

Khadzhi-Murat may convey an authorial pessimism about using literature “to propagate ethics,” as Herman puts it (13). But at his best Tolstoi did not seek to make literature propagate rules for good conduct; he aimed instead to pose moral questions that would induce readers to exercise their own moral faculties. *Khadzhi-Murat* surely succeeded on that score in addressing the issue of colonial war. Since Herman tries to bolster his thesis by drawing upon Tolstoi’s drafts, let me do the same. One long passage of Tolstoi’s drafts unambiguously condemned the conquest of the North Caucasus as an unjust enterprise instigated by Russia alone. What remains implicit in *Khadzhi-Murat* is the author’s conviction that the Avar hero’s life and death might have been very different had the Russian state pursued a more accommodating policy toward the Caucasian mountain peoples.

Finally, Herman sows confusion by privileging Aylmer Maude’s obsolete English translation of *Khadzhi-Murat* instead of respecting the authoritative jubilee edition of the Russian text. As published in Russian in Berlin in 1912, chapters 11 and 23 of the story duplicated passages concerning Khadzhi-Murat’s memories of his childhood. The duplication was due to the mistake of a scribe who failed to notice that Tolstoi had crossed out Khadzhi-Murat’s mental recollection of his childhood in the manuscript of chapter 11. The jubilee edition corrected the error so that the childhood memories appear only in chapter 23 when Khadzhi-Murat prepares to flee the Russians. Herman, however, prefers the Maude version that retains Khadzhi-Murat’s silent recollection of his childhood during his interview with Loris-Melikov in chapter 11. Herman even calls it “crucial to Tolstoi’s conception” (9) that the reader should become privy to Khadzhi-Murat’s inner life at that point. This is all clearly a mistake on Herman’s part.

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Professor Herman replies:

About Layton’s second point first: Layton is, of course, correct that the jubilee edition and Maude’s translation differ in the placement of the hero’s childhood recollections (as I myself observe in my introductory note). The original Berlin edition mistakenly has the passage in two places (the wording is nearly, though not absolutely, identical). Maude excised most of the passage on its second appearance. The jubilee edition editors later excised most of the passage on its first appearance. (In defense of the copyist who made the error, Layton’s description of the mechanics is not 100 percent accurate. Tolstoi had not “crossed out” the text in one place; according to the jubilee commentaries, he left behind a “znak otcherkivaniia, oznachavshii iskluchenie etogo mesta v tekste” [35:630], a somewhat more ambiguous editorial marking.) Between these two versions minor differences in interpretation can be imagined, but they have little to do with my reading (or Layton’s, for that matter). Meanwhile, Maude’s ubiquity and convenience are hard to deny. It is unfair to claim that I “[call] it ‘crucial to Tolstoi’s conception’ that the reader should become privy to Khadzhi-Murat’s inner life at that point”; I simply call it crucial that the reader become privy to Khadzhi-Murat’s inner life. Whether this occurs in chapter 11 or 23 matters little. What matters is that we be afforded insight with utmost modesty and that the points of true importance emerge by implication rather than direct exposition.

On to the main question. How to interpret a work in which 24 of 25 chapters read one way and one chapter has an unmistakably different drift is the key issue Layton raises. It would not be impossible to interpret the one chapter as central and the 24 as subordinate, as Layton did in her *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge, Eng., 1994); some texts do have a key passage designed to radically alter our understanding of the rest. But in this case it seems to me more sensible to conclude Tolstoi’s real intentions are better exemplified by the 24 consistent chapters than by the one inconsistent one. Not only does a more internally unified work emerge, a profounder and more important one does as well. The available extratextual evidence, too, favors this approach. The chapter on Nicholas was tacked on as a clear afterthought, entering the author’s field of vision only when the eight years’ work on the main themes was finally concluded. And as I note (14n48), Tolstoi himself seems to have believed that the topic ought preferably to be separated from the novella.

