Introduction

"...I am convinced that art represents the highest task and truly metaphysical activity of this life."[1]

--Friedrich Nietzsche

In my dissertation I perform a close reading of *The Cossacks*, *War and Peace*, and *Hadji-Murat*, three important novels completed by the major Russian writer, Leo Tolstoy, in his mature years. My aim in reading these novels is to analyze the way in which the writer artistically depicts human beings in their search for stable meaning in a fluid world.

In these works Tolstoy writes about this universal existential problem in a way that is both precise and attentive to the uniqueness of every human being and to the specificity of each individual human experience. Given that, the reader of the works is charged with the task of remaining attentive to the specificity of the details, while attempting to understand at the same time how those details may be seen to be part of a larger aesthetic and philosophical whole. How do the existential struggles of one character in a novel relate to those of another character in that novel? How do the formal and other artistic elements of each novel deepen and/or complicate our understanding of the existential searchings of the characters themselves? What is the relationship between *how* each of these novels depicts characters in their search for meaning and *what* each novel "means"? These are some of the questions that will interest me throughout my analysis.

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[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Preface to Richard Wagner," quoted in Walter Kaufmann, ed., *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: The Modern Library, 1992), p. 31.

My thesis about the three novels I analyze is that they contain a unifying principle, and that this principle is to be found not in an *idea*, but in the organic *process* of the novels themselves, in their capacity to create, break down, and recreate again ordering systems, in the same way that the characters depicted in them are continually discovering, rejecting, and rediscovering truths about themselves and their world.

In order to develop this thesis, I combine evidence gained from close readings of specific passages in the texts themselves with the evidence of a variety of fictional and non-fictional material produced by Tolstoy throughout his lifetime. I also draw on the work of a rich tradition of Tolstoy scholarship, past and present, as well as on some of the insights and analytical techniques of more recent literary theory. For instance, I am interested in Tolstoy's manipulation of the narrative voice and in his use of the technique of repetition. I am also interested in the subtle irony often pervading his texts. These are subjects which have recently become the object of intensive study in literary scholarship, and increasingly in Tolstoy scholarship, as well.[2] My interest in such aspects of Tolstoy's fiction serves the purpose of helping me to understand these works of art as organic wholes, as complete acts of human expression, in which the form and the content are inextricably linked in the act of communication itself.

[2] See, for instance, William G. Tierney and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds., *Representation and the Text: Re-framing the Narrative Voice* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997); Susana Onega and Jose Angel Garcia Landa, eds., *Narratology: an Introduction* (London; New York: Longman, 1996); Felicia Gordon, "Legitimation and Irony in Tolstoy and Fontane," in Nicholas White, ed., *Scarlet Letters: Fictions of Adultery From Antiquity to the 1990's* (England; New York: Macmilliam St. Martin, 1997), pp. 85-97; Laura Olson, "Exploring the Boundaries of Realism and Romanticism: Myth, Sententiousness, and Irony in Tolstoy's 'War and Peace,' Doctoral dissertation, Yale University, 1995; Natasha Sankovitch, "Creating and Recovering Experience: Repetition in Tolstoy," Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 1992; and Natasha Sankovitch, "Readers' Experience of Repetition in Tolstoy," *Tolstoy Studies Journal* 3 (1990): 49-61.

Although I draw on some of the techniques and insights of contemporary literary scholarship, the theoretical assumptions underlying my analysis are different from those underlying the so-called "cultural studies" and other post-modernist approaches to literature that have recently become dominant in Slavic Studies and in other fields of literary scholarship. Scholars who adhere to these approaches tend to read artistic texts as complex structures of meaning which may be "decoded" to reveal hidden ideologies of the author and/or larger social, political, and cultural patterns of the time period in which the text was written. I share the assumption of many contemporary scholars that meaning in a piece of fiction, as in any work of art, is the product of a complex network of rhetorical devices. But my analysis of that network of devices in Tolstoy's novels is largely for the purpose of better comprehending the philosophical depth and communicative power of those works as they speak about and themselves embody the existential strivings of human beings, not their political or social concerns. That Tolstoy's works contain ideas related to the social and political issues of the time in which they were written is undeniable, and many excellent works of scholarship have been devoted to this dimension of the author's writings.[3] That Tolstoy's novels also speak to universal human concerns which transcend time and place, and specifically to man's search for existential order, is a different sort of proposition, and one that requires for its illumination a sensitivity to the intangible, metaphysical element contained within Tolstoy's poetics.

[3] Among the most important of these works of scholarship are Boris Eikhenbaum, *Tolstoi in the Sixties*, trans. Duffield White (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1982); Viktor Shklovskii, *Mater'ial i stil' v romane 'Voina i mir'* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo 'Federatsiia') Reprint: University of Michigan, 1967; Kathryn B. Feuer, *Tolstoy and the Genesis of* War and Peace, ed. Robin Feuer Miller and Donna Tussing Orwin (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996); and Isaiah Berlin, "Tolstoy and Enlightenment," in Ralph E. Matlaw, ed., *Tolstoy: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Eglewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), pp. 28-51.

My approach to Tolstoy stems from a personal conviction about how best to begin to penetrate the richness of great works of art. It is therefore a matter of some personal interest to me that my conviction mirrors Tolstoy's own belief about how works of art, his included, should be approached. Tolstoy was critical of readers who attempt to search out a single idea or ideas in an artistic work. "For art criticism," he wrote to the prominent critic, Nikolai Strakhov, in 1876, "we need people who would show the senselessness of looking for the ideas in an artistic work and who would continually direct readers through that endless labyrinth of cohesions, in which consists the essence of art, and to those laws that serve as the foundation for these cohesions."[4] In Tolstoy's formulation, the "whole" of a work of art was to be found not in a single idea or ideas, but in the organic relationship among all of its "parts."

But how does one speak about such an organic relationship in a way that is both systematic and at the same time capable of elucidating the totality of "that endless labyrinth of cohesions"? Herein lies a problem with which literary critics always grapple. Whereas Tolstoy creates a sense of unity out of the diversity of life in a novel by the use of various artistic techniques that function in conjunction with all the other elements of the work, the literary critic is not permitted to speak in such associative language. He must speak about the work in a systematic and linear fashion. He must break down the work into its component parts and analyze each of these parts separately. Only then, after an analysis of the parts, may he speak about the way those parts are interrelated, and connected to the work as a whole. The critic is thus required to translate the meaning of a work of art, which is governed by the

[4] *Lev Tolstoi ob iskusstve i literature* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1958), p.517.

principles of associative logic and organic thought, into the language of systematic, linear thought.[5]

This problem, frustratingly familiar to literary scholars, is one which Tolstoy himself confronted, and failed to resolve successfully, in his own writing about art in his late essay, “What is Art?” (1898). In Tolstoy’s references to his own earlier works and to the works of other writers in that essay, he offered critical formulations that are decidedly thin in comparison to the original works about which the author was speaking. For instance, Tolstoy attacked the work of Homer, whom he read and admired throughout his lifetime, as well as that of Shakespeare, as examples of “bad” artists, as he defined such artists in the essay.[6] In the same essay Tolstoy also considered his own *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* as examples of “bad art,” because they too failed to live up to the moral requirements for “good art” that Tolstoy posited in the essay.[7]

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[5] Sergei Bocharov has recently written an interpretive work on *War and Peace* which provides a wonderful example of how literary criticism can speak analytically and linearly about “that endless labyrinth of cohesions” in Tolstoy’s fiction. My approach to Tolstoy has been influenced by Bocharov’s model. See Sergei Bocharov, *Roman L. N. Tolstogo ‘Voina i Mir’* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1987).

