With the collapse of the tsarist Russian Empire, Soviet reviewers were able to appropriate *Khadzhi Murat* as the work of an author who operated in stark opposition to the previous regime.

The second half of the nineteenth century marked the peak of Russia's obsession with history, giving rise to entire schools of thought such as the Slavophiles and Westernizers, intent on defining and analyzing Russia's complex history. This period, however, did not inherently affect history as an academic discipline. Rather, nineteenth-century Russian thinkers questioned not only what history was, but also who was capable of writing it. Literary scholar A.V. Knowles notes the following:

[Regarding Russian thought], the words 'history' and 'historical' in these questions was replaced by 'literature' and 'literary.' To the educated Russian, living in a country which cocooned its population in numerous regulations and restrictions, where political debate was to all intents and purposes impossible, literature was one of the few means through which ideas could be reasonably freely discussed.

Literary journals, therefore, became historiographical battlegrounds based in part on the analysis of literary texts as works of art, but more importantly on their analysis as the historical monographs of their day.⁵⁷

Shortly before Tolstoy began his first writing endeavor of *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth*, literary critic Vissarion Belinsky publically argued in favor of the creation of literature that was "true to life, and most importantly...inspired by socially significant ideas."⁵⁸ Belinsky's theory was well received in the literary community: Russian literary scholar Dan Ungurianu estimates that between 1829 and the Russian Revolution of 1917 Russian authors produced a minimum of

⁵⁶ P.Iu.P. *Russkie Vedomosti* 4 (January 6, 1911): 3. The author also notes that Tolstoy's nonfictional works would "most likely take a longer time to appear." While some would appear in later Imperial volumes, the bulk of Tolstoy's nonfictional works were banned in Russia. See Wayne Dowler, *Russia in 1913* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012).

⁵⁷ A.V. Knowles, *Tolstoy: The Critical Heritage*. The Slavophiles and the Westernizers were two opposing ideological camps, the former of which defined Russia's history as uniquely "Slavic" with a historical destiny different from that of Western Europe. The Westernizers, on the other hand, believed that Russia would only advance by adopting Western technology and political ideologies.

⁵⁸ Knowles, 3.

800 works of historical fiction alone.⁵⁹ Despite Belinsky's early death in 1848, the community of Russian literary critics continued to support the notion that works of literature served a higher purpose socially and should be held to particular standards beyond mere plot and character development.

By the time he began publishing, therefore, Tolstoy was no stranger to the historiographical endeavors of authors and literary critics in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although at first inspired simply by his surroundings and day-to-day life, the author soon began to contemplate writing pieces on various historical topics. *War and Peace* – originally entitled *1805* when first published in serial form – began as a novel on the Decembrist Revolt of 1825. The Russian involvement in the Napoleonic Wars led many educated officers to Western Europe, which – in reaction to the political upheaval of the early nineteenth-century – had adopted new governmental policies including the concept of a constitutional monarchy. Upon returning to Russia, many of these officers rebelled against the autocratic tsarist system, only to be either executed or exiled by Tsar Nicholas I who brutally quashed their liberalizing efforts.

This connection between the two events was not lost on Tolstoy. In its final form, the novel appeared as an epic tale of the everyday lives of Russians involved in the Napoleonic Wars. Although Tolstoy created numerous fictional characters for the sake of the novel's plot – or refashioned historical members of the Russian nobility as fictional characters – his portrayal of events that had only occurred a half-century earlier required significant historical research. Furthermore, when discussing major historical figures such as Napoleon, Tsar Alexander I, and numerous commanding officers of the Russian army, Tolstoy assumed a position that required him to render historical information in a very specific manner.