On the other hand, an obvious difficulty arises with Layton's interpretation: if Nicholas's flaws are meant to implicate others, why stop with Russian aristocrats? There is adultery among the peasantry (Avdeev's wife) and adulterous leanings—more obvious in the drafts but detectable in the canonical text—between Khadzhi-Murat and Mariia Dmitrievna; nor are Nicholas's willingness to use violence and his will to power entirely alien to the hero; and so on. This deliberate ambiguity works to stymie traditional moralistic readings and to force us to focus elsewhere. Layton's approach does us the disservice of losing sight of the uniqueness of *Khadzhi-Murat*; a more familiar Tolstoi emerges, the one we have come to expect from other texts, but that may be exactly what we least need. The limitation of Layton's interpretation flows from its exclusive reliance on the portion of the novella least relevant to the fate of the hero, whose astounding tenacity and unforgettable death are the *raison d'être* of each of the highly various eleven drafts the work passes through. After a lifetime of writing fiction nothing like *Khadzhi-Murat*, surely Tolstoi's backsliding should not be made too much of, especially if he noticed and planned to correct the slip. If the author allows himself to violate his principle of silence and restraint here (and he does) it may be because this chapter has no Khadzhi-Murat in it, no one who knows or meets the hero, and no essential connection to his story at all.

Perhaps most to the point, in a time and place where strife, hostility, and harrowing violence are constants, there are no grounds to believe, as Layton suggests, that Khadzhi-Murat's life "might have been very different" if only the tsar had ceased his sinning ways. Readers who have not looked recently at the text may forget that Khadzhi-Murat wants only one thing from the Russian tsar: permission to fight against his enemy Shamil—and Nicholas *grants* that permission. But like the Napoleon of *War and Peace*, Nicholas is so far removed from the scene that his words have no discernible effect; his decision is never translated into action by subordinates. Khadzhi-Murat's death fascinated Tolstoi against his will and despite his avowed morals because it touched on something vital the writer had never fully come to terms with: the potential dignity of an individual battling the harshest adversity alone and unbowed even as he fails and succumbs completely. Not for nothing is this tale Tolstoi could not resist drenched in blood from start to finish: Khadzhi-Murat's father nearly kills his mother in an argument over the baby; as a youth, Khadzhi-Murat assassinates the imam Gamzat and is nearly slain by his guards; when he does finally die, it is not at the hands of the Russians, but of his countrymen; if he escaped death there, he would still have faced execution by Shamil; if he defeated Shamil, he would have continued to face others. These life-threatening challenges have little to do with the presence of the Russians, however much Tolstoi surely deplored that presence, and *this*, it seems to me, is where we should begin thinking about what *Khadzhi-Murat* is trying to catch a clear view of for the first time.

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To the Editor:

It was gratifying to read Larry Wolff's article, "Inventing Galicia: Messianic Josephinism and the Recasting of Partitioned Poland" (*Slavic Review* 63, no. 4), in which he makes Wojciech Bogusławski's *Cud mniemany albo Krakowiacy i Górale* a focus of his analysis. The article, however, may have left some readers with a misapprehension as to the production history and textual variants of Bogusławski's musical drama.

Professor Wolff notes that the original stage production of *Cud mniemany* opened "in Warsaw in 1794, at the moment of the Kościuszko insurrection" (836). However, Zbigniew Raszewski's archival research has established that Bogusławski's play was first performed in Warsaw on 1 March 1794, that is, more than three weeks before the start of the Kościuszko insurrection on 24 March.

To make his point about Josephine ideology, Professor Wolff cites the 1949 publication of *Cud mniemany*. This seems to suggest that this is the text that was performed in L'viv in 1796. It is not. While the text of the Warsaw production of *Cud mniemany* has not survived, a manuscript of the version that was used in L'viv—possibly as a production script or a prompt book—is available in the Mieczysław Rulikowski archives at the Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk in Warsaw.