[6] Homer and Shakespeare are “bad artists”, for Tolstoy, because their works fail to infect the audience with the positive, Christian values of love of God and love of one’s neighbor.

[7] Here is how Tolstoy defines “good art” in the treatise:

> Christian art either evokes in men feelings which through love of God and of one’s neighbor draw them to closer and ever closer union and make them ready for, and capable of, such union; or evokes in them feelings which show them that they are already united in the joys and sorrows of life. And therefore the Christian art of our time can be and is of two kinds: first, art transmitting feelings flowing from a religious perception of man’s position in the world in relation to God and to his neighbor--religious art in the limited meaning of the term; and secondly, art transmitting the simplest feelings of common life, but such always as are accessible to all men in the whole world--the art of common life--the art of the people--universal art. Only these two kinds of art can be considered good art in our time.

[*Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, 90 vols. (Moscow, 1928-1958), vol.30, p.159. Hereafter indicated as (PSS, volume no., page no.). Translation taken from Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art? and Essays on Art*, transl.Aylmer Maude (London; Humphrey Milford; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938).]

One of the reasons for the thinness of Tolstoy's critical formulations in "What is Art?" when he wrote about the works of Homer and Shakespeare, and about his own earlier works, is that, in speaking about such works, he was approaching them in just the way that he said in his 1876 letter to Strakhov art should not be approached: He extracted from them a single idea, and he passed that idea through the prism of his own systematic morality, which had become dominant in his thinking and writing in his later years. That prism, when applied by Tolstoy to these works, diminished their philosophical and artistic richness. This is because, in applying to such works a moral standard, Tolstoy was attempting to locate in them an *idea*, a moral idea, which he had himself formulated, whereas the richness of these works lies precisely in their *supra-moral* quality, in their capacity to combine, without moral value judgement, a vast range of contradictory human experience into a unified artistic whole.[8]

This contradiction between what Tolstoy offered as the ideal way of approaching art in his letter to Strakhov and how he himself performed as a reader in "What is Art?" might be interpreted historically. That is, the difference between Tolstoy's two theoretical formulations might be explained by the fact that they were produced during two distinct stages in the author's intellectual development. And if we approach the problem ahistorically, then we might also be tempted to conclude that Tolstoy was simply a good writer but a bad critic. Without denying the possible validity of either of these explanations, I would like to propose here a third approach to thinking about the contradiction between Tolstoy's stated ideal and his actual

[8] Cf. Caryl Emerson, "What is Infection and What is Expression in *What is Art?*, in Andrew Donskov and John Woodsworth, eds., *Lev Tolstoy and the Concept of Brotherhood: Proceedings of a Conference Held at the University of Ottawa, 22-24 February 1996* (New York: Legas, 1996), pp.102-115.

practice of art criticism in the late essay. Our approach touches an issue that is relevant to the theoretical concerns of literary interpretation, and which, more importantly for our purposes, also touches on the core of Tolstoy's perception of the existential challenge of his own characters, a challenge which Tolstoy experienced in his own lifetime. It is the problem of how the human intellect may explain rationally a phenomenon whose form is defined by principles other than those of reason or logic.

When Olenin transforms his totalistic vision of nature in the stag's lair into a systematic theory about morality; when Prince Andrei attempts rationally to organize in his mind the chaos of battle on the night before the Battle of Schoen Grabern; when Pierre attempts to create a rational theory out of his experience of meeting Platon Karataev--each of these moments is one in which a character attempts to transform an organic experience of life into a systematic one. In each case, the reader is made aware of a larger totality of experience that the characters, in their attempts at rational explanations, do not themselves perceive. The reader is thus shown the way in which these characters, in attempting to apply rational systems to their world, actually diminish that world's richness and complexity. Is this attempt at transforming a totalistic vision of the world into a more narrow and often systematic one not just what Tolstoy himself does in his own lifetime when he moves from his totalistic, organic visions of life in his great novels to the openly didactic and illustrative art of his later years?[9] And is it not just such a transition that Tolstoy also makes as a

[9] Not all of Tolstoy's works in his later years which were intended to speak specifically to moral problems may be considered openly illustrative or didactic. For instance, the short stories "The Death of Ivan Ilych" [*Smert' Ivana Ilicha*] (1886) and "Master and Man" [*Khoziain i rabotnik*] (1895) represent human situations in which characters confront questions of right and wrong, but they do so in a way that is both realistic and focussed as much on the human dilemma as on the moral ideal towards which that dilemma leads them. In this respect, these stories differ from Tolstoy's earlier novels, in which the problem of human morality was only one of many interlinked themes. But they are also not

theoretician of art, a transition from his position in the 1876 letter to Strakhov that works of art should be perceived as organic wholes, to his theoretical formulations about art in his late didactic tract?

I contend that it is. And I contend also therefore that there is a close and important similarity between the philosophical struggle of Tolstoy's characters to articulate the meaning of life through rational formulations, and Tolstoy's own struggle in "What is Art?" to discover a rationally grounded explanation for the activity of artistic creation, to which he had devoted his life. This parallel, which is interesting, I think, in itself, suggests also the peculiarly *existential*, as opposed to merely aesthetic or moral, nature of Tolstoy's searchings in "What is Art?". What Tolstoy aspires to in that essay is to ground the activity of artistic creation itself in a rationally formulated ethics, whereby he could view the function of artistic creation in relation to the larger purpose of human life, in general, and his own life, in particular. The very title of the essay itself suggests that Tolstoy had such a purpose in mind when he wrote the tract. The title poses the question: what *is* art? It seeks to understand the purpose of art in the most fundamental, essential sense.

Tolstoy's search in "What is Art?" is one manifestation of his search as an artist. That search was not, as Rimvydas Silbajoris argues, a quest for a specifically "moral value."[10] It was rather, I submit, a quest to master his own existence, an

as openly illustrative as stories such as "Alesha the Pot" [*Alesha Gorshok*] (1905) and "God Sees the Truth, But Waits," [*Bog pravdu vidit istinu, da ne skoro skazhet*] (1872) and sections of the novel *Resurrection* [*Voskresenie*] (1899), in which concern with presenting a believable and complex human situation seems to be less important than the author's intention to illustrate a clear moral ideal. When I speak about Tolstoy's "didactic and illustrative" art, I am referring primarily to these latter examples, although it also true that even in the case of the former two examples there was a narrowing of the totalistic visions of the earlier novels.

[10] Rimvydas Silbajoris sees "What is Art?" as the comprehensive expression of Tolstoy's life-long quest for a specifically *moral* ideal in his art. Silbajoris writes:

aspiration to locate in the discordant facts of life, and in the chaos of his own life, in particular, a unified order and purpose. In *The Cossacks* and *War and Peace*, this aspiration to master his world manifests itself in Tolstoy's instinct to embrace and celebrate life in all of its contradictory totality. These novels reflect the organic unity of life itself. In such stories as "Alesha the Pot" and "God Sees the Truth, But Waits," Tolstoy's art no longer envisions life in its totality; it intends rather to illustrate a clear moral vision of the author. And in the tract, "What is Art?", this same reductive tendency manifests itself in Tolstoy's desire to impose a single idea upon the meaning of specific artistic works, and to apply that idea also to the very notion of art itself, and to his life's activity as an artist. "What is Art?" may thus be read as a counterpart to Tolstoy's *A Confession* (1882), in which the author diminishes the complex nature of his personal development when he translates all of his contradictory youthful strivings (which are amply documented in Tolstoy's diaries and letters of the time) into an unbroken string of acts of moral turpitude.[11]

The instinct underlying Tolstoy's acts of verbal self-expression--in the case of both his earlier novels and his later confessional essay and didactic tract on art--is an

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> It is clear from the evidence of Tolstoy's works that they encode an ongoing effort to understand and define art in general while the power of his own art in particular was emerging from what his works could accomplish in the moral dimension. In this process, Tolstoy's personal quest for moral value invariably extends to the very act of writing fiction, of breathing life into people who must then seek answers to the questions that plague their own creator. As these answers emerge, they become a kind of metalanguage about art itself and can ultimately be articulated also in theoretical terms, as Tolstoy finally did in his essay.