The critical reviews of *War and Peace*, therefore, reflected Tolstoy's uniquely dualistic position, analyzing not only his literary style, but his portrayal of particular historical events. In an 1868 issue of *Vesnik Evropy*, for instance, critic Pavel Annenkov noted the following: "With the first gleams of critical thought desiring to check the present against the past, the services of this *petite histoire* are invaluable and are accepted with great and fully deserved gratitude. It helps to bring down the political figures from the misty heights where they have lived...to the level of human beings." Annenkov continued, noting Tolstoy's thorough research process, and – although critical toward the author's occasional lack of fictional plot development – argued that his historical realism was in many ways preferable to "official, scholarly, and traditional history."⁶⁰

In addition to Russia's literary elite, the readership of the novel also took the opportunity to critique Tolstoy's historical work. As numerous veterans of the Napoleonic Wars were still alive following the novel's publication, Tolstoy also endured the criticism of former soldiers. Prince Pyotr Vyazemsky, for instance, lambasted the novel arguing that Tolstoy was an historical nihilist who merely sought to lampoon the events of 1812. The Prince's critiques, as Ungurianu notes, were focused predominantly on incredibly nuanced portions of *War and Peace*. He noted, regarding one section on the tsar that "this account betrays a total lack of knowledge of Alexander I's personality...he amuses himself by throwing biscuits into the crowd...as if he were some sort of backwoods squire...it is absolutely out of place and is out of keeping with the truth." The aged

⁵⁹ Dan Ungurianu, *Plotting History: The Russian Historical Novel in the Imperial Age* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 11.

⁶⁰ P.V. Annenkov in A.V. Knowles, ed. *Tolstoy: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1978), 108.

Prince's recollections proved to be on equally shaky factual ground however, as many of his accounts of battles and their aftermath tended to evolve into anecdotes concerning his leisure time or patriotic tirades against Napoleon Bonaparte.⁶¹

Despite these conflicting reviews, the novel was internationally praised as both a major literary feat and as a significant contribution for the historical discussion of the Napoleonic Wars. This would not, however, be the last time that Tolstoy's artistic works blurred the line between fictional and non-fictional historical writing.

By the time of the publication of *Khadzhi Murat*, therefore, Russian literary critics had established a very specific precedent for the reviewing of works of historical fiction. The novel, however, would only receive one specifically literary review in the journal *Appollon* despite the considerable coverage of the drama surrounding the publication of his posthumous works. Critic Mikhail Kuzmin regarded the novel as "reminiscent of *War and Peace*...making this work valuable and attractive for lovers of Tolstoy." The novel highlighted what Kuzmin considered Tolstoy's "youthful fascination" with military life in the Caucasus, which, as was the case in *War and Peace*, the author rendered in a realistic fashion. While Kuzmin considered it to be a work which fit in with the bulk of Tolstoy's works artistically, he found *Khadzhi Murat* fragmented at times: "[The thistle anecdote] falls outside of the general style of the story...it barely fits...the remaining sections are too brief. They do not force us to dream."⁶² Rather, Kuzmin felt, Tolstoy's attempts at moralizing took away from the otherwise epic style of the narrative.

The only remaining press on the novel itself consisted of a lengthy article by critic P.A. Boulanger concerning the author's research process.⁶³ Rather than critiquing the novel, however, Boulanger simply provides a thorough analysis of Tolstoy's use of sources gathered from the Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovich and Anna Korganova, as well as the numerous contemporary accounts of Russia's encounter with Shamil and Khadzhi Murat. Tolstoy scholar Boris Sorokin postulated the reason for such sparse critique of Tolstoy's posthumous works: "[The works made] such a dead impression...Tolstoy had been trying to abandon his marvelously vital art in favor of divination...As an artist he was cursed with total recall. His last works made the impression of a somewhat dead landscape because his spirit was already elsewhere." Tolstoy's late-life moral turn and his insistence on rejecting his previous artistic accomplishments effectively set the stage for an overall bland critical reaction to the release of his posthumous works.

It is equally important to note, however, that Russian literary criticism was in the midst of a significant change. As Sorokin's study of Tolstoy in Russian criticism acknowledges, between Tolstoy's death in 1910 and the Revolution, criticism was shifting from a strong focus on symbolism – an artistic school of thought created in reaction to realism – to an increasingly Marxist-influenced form of literary analysis. Additionally, with the eventual collapse of the Romanov dynasty, the entire ideological landscape of Russia was in flux. This would directly affect the official perception of Tolstoy: although many of the author's beliefs conflicted with those of the Bolsheviks, Lenin and other communist leaders could not deny his talent as an artist and opposition to the oppressive tsarist regime they had fought to destroy.

⁶¹ Prince Pyotr Vyazemsky as quoted in Ungurianu, 111-114.