See Rimvydas Silbajoris, *Tolstoy's Art and His Aesthetics* (Columbus: Slavica, 1991), p.9.

[11] Tolstoy writes in his *Confession*: "I cannot recall these years without horror, loathing, and heartfelt pain. I killed people in the war, challenged them to duels in order to kill them; I lost at cards, ate up the labors of the muzhiks, punished them, fornicated, swindled. Falsehood, theft, indulgence of all kinds, drunkenness, violence, murder...there was no crime which I would not have committed." (PSS, vol. 23, p. 5) English translation quoted in Leo Tolstoy, *Confession*, transl. David Patterson (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1983), p.18.

impulse to create order and meaning out of the discordant facts of life, and out of the facts of his own life's experiences, in particular. What Tolstoy does in his later efforts at stock-taking and reevaluation of his own past in *Confession* and "What is Art?" is just what his own characters do when they attempt to lift themselves out of the chaos of their lives to view that chaos from a distance, and to apply to it systematic explanations. They attempt to discover rational explanations for a phenomenon defined by non-rational principles. And just as Tolstoy always points his readers of his novels to a larger totality of human and natural existence that such systematic explanations fail to explain or embrace, so do we, in viewing Tolstoy's own life and work as a whole, recognize the larger chain of growth and change in the author's biography, in which his effort at systematic re-evaluation becomes but a link.

Just as Tolstoy's characters continually create, reject, and then resurrect again truths about themselves and their world, Tolstoy himself continually creates and destroys and recreates again throughout his lifetime his own authorial visions. Tolstoy's rejection of his artistic past, which begins with *Confession* and finds its full expression in "What is Art?", is an intellectual position that he would himself overcome when he creates, in his last decade of life, *Hadji-Murat*, a work which reasserts the organic artistic vision of life that underlies his first three major novels, *The Cossacks*, *War and Peace*, and *Anna Karenina*. But just as the oak tree that Prince Andrei observes is not the same when he sees it for a second time, so *Hadji-Murat* is more than a mere a repetition of an earlier artistic vision. It is an expansion and a deepening of that vision. In his final masterpiece, Tolstoy subsumes his youthful fascination with the Caucasian landscape and people of *The Cossacks* into a

work that is not merely different from, but also richer and deeper than, the earlier work. Here the tragic-comedic view of the world, held by the young author in his twenties, is expanded into the sublimely tragic vision of an author nearing his end. If, in *The Cossacks*, man's predicament is embodied in the endless searchings of a young aristocratic intellectual, then in *Hadji-Murat* the ultimate expression of man's place in the universe is exemplified in the tragic, yet exalted death of a Rousseauian natural man, in whom an instinct for personal survival seems to be for him--and for his creator--the only remaining justification for life.

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My dissertation enters into dialogue with two distinct, though not mutually exclusive, traditions of Tolstoy scholarship. The first tradition goes back to an essay, published in 1862, by Apollon Grigor'ev, called *Rannie proizvedeniia gr. L. N. Tolstogo* ["The Early Works of Count L. N. Tolstoy"].[12] In that essay, Grigor'ev argues that Tolstoy was an inherently nihilistic writer in search of a positive ideal that could rescue him from his own nihilism. Grigor'ev thus introduced a paradigm for thinking about Tolstoy that would become a cornerstone of much future Tolstoy criticism: the paradigm of Tolstoy as a divided man, as an unflinching realist who exposed the false idols of others while longing at the same time for a positive ideal that could withstand the challenge of his own analytical powers.[13]

[12] Apollon Grigor'ev, *Rannie proizvedeniia gr. L. N. Tolstogo*, vol. 12, *Sobranie sochinenii Apollona Grigor'eva*, ed. V. F. Savodnik (Moscow, 1916).
[13] Important twentieth-century variants of this paradigm have been developed in Boris Eikhenbaum, *The Young Tolstoy*, trans. and ed. Gary Kern (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1972); Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970); Edward Wasiolek, *Tolstoy's Major Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Richard Gustafson, *Leo Tolstoy: Resident and Stranger; A Study in Fiction and Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University

In my readings of Tolstoy's novels, I posit, á la Grigor'ev, an intense and generative conflict in Tolstoy's works, both within the formal structure of the novels and within the characters themselves, between aspirations to an ideal vision of life and perceptions of the real. I see also a parallel conflict in Tolstoy's *oeuvre* as a whole, between Tolstoy's desire, on the one hand, to explain life by means of systematic theories, evident in (but not limited to) his later didactic tracts, and his tendency, on the other hand, to break down such ordering systems in his novellic masterpieces.

The second main tradition of Tolstoy scholarship I engage in my dissertation is

represented by those scholars who have written about the philosophical and psychological problem of the self in Tolstoy's art. This tradition has its roots in the nineteenth-century writings of Nicholas Chernyshevsky, who, in an 1856 article about Tolstoy's early stories, coined the phrase, "*dialektika dushi*" ["dialectic of the soul"], to refer to a characteristic aspect of Tolstoy's representation of the inner world of his characters, and "*vnutrennyi monolog*" ["interior monologue"], to describe the artistic technique used by Tolstoy to describe that inner world.[14] This aspect of Tolstoy's representation of the self subsequently became the focus of much Soviet scholarship on the author.[15] Various other dimensions of the problem of selfhood in Tolstoy's

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Press, 1986); Gary Saul Morson, *Hidden in Plain View: Narrative and Creative Potentials in 'War and Peace'* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); and Donna Orwin, *Tolstoy's Art and Thought, 1847-1880* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[14] N. G. Chernyshevsky, "Detsvto i otrochestvo. Voennye rasskazy" in *L. N. Tolstoi v russkoi kritike* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1952).

[15] To cite just three examples: For an article which analyzes the various functions of interior monologues in *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, see Z. P. Bezrukova, "Formy psikhologicheskogo analiza v romanakh L. N. Tolstogo 'Voina i mir' i 'Anna Karenina'," in *Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi: Sbornik statei o tvorchestve* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1955), pp.62-100. For an article which analyzes Tolstoy's representations of characters' interior monologues in the various

fiction have also been studied by the prominent Soviet scholars, Sergei Bocharov, Lidiia Ginzburg, Vladimir Dneprov, and Ol'ga Slivitskaia.[16] The problem of the self in Tolstoy's fiction has recently become the object of attention in American Tolstoyan scholarship, as well.[17]

In my analyses of Tolstoy's works, I demonstrate various ways in which the novels, as artistic constructs, both embody and complicate the sense of internal dialectic that we find in the searching heroes themselves. In *The Cossacks*, for instance, the conflict of the hero's inner world is mirrored, in part, by an intensive dialogue that takes place throughout the work between the narrator's "objective" voice and the voice of the hero's subjective "I". At the same time, the novel shows that these competing voices are ultimately subsumed into a larger authorial consciousness which internalizes opposing poles of human experience. This authorial consciousness finally transforms dialectic into synthesis, into a vision of life in which inner emotional struggle becomes part of a more permanent Tolstoyan truth of life.

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styles of their speech, see V. V. Vinogradov, "O Iazyke Tolstogo," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, no. 35-36 (Moscow, 1939), pp. 117-220. For an article which discusses the roots of Tolstoy's methods of psychological analysis in Lermontov's prose, see V. A. Kovalev, "Lermontovskie traditsii v stile L.N. Tolstogo," *Russkaia zhurnalistika i literatura xix-ogo veka* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1979), pp.102 -118.

[16] S. G. Bocharov, *L. Tolstoi i novoe ponimanie cheloveka*: '*Dialektika dushi'*, in V. V. Ermilova, ed., *Literatura i novyi chelovek* (Moscow, 1963); Lidiia Ginzburg, *O psikhologicheskoi proze* (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1977); Vladimir Dneprov, *Iskusstvo chelovekovedeniia: Iz khudozhestvennogo opyta L'va Tolstogo* (Leningrad, 1985); O. V. Slivitskaia, '*Voina i mir' L. N. Tolstogo*: *Problemy chelovecheskogo obshcheniia* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo universiteta, 1988).

[17] See, for instance, Morson, "Part Three: Selves and Decisions" in *Hidden in Plain View*, pp.193-268; Caryl Emerson, "The Tolstoy Connection in Bakhtin," *PMLA*, vol.100, no.1 (January, 1985): 76; Patricia Carden, "The Expressive Self in *War and Peace*." *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 12, No. 4 (Winter 1978): 519-34; and Orwin, *Tolstoy's Art and Thought*.

In *War and Peace*, the dialectical nature of life can be seen in the dialectical structure of the work itself: the alternation between the experiences of war and peace, and the contrast between the aggressive, individualistic French and the collective spirit of the Russians. As in *The Cossacks*, in *War and Peace*, too, the dialectic is ultimately transcended and replaced by a kind of symbiosis, whereby opposing poles of human experience, just as opposing cultural traditions (French versus Russian), are subsumed by a totalistic authorial vision of life in which opposites are ultimately seen to cohere. The novel embodies therefore not only the juxtaposition of opposite phenomena, but also their poetic union. That union is expressed in the way in which the "part"--an image, a scene, or even a single idea--becomes coextensive with the "whole" experience of the novel. This can be seen for instance in the way in which the detail of the oak tree that Andrei twice sees, or the scene of Pierre's meeting with Karataev, both spawn a range of connections and meanings which in turn resonate with the larger thematic concerns of the novel as a whole. In his capacity to create such resonances for the reader--resonances which his characters often do not themselves perceive--Tolstoy becomes perhaps the quintessential "searching subject" in his own works. He becomes a self who is able to achieve that which so few of his searching characters can: He creates out of the chaos of life a totalistic vision of the world that is not also a totalizing vision.

In Tolstoy, the author, and in his characters, then, there is an unmistakable striving impulse, a desire to defy the limitations of their own subjective perceptions and experience of the world, and an aspiration to move always towards some higher form of understanding and truer explanation of life. It is, I submit, in just such acts of

striving, in such an aspiration towards a more totalistic understanding of life and a more complete form of engagement with their world, that the essential depth and unique quality of Tolstoy's artistic personality, and the personality of many of his male characters, lies. In my analyses of Tolstoy's fiction, I attempt to explain how this continual impulse for metaphysical order and self-transcendence manifests itself, at the psychological and philosophical level, in Tolstoy's searching characters, and also how this same impulse is expressed in the way Tolstoy artistically depicts those characters' searchings in his novels. I offer a way of thinking about the problem of the self in Tolstoy's fiction, in which the fictional subject and the authorial subject are seen to be engaged simultaneously in a continual effort to create order out of chaos, and higher forms of meaning out of the prosaic facts of reality.

I do not agree therefore with certain aspects of Gary Saul Morson's recent thesis about *War and Peace*, applied by Morson to the writer's world view at large, that Tolstoy intends to show the absence of any unifying order in the world.[18] Close attention to the aesthetic organization of *War and Peace*, for instance--in particular, to the frequent repetition of certain images and ideas--reveals that there *is* a deep unifying principle in *War and Peace*. That principle lies in the complex interlinkage of ideas and images, and in the ultimate union of individual and historical experience that I believe this interlinkage intends to communicate. Tolstoy's vision of the "whole" is thus communicated to the reader by means of a novelistic technique which creates a sense of unity of many contradictory aspects of the world.

[18] Morson, *Hidden in Plain View*. See also his discussion of Tolstoy in his "Prosaics: An Approach to the Humanities," *The American Scholar* (Autumn 1988): 515-528.

While Morson is right, I think, in many of his observations--particularly in one of his central conclusions, that Tolstoy cherished ordinary moments in human life--he is wrong to link this and other aspects of Tolstoy's second novel to a broader Tolstoyan thesis about the superiority of prosaic experience. In so doing, Morson has underestimated the significance of an essential dimension of *War and Peace*: the fact that *War and Peace* transforms a mountain of "ordinary" facts into an extraordinary vision of human life as something inexhaustible and yet organically unified. It is a work in which "facts" are represented as both inherently meaningful in themselves, and are also subsumed into a mythical vision of life, which imparts to these facts a higher, and unifying, aesthetic and philosophical significance.[19] In both content and form *War and Peace* embodies Tolstoy's life-long aspiration, expressed in all of his major works, to self-transcendence, his desire artistically to create out of the real--out of the ordinary facts of the world--an extraordinary, ideal vision of life.

The meaning of such a work cannot be said to lie in any specific authorial thesis, for in the artistic portion of *War and Peace*, as in the other two novels we will analyze, the very notion of "thesis" is foreign. The "meaning" of these works lies in a realm in which many, many contradictory theses are uttered at once, conjoined ultimately by a unifying principle that is contained in the architechtonics of each work itself. How may Tolstoy's novels be read by us as expressions of the author's aspiration to speak, through art, of a unifying principle in human life? How may these works be read as living examples of one man's aspiration to create out of the facts of

[19] On the way in which *War and Peace* expresses a mythical vision of life, see Laura Olson, "Exploring the Boundaries of Realism and Romanticism: Myth, Sententiousness, and Irony in Tolstoy's 'War and Peace,' Doctoral dissertation, Yale University, 1995. Thanks are due to Professor Monika Greenleaf of Stanford University for pointing me to this source.

our ordinary, prosaic existence an extraordinary, poetic order? In addition to offering an approach to these important philosophical problems in Tolstoy's novels, my dissertation intends to make a more general contribution to the contemporary study of literature. I hope that my close readings, which approach Tolstoy's fiction in the holistic philosophic spirit of the "old criticism," while drawing on some of the analytical techniques of more contemporary textual criticism, will demonstrate how old and new methods of interpretive scholarship may be joined to yield fresh insights about great fiction.

The Dialogue of Self in *The Cossacks*

When Tolstoy began to work on *The Cossacks* in 1852, both the Caucasus as a geographical region and the Cossacks as a cultural community had already become significantly marked themes in nineteenth-century Russian literature. The Caucasus was a favorite venue for Romantic writers to celebrate their love of exotic cultures and places and to revel in their fascination with the fresh, expansive nature of the south, which was often contrasted with the constriction of civilized culture of the northern Russian cities. Among the earliest and most famous of the works of Russian literature dealing with this theme were Pushkin's narrative poem, "The Gypsies," published in 1824, and Lermontov's narrative poem, "Izmail-Bey," completed in 1832.[20] Both of these works, as well as Tolstoy's personal experiences as a soldier in the Caucasus, were influential in the writer's creation of *The Cossacks*.[21] Similarly,

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[20] Many excellent recent works of Slavic scholarship have been devoted to the issue of "Russian Orientalism." See, for instance, Harsha Ram, "Russian Poetry and the Imperial Sublime," in Monika Greenleaf and Stephen Moeller-Sally, eds., *Russian Subjects: Empire, Nation, and the Culture of the Golden Age* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), pp.21-49; Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge University Press, 1994); Katya Hokanson, "Empire of the Imagination: Orientalism and the Construction of Russian National Identity in Pushkin, Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, Lermontov, and Tolstoy," Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 1994; and Monika Greenleaf, "The Foreign Fountain: Self as Other in the Oriental Poem," in *Pushkin and Romantic Fashion: Fragment, Elegy, Orient, Irony* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 108-155.