⁶² M. Kuzmin, "Zametki o Russkoi Belletristike: Posmertniya Khudozhestvennaya Proizvedeniya L.N. Tolstogo, Tom. II i III," *Appollon* 2 (1912): 71-3.

⁶³ See P.A. Bulanzhe, "Materialy po istorii russkoi literatury i kultury: Kak L.N. Tolstoy pisal 'Khadzhi Murata,'" *Russkaia Mysl'* 6 (June 1913).

The task became, therefore, to simply appropriate the works of Tolstoy. As historian David Hoffmann notes, “A series of articles presented Leo Tolstoy...as part of Soviet cultural heritage...the tsarist government had suppressed Tolstoy’s writings, [they] claimed, but the Soviet government made them available to everyone.”⁶⁴ This became the status quo concerning Tolstoy’s works and for that matter, *Khadzhi Murat*. In a 1918 edition – which served as the first uncensored version published in Russia – a critic praised Tolstoy’s critique of Nicholas I: “With regard to the portrait of the tsar, the description of his appearance, the accuracy regarding the strength of his expressions, and the rigorous selection of necessary traits, this portrait is a miracle of verbal art.”⁶⁵ This trend continued into the 1920s where a reviewer remarked, “Tolstoy’s Nicholas I is the personification of extreme despotism, the embodiment of dull and dead force which prevents an individual from truly living. Tolstoy depicts Nicholas in greater detail, illustrating all of his hideous qualities as monarch and as a human being.”⁶⁶ The issue, according to the Soviets, was tsarist rule rather than direct incursion into the Caucasus. It is noteworthy, however, that very little evidence seems to indicate a Soviet interest in relinquishing the borderlands subsumed into the Empire during the tsarist period. While Soviet critics openly agreed with Tolstoy’s harangues against tsarist despotism, the status quo regarding imperial expansion became to avoid the topic entirely.

The novel appeared consistently in publications of Tolstoy's collected works as well as in single editions throughout the Soviet period. While critical interpretation of the novel was relatively minimal, the editors compiling such editions were often thorough in their analysis of the novel's initial censorship at the hands of the tsarist empire. The despotism of the tsar - and therefore, the tsarist system - as well as the despotism of Imam Shamil served as the editors’ primary focus. This conveniently took the focus of the readership away from Tolstoy’s critique of empire - an empire that continued to expand at the hands of the Soviet government despite the collapse of the previous regime.

The publications of the Stalin era continued in a similar fashion – albeit with far less literary commentary – predominantly reprinting the same texts in single-edition format or as sections of larger sets of collected works.⁶⁷ The 1943 edition, interestingly enough, was printed in full at a time when Stalin ordered the deportation of nearly 500,000 Chechens from their homeland. The 1950 edition, in contrast, contains a detailed article chronicling both the step-by-step history of Tolstoy's writing of *Khadzhi Murat* as well as a section devoted to Chertkov's fears that the novel may be confiscated. The author highlights the chapters on Nicholas I and the raid of the *aoul*, detailing word for word what the censors omitted in the 1912-13 Edition. Finally, he indicates, “This publication of the text is the authorized version, verified by the all the writings of Tolstoy himself” while simultaneously noting that the publishers of this edition “corrected many errors of the previous copywriters and typos of the author.”⁶⁸ This particular edition, however, is hardly indicative of the era itself: editors began compiling Tolstoy's works in

⁶⁴ David L. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values* (Ithaca: Cornell, 2003), 163.

⁶⁵ See L.N. Tolstoy, *Khadzhi Murat*. Illustratsii E.E. Lansere. Vstupitel'naya stat'ya i redaktsiya N.O. Lerner. (Petrograd: T-va R. Golnke i A. Vil'borg, 1918).

⁶⁶ See L.N. Tolstoy *Khadzhi Murat*. Erevan: Knigoizd-vo “Germes,” 1928.

⁶⁷ See L.N. Tolstoy, *Khadzhi Murat* (Moskva: Gos. Izd.-vo. Khudozhestvennaia Literatura, 1941); L.N. Tolstoy, *Sobranie Khudozhestvennykh Proizvedenii, Tom 12* (Moskva: Izd.-vo 'Pravda', 1943).

⁶⁸ A.P. Sergeenko, “Kommentarii - Khadzhi Murat: Istorii pečataniia” in L.N. Tolstoy, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii, Tom 35* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvennoy Literatury, 1950), 629-30.

1928 for the centennial celebration of Tolstoy's birth.

Editions following the death of Josef Stalin changed subtly, with a focus pointed less toward the censorship of *Khadzhi Murat* and more on the concept of despotism in the novel. The 1958 *Sobranie Sochinenii* notes that “Tolstoy stated that in addition [to analyzing] the personality of Khadzhi Murat, he was interested in the historical parallelism between the two seemingly opposite characters of Imam Shamil and Nicholas I, representing ‘the two poles of feudal absolutism – European and Asiatic.’”⁶⁹ In a 1963 edition, a similar theme is presented: “Prompted by nagging feelings regarding poverty, Tolstoy appealed time and time again to the idea of social contrasts, denouncing autocracy and militant despotism.”⁷⁰ Such commentary is remarkably similar to the rhetoric of Nikita Khrushchev's denouncing of Stalin following his death. Referring to Stalin's rule as a “cult of personality” Khrushchev cataloged the numerous occasions on which the Soviet people “fell victim to Stalin's despotism.” In an effort to carve a new path for the Soviet Union, Khrushchev adopted this portrayal of the former leader – a self-absorbed ruler, trampling the common people with an insatiable thirst for power.⁷¹

As the Khrushchev era ended and Russia entered its period of general stagnation, so too did the situation in Chechnya and the Caucasus. Charles King notes the following: “The Caucasus was settling into a period of relative calm and isolation, when it would once again become the remote edge of an enigmatic empire...a land that had experienced decades of political turmoil, economic revolution, and war was once again a place of wonder and mystery.”⁷² The same was also true of the Russian relationship with *Khadzhi Murat*. Although editions of the novel continued to be published throughout Russia, the controversial nature of the novel's content became simply an historical fact – the last fictional work of Russia's greatest writer regarding an empire decades in the country's past. The 1971 edition, for example, offers only a brief note, stating that “the first publication of *Khadzhi Murat* underwent many censorship cuts in the places where Tolstoy spoke of despotism and abuses of imperial authority. The full text, however, was published simultaneously by foreign groups.”⁷³ The novel, therefore, appeared to be rendered a relative footnote in a far broader catalog of Tolstoyan literature.

Chapter IV – Conclusion

Despite the effects of the stagnation of the 1970s and Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika* on the deported population of the Caucasus, the fall of the Soviet Union brought renewed significance to the tumultuous region of Russia's borderlands. Moshe Gammer describes the 1990s as an anomaly for Chechnya: “The issue of sovereignty had not been solved – Moscow neither recognized Chechnya's independence nor made a serious effort to re-annex it...Ichkeria became a

⁶⁹ L. Opul'skaya, “Primechaniia” in L.N. Tolstoy, *Sobranie Sochinenii, Tom. 12* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvennoy Literatury, 1959), 508.

⁷⁰ L.N. Kuzinoi, “Primechaniia” in L.N. Tolstoy, *Sobranie Sochinenii, Tom 14* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvennaia Literatura, 1964), 527-8.

⁷¹ Nikita Khrushchev, “The Secret Speech – On the Cult of Personality, 1956” from *Internet Modern History Sourcebook* (New York: Fordham University, 1998). (Accessed online at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1956khrushchev-secret1.html>, 25 April 2014).

⁷² Charles King, *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 199.

⁷³ V. Orlov, “Primechaniia,” in L.N. Tolstoy, *Povesti I Rasskazy* (Moskva: Moskovskii Rabochii, 1971), 407.

no-man's land...Moscow's non-recognition...encouraged growing opposition...and deteriorated into full-scale war.”⁷⁴ The two Chechen Wars of the 1990s and early-2000s acted as a tragic international reintroduction to republics such as Chechnya and Daghestan. Additionally, Caucasus-based terrorist activity throughout the 2000s in response to Russian presence in the Caucasus –the Beslan School attacks and Moscow Theater and Metro bombings in particular – only served to sully the region’s image in the international press.