[21] Tolstoy's initial work on the novel took place at a time when he was fascinated by the romantic image of the Caucasus as a land of freedom and poetic inspiration. In 1854 Tolstoy reflected on his personal experience in the Caucasus in light of his recent reading of Lermontov's "Izmail-Bey" and thoughts about Pushkin's "The Gypsies":

> I found the beginning of "Izmail-Bey" very good. Perhaps it seemed all the more so to me because I'm beginning to love the Caucasus with a deep, though posthumous love. That wild region in which two such completely opposite things as war and freedom are so strangely and poetically blended is really fine. In Pushkin I was struck by "The Gypsies," which, strangely enough, I hadn't understood till now. (PSS, vol. 47, p. 10.)

My quotation is based on the translation in R.F. Christian, *Tolstoy's Diaries* (London: The Athlone Press, 1985), vol. 1, p. 91. Hereafter abbreviated: (*Diaries*, volume no., page no.)

the myth of the vital, free Cossacks was firmly established in the Russian cultural imagination in the writings of Pushkin and Gogol before Tolstoy entered literature in the 1850's. Judith Kornblatt has recently shown how the Cossack myth was a way for Russian writers to express their ideas on subjects as wide-ranging as social equality, political and artistic freedom, and Russian national identity.[22]

In spite of its subtitle, *Kavkazskaia Povest'* ["*A Caucasian Tale*"], Tolstoy's *The Cossacks* is a different sort of Caucasian tale from the one with which Tolstoy's readers would have been familiar. It represents in many ways a debunking of the Romantic treatment of the Caucasus in Russian literature, as scholars have often noted.[23] There has also been a growing body of research which recognizes within Tolstoy an unresolved tension between an attempt to debunk the romantic myth of the Caucasus and an equally strong tendency to participate in that myth.[24] My

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[22] Judith Kornblatt, *The Cossack Hero in Russian Literature: A Study in Cultural Mythology* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).

[23] Susan Layton, for instance, reads the novel as an illustration of the problems of cross-cultural communication and as Tolstoy's response to his romantic predecessors. See Susan Layton, "Revolt Against Romanticism," in *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy*, pp. 233-51. Katya Hokanson reads the novel as a *Bildungsroman*, in which Olenin comes "face to face not with the Caucasus or the Cossacks or the Chechen *abreks*, but with himself--with himself as other, with the other as himself." Hokanson's insights have contributed to my thinking about the psychological aspects of Olenin's experience of the Caucasus. See Katya Hokanson, "Tolstoy's *The Cossacks*: Back to the Natives," in "Empire of the Imagination: Orientalism and the Construction of Russian National Identity in Pushkin, Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, Lermontov, and Tolstoy," p.246. The arguments of Layton and Hokanson have their partial roots in a critical paradigm first offered by Boris Eikhenbaum, who argued that Tolstoy's intention in *The Cossacks*, as well as in his other early Caucasian tales, was to debunk the tradition of literary Romanticism in Russian *belles lettres.* While Layton and Hokanson concentrate on the literary Caucasus as a cultural construct, Eikhenbaum was more interested in the question of poetics. He writes: "Tolstoy follows in the footsteps of the romantics with the conscious intention of thoroughly destroying their poetics. He happens in the Caucasus for the apparent purpose of confronting Marlinsky and Lermontov, exposing their 'untruth' and liquidating the romantic contrivance. See Boris Eikhenbaum, *The Young Tolstoy*, ed. Gary Kern (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1972), p.89. In Russian: *Molodoi Tolstoi* (Petersburg, Berlin: Izdatel'stvo Z. I. Grzhebina, 1922).

[24] Carol Anschuetz writes: "...When Tolstoy parodies the romantic situation of the European among savages, he merely disguises his ideological affinity, if not for the individual romantics he parodies, at least for the myth of exile to which the traditional romantic situation corresponds." See Carol Anschuetz, "The Young Tolstoy and Rousseau's Discourse on Inequality," *The Russian Review* 39, no.4 (October, 1980): pp.401-425. Judith Kornblatt maintains that "Tolstoy uses irony only to question, not to discard, the myth [of the wild Cossacks]. Eroshka is vital to Olenin's spiritual

interpretation of the novel lies closer to this second camp. I argue that, like Rabelais, whose use of the grotesque and carnivalesque served the purpose of a spiritual and artistic renewal, Tolstoy will deform certain thematic and linguistic aspects of the literary Caucasus in order to resurrect that region for his readers and inject into it fresh artistic vigor.[25] One of the ways Tolstoy accomplishes this in the novel is by focusing heavily on his hero's complex inner world, something almost no Russian writer before Tolstoy had attempted to do when writing about the Caucasus.[26] Tolstoy's "re-writing" of the Russian Caucasian tale, then, does not lie merely in the writer's demystification of his hero's romanticized perceptions of the region. The uniqueness of Tolstoy's approach to the theme of the Caucasus also lies in the way in which the author peers inside his hero's inner world and shows how that world becomes a repository for the contradictory psychological impulses of a young man in search of identity and meaning in the modern world.

Tolstoy was in his twenties when he worked on *The Cossacks*. Viktor Shklovsky calls this period in Tolstoy's life the "years of doubt, self-analysis, diaries, and constant uncertainty in his future."[27] Skhlovsky claims that such internal uncertainty "all came in useful to Tolstoy when he immersed himself in writing."[28] The scholar means to suggest that Tolstoy's inner chaos led to creative richness. It is also probable that the author's internal disorder during these years is partly

development in the story; only through the Cossack and the world he claims to represent can Olenin glimpse the richness of life. See Kornblatt, p.95.

[25] I am borrowing a central paradigm from Bakhtin's classic study of Rabelais. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, transl. Helen Iswolsky (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1965).

[26] One exception to this would be Lermontov's depiction of Pechorin in *A Hero of Our Time*, whose influence on Tolstoy I mention below.

[27] Viktor Shklovsky, *Lev Tolstoy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978), p.187.

[28] Ibid., p.187.

responsible for the general ambivalence in the overall design and structure of *The Cossacks*. For instance, Olenin's development throughout the course of the novel suggests Tolstoy's ambivalence about what the hero's function in the work was to be. The novel opens with the depiction of Olenin as an idealistic aristocratic youth who wishes to escape the fetters of civilization in pursuit of the natural freedom of the natives--a standard theme in Russian and European literature by this time.[29] But by the end of the novel Olenin becomes a writer-philosophizer who reflects at length on the contradictions of modern existence. In spite of Tolstoy's apparent uncertainty about the role his hero was to play, there is nevertheless a kind of internal logic to the shift in Olenin's function in the novel. Olenin's role in the novel moves from the relatively narrow one of representing a specific Russian and European literary tradition to the broader one of representing the philosophical and psychological struggles of modernity at large.

This extension of the theme of civilized man in search of a primitive ideal to the realm of philosophical reflection and psychological realism has its roots in Russian literature in Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*, a work that Tolstoy said had a "very big influence" on him when he was young.[30] Tolstoy's Olenin, however, tends to be more intent on his search for truth and moral goodness than Lermontov's Pechorin.[31] This is one of Tolstoy's unique contributions to the tradition of the literary

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[29] For an analysis of the Russian precedents of this theme, see Iu. M. Lotman, "Istoki tolstovskogo napravleniia v russkoi literature 1830-kh godov," in Iu. M. Lotman, *Izbrannye stat'i v trekh tomakh*, t.3 (Talinn: Aleksandra, 1993), pp.49-90.
[30] N. N. Gusev, *Letopis' Zhizni i Tvorchestva L'va Nikolaevicha Tolstogo, 1828-1890* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1958) p.34.
[31] Boris Eikhenbaum traces the character of Olenin to a social type prevalent in Russia in the 1850's during the reign of Nicholas I. Boris Eikhenbaum, "*L. Tolstoi na Kavkaze* (1851-1853)," *Russkaia literatura* 4 (1962): 48-76.

Caucasus in Russian literature, and it is this aspect of the novel that will interest me here. My aim in this chapter will be to show how these abstract philosophical questions are explored at the level of specific scenes and rhetorical techniques in the novel. I approach the novel as a rich universe of artistic thought.[32] Tolstoy's intention in creating that universe, I argue, is not to offer definitive answers to questions about selfhood and truth, but rather to make those questions and their interrelationship more complex in the novel. These problems, I argue, are never finally resolved by the author, and the richness of the work lies precisely in its ultimate philosophical indeterminacy.[33] My primary aim will be to explain the ways in which the novel speaks to the reader about these larger philosophical issues through the depiction of the experiences of unique individuals, and primarily those of Olenin, existing in specific contexts and concrete situations.

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[32] Donna Orwin's recent work on Tolstoy has demonstrated just how deep and rich is Tolstoy's thinking in his fiction. See Donna Tussing Orwin, *Tolstoy's Art and Thought, 1847-1880* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). And Sergei Bocharov's work on *War and Peace* is an example of how that depth and richness may be explored through a close analysis of the "endless labyrinth of interlinkages" in Tolstoy's fiction. My approach to *The Cossacks* has been inspired by Bocharov's model. See Sergei Bocharov, *Roman L. N. Tolstogo 'Voina i Mir'* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1987).

[33] Tolstoy wrote in 1865:

> The goal of the artist is not to decide a question indisputably, but to force people to love life in its countless, inexhaustible manifestations. If I was told that I can write a novel in which I would indisputably establish what seemed to me to be the true view of all social questions, I would not devote two hours of work to such a novel. But if I was told that what I write will be read by today's children in twenty years and that they will cry and laugh over it and love life, then I would devote my entire life and all my strength to such a work.

Cited in *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii v 90-kh tomakh* (Moscow: Gosudarvstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1960-1965), vol. 61, p. 100. Hereafter abbreviated: (PSS, volume no., page no.).

I read *The Cossacks* as one of Tolstoy's first attempts to write a work which "force[s] people to love life in its countless, inexhaustible manifestations."

(Unless otherwise stated, all translations of Tolstoy's extra-literary writings are my own.)

In the opening chapter of the novel, we are shown three young men. One of them is sitting, another one of them is lying on the sofa and playing with his watch-key. In contrast to the other two men, who are ready to call it a night, there is a third man, Olenin. He is “pacing up and down the room stopping now and then to crack an almond between his strong, rather thick, but well-tended fingers. He keeps smiling at something and his face and eyes are all aglow. He speaks warmly and gesticulates, but evidently does not find the words he wants and those that occur to him seem to him inadequate to express what has risen to his heart.”(pp. 3-4, pp. 85-86)[34] We learn here of the hero’s physical vitality, his youthful vibrancy, his groping for self-expression, and his sense of the futility of words to express what he feels. From the opening line of the novel (*Vse zatikhlo v Moskve*) Tolstoy has thus moved the reader from the streets of Moscow into a restaurant, into a single room in that restaurant, and finally into the inner world of one of the inhabitants of that room. But we are still restricted from fully perceiving what is happening inside of Olenin’s inner world. The narrator still remains here in the position of an outside observer. We are given merely a hint of the hero’s passionate inner life, in which we sense that something is bubbling beneath the exterior, waiting to emerge.

That something is language. “*Teper’ mozhno vse skazat’*!” Olenin exclaims. And he speaks: “I don't want to defend myself, but I should like you at least to understand me as I understand myself, and not look at the matter superficially.” (4,86) Olenin goes on attempting to justify himself before his colleagues, but the reader

[34] The first number refers to the page in PSS, volume 6, which is the volume containing *The Cossacks* [*Kozaki*]. The second page number refers to the English translation in *Great Short Works of Leo Tolstoy*, trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1967.). My quotations are based on the Maude translation, but I make changes when necessary.

begins to get the sense that what was perhaps supposed to be a dialogue between Olenin and his colleagues turns into a dialogue between Olenin and himself: “But why shouldn’t the man love too?...Why shouldn’t one love? Because love doesn’t come....No, to be loved is a misfortune.” A moment later, admitting that he deceived himself about being in love, Olenin asks himself: “Am I to blame that I couldn’t [go on]? What was I to do?” (4,86) One of the colleagues gives a perfunctory response, while “lighting a cigar to master his sleepiness.” Olenin is being made an object of irony on the part of both his interlocutors and the author, at the very moment when he most wishes to express himself and to be taken seriously. If the reader senses something a little cruel in this, we realize that Tolstoy’s use of irony here also serves a liberating effect. It permits some degree of playfulness and comedic relief in a situation that is ultimately tragic. It allows the reader to enjoy the lightness of artistic irony amidst a weightier truth about the hero’s life: that in his attempts to change himself, Olenin will confront again and again the stubborn fact that human nature is often a more powerful force than human will.

Olenin continues reflecting aloud to himself, and finally says: “Ah well! What’s the use of talking? I’ve made an awful mess of life! But anyhow it’s all over now; you are quite right. And I feel that I am beginning a new life.” To which his second acquaintance responds, while playing absent-mindedly with his watch-key: “Which you will again make a mess of.” (5,87) The reader’s sympathy is aroused for Olenin, but the ironic distance with which Tolstoy describes him also makes the reader realize that the young man’s acquaintances may understand him and his situation better than Olenin thinks they do. By the novel’s end we realize that the

words “which you will again make a mess of” *do* contain at least as much truth about Olenin’s fate as his own stated promise of self-renewal. I say “at least as much” and not “more” truth, because I think the truth the novel is after lies neither in Olenin’s idealism nor in the cynicism of his acquaintances, but somewhere in between, in a realm in which realism and idealism are engaged in creative dialogue.