In order to grapple with these conflicts, many have turned to cultural depictions of the Caucasus. During the First Chechen War, for instance, Russian filmmaker Sergei Bodrov chose to adapt Tolstoy’s 1872 short story “The Prisoner of the Caucasus” into a modern tale of Russian captivity in war-torn Daghestan. The persistent antagonism between Russia and the Caucasus frequently came into stark focus for the filmmaker and his crew: the producer’s local bodyguards held the crew for ransom over pay disputes while simultaneously the very real Chechen War raged only miles away. Although Bodrov denied making any political statement either positive or negative regarding the war, many of the film’s themes echo Tolstoy’s personal issues with war and the ongoing Russian incursion in the Caucasus.⁷⁵

In 1999, as the Second Chechen War began, an article appeared in the popular English-language Russian newspaper, *The Moscow Times* concerning Russia’s current relationship with the Caucasus. It read as follows:

The common cry from the pages of newspapers and the screens of televisions concerning Chechnya is to "mercilessly destroy it," to "blow it to bits once and for all," to "plow it over and turn it into a parking lot." But there are things that we don't want to think about, things that the laws of psychological defense dictate we crowd out of our minds. Thousands of innocent people died as a result of aerial bomb raids and artillery shellings. Their deaths were no less terrible than those in Moscow. Bombs are raining on Chechen villages even today.⁷⁶

The author, Andrei Piontkovsky, wrote the article following the infamous Moscow apartment bombings that served as the impetus for yet another major clash between Russia and Chechnya. The circumstances of the attack and the subsequent Russian retaliation, while appearing a contemporary issue, proved remarkably similar to previous issues between the two countries. The author went on to remark that anyone still confused regarding the nature of the tensions between the Russians and Chechens should look no further than the century-old writings of a former Russian officer after a campaign in the mountains of the Caucasus: the seventeenth chapter of Lev Tolstoy’s *Khadzhi Murat*.⁷⁷

It is the very complexity surrounding Tolstoy’s *Khadzhi Murat* that makes it such an important work not only as a part of the Tolstoyan canon, but as a source of reference regarding the centuries-old tensions between Russia and the people of the North Caucasus. As writer and director Rustem Ibrahimbekov noted, echoing countless other educated Russians, “If we are going

⁷⁴ Moshe Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear* (London: Hurst and Company, 2006), 205-6.

⁷⁵ See Bruce Grant, *The Captive and the Gift*, 120-2.

⁷⁶ Andrei Piontkovsky, “Season of Discontent: Bombs Offer Russia Slice of Chechen Life,” *The Moscow Times* no.1795 (September 16, 1999).

⁷⁷ Ibid.

to talk about the image of Caucasians, then among the most important will be from Tolstoy – *Khadzhi Murat*.⁷⁸ While the demographics and politics of the Caucasus have changed significantly from the time of Khadzhi Murat, Imam Shamil, and those like them, many factors have remained constant. Since the late 1700s, the Russian government has acted as a consistent expansionist and controlling force in the North Caucasus – particularly in the regions of Chechnya and Daghestan – regardless of its status as the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, or the Russian Federation. In response, the multiethnic peoples of the North Caucasus have frequently risen against this Russian presence, often represented by extremist warlords and organizations. These two groups have maintained a symbiotic relationship defined by violence, expansion, and reciprocation that continued in spite of regime collapse, struggles for independence, or empire-wide revolutions. This perpetual battle between Russia and its southern neighbors allowed for the creation of a complex image of the Caucasus and its peoples – one in which all attempts to pinpoint the cause of or solution to this ongoing struggle fall short.

Tolstoy's *Khadzhi Murat* encapsulates this sense of complexity from both within and without. Despite Tolstoy's clear opposition to Russian Imperial incursion in the Caucasus, his description of Khadzhi Murat and the warrior tribes of Imam Shamil equally targets the extremism of despot rulers and the dangers of fanaticism. While Tolstoy portrays Khadzhi Murat as a noble and admirable character, the author stresses the futility of the Avar's final battle: "Having understood that he was surrounded... he was already thinking of leaping on his horse and trying to make his way to the river... everything seemed so insignificant in comparison with what was beginning."⁷⁹ Tolstoy's characters are each flawed – both Russians and tribesmen alike appearing neither fully good nor fully evil as the events in the novel unfold.