Tolstoy’s ironization of Olenin thus does not intend merely to demystify the hero’s world view and replace it with its ostensibly more truthful “other,” as some critics have argued. Instead, Tolstoy’s irony humanizes Olenin’s character by creating a dynamic relationship between the author and hero, in which the hero is simultaneously admired for his noble aspirations and held up for good-humored laughs.[35] Tolstoy’s irony serves the purpose of combining a comedic with a tragic sense of life. We pity Olenin who is trapped by his own Werther-like nature, yet we are never allowed by the author to take his tragic fate too seriously. Tolstoy never permits the reader to identify too closely with the hero’s, or any character’s, perspective. The author is continually teasing the reader by creating an artistically playful world, in which our sense of an objective reality is always being destabilized by the intrusion of a creative authorial consciousness. Such playfulness is one manifestation of a central tension we find in *The Cossacks*, and in much of Tolstoy’s art. This is a tension between a recognition of the objective/impersonal forces of life and nature, on the one hand, and an awareness of the possibility for subjective/personal strivings and expression amidst those forces, on the other.[36]

[35] Cf. “Romantic Irony in Eugene Onegin,” in Monika Greenleaf, *Pushkin and Romantic Fashion*, pp.205-286.
[36] I think that both Mikhail Bakhtin and the Russian existentialist philosopher, Lev Shestov, have misunderstood this paradoxical quality of Tolstoy’s artistic universe. Focusing on Tolstoy’s poetics, Bakhtin argues that the essence of Tolstoy’s poetics is “monologism,” which, in the philosophical

Tolstoy does not claim primacy for one or the other of these two realms in his first novel, but he combines them both into a totalistic vision of life that unites, but never fully reconciles, these opposing poles of human experience. Tolstoy's use of irony may thus be described with the same words that Rene Wellek used to explain the function of irony in Friedrich Schlegel's writing: "Irony is his recognition of the fact that the world is in its essence paradoxical and that an ambivalent attitude alone can grasp its contradictory totality."[37]

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sphere implies a totalizing authorial perspective on the world. Bakhtin writes: "A second autonomous voice (alongside the author's voice) does not appear in Tolstoy's world. For that reason, there is no problem of linking voices, and no problem of a special positioning for the author's point of view. Tolstoy's discourse and his monologically naive point of view permeate everywhere, into all the corners of the world and the soul, subjugating everything to its unity." As I will show, there is a substantial amount of dialogue between the narrator and his hero in *The Cossacks*. This dialogic relationship serves the purpose of "opening" up the artistic universe in the novel, allowing for a playful interaction between narrator and hero. This is precisely the sort of relationship that Bakhtin sees as the essence of Dostoevsky's art but absent in Tolstoy's. About Tolstoy, I hope to show, Bakhtin was not entirely correct. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis, Minn., 1984), p. 56. Lev Shestov has made a similar point about Tolstoy's "closed" universe. Discussing Tolstoy from a purely philosophical point of view, Shestov sees in Tolstoy's omniscient point of view evidence of the author's calm acceptance of tragic fate. Tolstoy does not sympathize with his characters in the way that Zola, Turgenev, and Dickens do, according to Shestov. Readers therefore "reproach him for his coldness, insensitivity, and hardness....To many readers this attitude appears so incomprehensible and revolting that they are even inclined to deny Tolstoy's genius....And, from their point of view, these readers are only too right... [because] Tolstoy, who manifests no humane feelings, frightens such people." As I have argued in my analysis of Tolstoy's use of irony and will continue to argue in my analysis of other scenes in *The Cossacks*, the artistic universe of the novel is one in which both objective reality *and* personal will are shown to interact. See Lev Shestov, "The Good in the Teaching of Tolstoy and Nietzsche: Philosophy and Preaching," trans. Bernard Martin, *Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Nietzsche* (Athens, Ohio, 1969), pp. 20-21.

[37] Quoted in Peter L. Thorslev, Jr., *Romantic Contraries: Freedom versus Destiny* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), p.163. The complex implications of Tolstoy's use of irony in the novel were often misunderstood by contemporary critics who attacked Tolstoy's novel for its rejection of civilization and celebration of the savage state. In an 1863 article in *The Contemporary* (*Sovremennik*), which accused Tolstoy of "lighting the fuse and singing the praise of the savage Cossack", the reviewer said this about Tolstoy's representation of Olenin:

> When we first become acquainted with Olenin it appeared to us all that the author was about to regard his hero ironically, that he would even be somewhat scornful toward his naïveté and extreme emptiness, and that in the end he would lay bare the falseness of his thinking and the silly confusion of his feelings. But as soon as the incessant exclamations began about the beauty and grandeur of Nature and of primeval woman, and as soon as intimate themes developed, we guessed that the author was taking his hero seriously. [Quoted in Boris Eikhenbaum, *Tolstoi in the Sixties*, trans. Duffield White (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1982), p.88.]

This is one of the central ideas of the opening scene of the novel. That scene presents us with a vivid drama of conflicting personalities and attitudes towards life. There is irony on the narrator's part towards his hero, but there is also irony towards his acquaintances. In contrast to his acquaintances who are shown to be sitting or lying with tired expressions, Olenin is exuberant and full of life. In this respect he is distinguished from them and linked by Tolstoy to the old woman who in the opening paragraph is on her way to church and to the workmen who are on their way to work. Like them, Olenin is on his way somewhere, both literally and figuratively, while his acquaintances are not. Olenin's enthusiasm and moral searchings are shown to be generative and even inspiring to the reader (and to his acquaintances, as well), even if there is also something delusional about the hero's youthful naïveté. His world-weary acquaintances seem to be wiser than Olenin, and yet they are lacking in that simplicity and vital energy that make Olenin attractive to those with whom he comes into contact in the novel.

The evenness with which the characters are described here makes it nearly impossible to apply moral judgments to any of them. The author does not let us know who is the moral villain and who the moral protagonist. Each character contains positive and negative traits. There is something "right" and something "wrong" in each of the characters' attitudes towards life. One of the commonplaces of Tolstoy criticism is that Tolstoy, unlike Chekhov for instance, used art as a medium to communicate definite moral attitudes about the world. Although this is certainly true

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As I have argued, Tolstoy's attitude towards his hero is both ironic and serious at the same time. Although Tolstoy may initially have set out to celebrate the ideal of natural man in the novel, the final work transcends that intention. The critic from *The Contemporary* seems to have read the novel too much in the context of the heated political debates of his time rather than as a complex work of art full of internal contradictions.

in the case of the latter, more openly polemical Tolstoy, *The Cossacks* is an example of a major work by Tolstoy clearly lacking in moral or polemical agenda. Moral ambiguity becomes a reigning feature of this work.[38]

The closing of the novel reinforces this sense of moral ambiguity with which the novel opens. One of the ways Tolstoy shows this is in his portrait of Uncle Eroshka, who has been depicted throughout the novel as possessing both good and bad qualities, both self-interest and genuine love for his newly found friend. Both of these qualities are highlighted when, at their parting, Uncle Eroshka is seen filching a gun from his friend, while “sobbing quite sincerely” about Olenin’s departure. Vanyusha, who has throughout the novel been shown to be a sharp judge of character when Olenin’s vision is clouded by his romantic dreaming, has this to say about Eroshka’s request: “What a lot you’ve given the old fellow,...he’ll never have enough! A regular old beggar. They are all such superficial people.” (149,242). Vanyusha is of course in part correct. Eroshka *is* greedy, and Olenin does not see that he has been taken advantage of. But at the same time Vanyusha misses the mark when he generalizes that all the Cossacks are superficial. The text, in fact, shows just the opposite, that in their uncivilized, yet contradictory and resourceful ways, the Cossacks possess a kind of human profundity. The Cossacks are multi-faceted. They are often inconsistent and shifting in their moral and personal allegiances. Unlike Gogol’s Cossacks in *Taras Bul’ba*, for instance, Tolstoy’s Cossacks resist typology.[39]

[38] For an analysis of moral ambiguity in the work, see John Hagan, “Ambivalence in Tolstoy’s *The Cossacks*,” *Novel 3* (1969): pp.28-47. Hagan argues that Tolstoy both admires the Cossacks and has serious reservations about their way of life.
[39]In fact, almost every Tolstoyan hero resists typology. This is in part because Tolstoy sensed the irreducible individuality of every living being in the world. Tolstoy reflected on the idea of human individuality frequently throughout his lifetime. Reflecting on Kantian thought about space and time, Tolstoy once wrote in his diary in 1870: “But beside space and time, there is a form of our thinking--

When Olenin notes in his letter that Maryanka is “like nature: consistent, calm, and self-contained,” he has misunderstood this quality of the Cossacks. In this novel nature is also shown to be ever-shifting (precisely like Maryanka herself!), and even frightening, as Olenin himself discovers when he leaves the stag’s lair.