The novel and its author proved to be equally complex. Regardless of Tolstoy's strict turn toward religious writing in the final years of his life, the author chose to craft a work of historical fiction, returning to literary methods comparable to those employed in works such as *The Cossacks* or *War and Peace*. The novel only appeared in full years after Tolstoy's death, undergoing significant censorship due to its controversial anti-imperial content. Yet in spite of these controversial critiques of imperial expansion and despotism – critiques that could have quite easily applied to any of the Russian regimes ruling from the time of Catherine the Great to the present day – the novel continued to receive publication, most often in its uncensored form. The novel, regardless of the inconvenient truths of its message and Tolstoy's controversial political and religious beliefs, was simply absorbed into the canon of one of Russia's most prolific authors.

Afterword – The Complexity of Fate: The Entangled Paths of Russia, Chechnya and Tolstoy's Novel

On April 15, 2013, two bombs exploded west of Copley Square in Boston, Massachusetts only a few hundred yards from the finish line of the annual Boston Marathon. Less than a day later, the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation identified the chief suspects in the attack as Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev, two young men of Chechen ancestry. The chain of events beginning with the Marathon bombings and ending with Dzhokhar Tsarnaev's capture attracted both nationwide and worldwide attention as one of the largest cities in the United States stood paralyzed for nearly a week, reeling from a tragic attack and its aftermath. Additionally, however,

⁷⁸ Rustem Ibrahimbekov as quoted in Grant, 143.

⁷⁹ Tolstoy, *Khadzhi Murat*, Maude ed. 737.

the Boston Marathon Bombings caused an unforeseen occurrence: a renewed interest in the Caucasus and its troubled past. After the FBI announced that the bombing suspects were of Chechen background, news organizations and social media forums alike exploded with articles concerning Chechnya, the Caucasus, and the Russo-Chechen conflicts. While many of these articles simply served as general inquiries into the complex region, others served to illustrate the stark lack of public knowledge regarding the Caucasus: after a series of negative Tweets and blog posts appeared following the terrorist attacks, Ambassador Petr Gandalovic issued a public statement to clarify the fact that the Tsarnaev brothers hailed from Chechnya rather than from his similarly-named country of the Czech Republic.⁸⁰

Despite social media confusion, the Tsarnaev brothers' Chechen affiliations once again unearthed the long-standing conflicts between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Chechnya. Russian President Vladimir Putin was quick to claim that the brothers' connections to Chechnya had nothing to do with their actions. He noted the following:

Common folk in the US are not to be blamed; they don't understand what is happening. Here I am addressing them and our citizens to say that Russia is a victim of international terrorism too...It's not about nationality or religion. It's about the extremist mindset of those men.⁸¹

Putin's statement was echoed by his close supporter, the current President of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, who despite being credited for the economic recovery of the region has been frequently implicated in human rights violations in the name of counter-terrorism.⁸² Opponents of Kadyrov and Putin, such as the exiled Prime Minister of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria Akhmed Zakayev, soon began to critique the statements of the two leaders. Zakayev argued that "[The Boston attacks are] a gift to the Kremlin and Putin. [The Russian government] will say, 'This is the Chechen.'"⁸³ Years of extreme tension between the two countries only managed to further complicate a tragic and confusing chain of events both in the United States and abroad.

The renewed focus on Chechnya and the Caucasus quickly led numerous commentators to reconsider Tolstoy's *Khadzhi Murat* as a viable source concerning the often-troubled region. Journalist Benjamin Lytal noted the following:

⁸⁰ Charlie Campbell, "Czech Republic Forced to Remind the Internet That Chechnya Is in Different Country After Boston Bombing," *Time* (April 23, 2013).

<http://newsfeed.time.com/2013/04/23/czech-republic-forced-to-remind-the-internet-that-chechnya-is-a-different-country-after-boston-bombing/>

⁸¹ Vladimir Putin as quoted in "Putin on Boston Bombings: World Faces Terrorists Never Referred to as such by West," *Russia Today* (April 25, 2013). <http://rt.com/news/putin-boston-bombing-terrorists-381/>.

⁸² Kadyrov noted "Any attempt to link Chechnya and the Tsarnaevs, if indeed they are guilty, are futile," going on to state that any roots of extremism should instead be linked to their upbringing in the United States. See Ramzan Kadyrov, Instagram Posting: April 19, 2013. Regarding Kadyrov's Human Rights violations see: Human Rights Watch, "Widespread Torture in the Chechen Republic: Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper for the 27th Session UN Committee against Torture," November 13, 2006. <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/eca/chechnya1106/>.

⁸³ Akhmed Zakayev as quoted in Michael Moynihan, "Boston Bombings a 'Gift' to Putin, Says Chechen Opposition Leader," *The Daily Beast* (April 22, 2013).

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/04/22/boston-bombings-a-gift-to-putin-says-chechen-opposition-leader.html>.

While [*Khadzhi Murat*] offers few overt parallels to a case of 21st-century terrorism, Tolstoy's novel sets the stage for the Chechen grievance—and tribal dysfunction. But what is more piercing, when Dzhokhar Tsarnaev's image is haunting the public eye, is Tolstoy's insight into the dire symbiosis between heroic desires and boyish innocence.⁸⁴

Lytal – commenting on CNN's focus on Tsarnaev's desire to “go out in a blaze of glory” – noted the distinct similarities between the media analysis of the terrorists' *modi operandi* and Tolstoy's description of the Daghestani chieftain's arguably reckless ride to certain death in opposition of his Russian captors.

This conflicting image of the Caucasus also struck New York literary critic Liesl Schellinger who noted that during the lockdown of the city of Boston and its suburbs she “found refuge in [Tolstoy's] evocation of the rugged, lawless North Caucasus—a place which belongs equally to the past, to the present, and to no particular time at all...[in which] before long, everyone will betray everyone.”⁸⁵ The novel in all its complexity illustrated, for Schellinger, an environment that fostered a violent but passionate lifestyle in constant struggle with its surroundings and even itself. The mountaineers of the Caucasus warred both internally and externally, and despite their passion – or perhaps because of it – were doomed to a series of never-ending conflicts with both Russia and one another.

While hardly the only modern event that called to public mind the tumultuous region of Chechnya and the Caucasus, the events surrounding the Boston Marathon Bombings simply served as the most recent. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the bulk of the news concerning the region has been unfortunately negative. These moments of negativity, however, have led several to arguably the richest sources of information regarding the Russian past: its authors. While state accounts of war, deportation, and ethnic struggle in the Caucasus are often steeped in the ideology of a given era or regime, literary figures in particular operated on the periphery, frequently disagreeing or even pointedly clashing with the government in a struggle to produce what they felt was a truthful or otherwise more accurate depiction of a given event or situation.

Tolstoy's novel is not a historical monograph by any stretch of the imagination, nor was it intended to be. Much like in *War and Peace*, Tolstoy describes numerous historical events and figures, yet sacrifices factual accuracy for literary intrigue and impassioned prose. What Tolstoy did capture, however, was an attitude of empire and power – an arguably timeless sense of the destruction and terror of imperial incursion in an oppressed region. Although the novel speaks of a specific time – Shamil and Khadzhi Murat's struggle against the Russian Empire in the 1850s – Tolstoy's diatribes speak not only to the abuses of despotism at that time, but to the endlessly tumultuous relationship of the Russian State with its Southern borderlands. While Tolstoy and his cast of characters are figures long since relegated to the annals of Russian history, *Khadzhi Murat* remains a relevant analysis of imperial aggression both in its historical context and in the continuingly unfolding events of the Russian polity.

⁸⁴ Benjamin Lytal, “The Chechen Grievance: Tolstoy's *Khadzhi Murat* After Boston,” *The Daily Beast* (April 21, 2013):

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/04/21/the-chechen-grievance-tolstoy-s-hadji-murad-after-boston.html>.

⁸⁵ Liesl Schellinger, “Turning to Tolstoy's *Hadji Murat* as Boston Locked Down,” *The Daily Beast* (April 22, 2013):

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/04/22/turning-to-tolstoy-s-hadji-murad-as-boston-locked-down.html>

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