We thus see multiple levels of irony in the closing pages of the novel. Olenin is the object of Eroshka’s contradictory attitude towards him. Eroshka is ironized by Vanyusha. And Vanyusha’s assessment of the Cossacks is undermined by the evidence of the novel. So who is right and who is wrong in this scene? The novel refuses to answer this question. Tolstoy gives his readers an elusive wink in the closing pages of *The Cossacks*. The novel ends on a note of complete irresolution. Here are the final lines of the novel: “Olenin turned round. Daddy Eroshka was talking to Maryanka, evidently about his own affairs, and neither the old man nor the girl looked at Olenin.” (150,243) Eroshka has seen yet another Russian acquaintance come and go. Maryanka is upset about Lukashka, who lies at death’s edge, although Tolstoy leaves open the question of whether Lukashka will die. And perhaps most importantly, Olenin has been rejected by Maryanka, and has returned to the same state of disillusionment from which he was trying to escape at the beginning. This return is emphasized by Tolstoy in the repetition of a detail from the novel’s first chapter: “Again as on the night of his departure from Moscow, a three-horsed conveyance stood waiting at the door.” (146, 239).

The text continues: “But Olenin did not confer with himself as he had done then, and did not say to himself that all he had thought and done was ‘not it.’ He did

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individuality. For me a horse, a small insect, and I are all individual essences, because I myself see myself as an individual.” (PSS, vol. 48, p. 126)

not promise himself a new life. He loved Maryanka more than ever, and knew that he could never be loved by her." (146, 239) Such is the conclusion to the trip which Olenin anticipated with overflowing excitement in the beginning of the novel. He has begun to learn the Tolstoyan truth that life cannot be explained as a dynamic between *ne to* and *to*, as a progression from falsehood to truth, but that the truth of life lies somewhere in between these two extremes, in the constant interchange between idealism and disillusionment, and in the ceaseless flow of events and experiences that underlies that interchange. Robert Jackson puts it well when he writes: "If one can conclude anything from Olenin's journey to and from the Caucasus, it is that the artist Tolstoy's answer to life's problems lies in no single 'revelation,' no single striving, but in the ensemble of 'contradictory strivings' of human nature, in the recognition that man is fated by his very nature unceasingly to experience the tension between these strivings and, in the moral realm, unceasingly to strive."[40] This is a philosophical vision that Tolstoy would develop further in *War and Peace* in connection with questions of historiography. Here it is explored in the context of one young man's search for meaning and selfhood in a world which the novel shows to be full of many meanings and many contradictory selves.

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Tolstoy never permits the reader's sense of life to become ossified in the novel. The author is continually teasing the reader by creating a world of artistic playfulness and openness, even as we are convinced of the verisimilitude and necessity of the narrated plot line. One of the ways the author achieves this effect is in

[40] Robert L. Jackson, "The Archetypal Journey: Aesthetic and Ethical Imperative in the Art of Tolstoj," *Russian Literature XI* (1982): pp. 389-410.

the way he creates a dynamic relationship between the narrator's "objective" view and Olenin's subjective sense of things. An example of this relationship can be seen in the second chapter. Here the narrator is speaking about Olenin:

> On leaving Moscow he was in that happy state of mind in which a young man, conscious of past mistakes, suddenly says to himself, that was all not the real thing, that everything that went before was accidental and unimportant, that until then he had not really tried to live, but now with his departure from Moscow a new life was beginning--a life in which there would be no mistakes, no remorse, and certainly nothing but happiness. (8,91)

A page after this passage, when we are told that Olenin was reflecting on his entry into society, we also learn that Olenin had heard a voice that always whispered: "That's not it; that's not it." (9, 91) By placing these words so near the passage quoted above, Tolstoy is suggesting a connection between the narrator's description of how youths like Olenin will say that everything is *ne to*, and Olenin's actual utterance of these words. The implication here goes deeper than a mere confirmation of the accuracy of the narrator's prediction. Olenin's repetition of the narrator's words is a verbal echo, a recreation, and ultimately an expansion (Olenin repeats *ne to* twice) of the narrator's voice.[41] The rhetorical function of the repetition here, to establish a dynamic relationship between the narrator's and Olenin's voice, therefore exists in tension with their more direct role: to corroborate an already known fact about Olenin's character. We have here a tension between a narrative consciousness that is both superior to Olenin, that knows the hero is deluding himself, and one which exists at the same time in dialogic relationship with Olenin's own consciousness. The closed

[41] I am indebted to the work of Natasha Sankovitch for calling my attention to the rhetorical and thematic significance of repetition in Tolstoy. Dr. Sankovitch argues that repetition is a rhetorical technique used by Tolstoy to create a sense of the world in which unity and diversity of experience coexist. See Natasha Sankovitch, "Creating and Recovering Experience: Repetition in Tolstoy," Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 1992.

world of inevitability, whose master is the all-knowing narrator, thus coexists with the open world of playful dialogue between narrator and character, and thus between the author and his hero.

Another example of this sort of textual dialogue can be found in the end of the first and opening of the second chapter. Here is the final sentence of the first chapter: "All was dark and silent and dull around him, but his soul was full of memories, love, regrets, and a pleasant tearful feeling." Then the second chapter opens: "I'm fond of them, very fond!...First-rate fellows!...Fine!," he kept repeating, and felt ready to cry. But why he wanted to cry, who were the first-rate fellows he was so fond of--was more than he quite knew." (6, 89) The first chapter closes on a note of vague, melancholic feeling, characteristic of Romantic literature. The ellipsis too is probably a play on the Romantic convention of placing ellipses to suggest the presence of the infinite and ineffable. This silence enshrouding the ineffable is suddenly pierced by Olenin's exuberant voice. And as if that were not enough to wake up his readers from their romantic slumbers, Tolstoy goes further. He immediately follows Olenin's words with three questions and a statement that seem to be the product of a different consciousness altogether. Because the questions are not placed in quotation marks, the reader is uncertain whether they belong to the narrator or to Olenin: "*No otchego emu khotelos' plakat'? Kto byli slavnye? Kogo on ochen' liubil? On ne znal khoroshen'ko*." ["But why did he want to cry? Who were the first-rate fellows? Whom did he love very much? That was more than he quite knew."] (6,89) The effect of this inquiring voice is to place Olenin's voice in dialogic relationship with that of the narrator. Our sense of an objective and omniscient narrator thus becomes

immediately destabilized. The sentence "*On ne znal khoroshen'ko*" is significant for two reasons. First, it is posited as an answer to the two questions asked just prior to it in the paragraph. It therefore creates the impression that there is some kind of internal dialogue within the narrative itself. Secondly, and closely related to this first reason, the sentence is written in patently un-literary, conversational language. Thus, in the same way that it is part of a narrative dialogue within the text, so too it becomes part of a linguistic dialogue with accepted literary language. Tolstoy is playing with his reader by entering into dialogue with established literary conventions.

The dialogic quality of the text of the novel mirrors the dialogic quality of Olenin's inner world. One of the techniques frequently used by Tolstoy in the novel to depict his hero's inner world is the technique of "interior monologue."[42] An example of this technique can be seen when, just after Olenin muses about the submissive young woman he will meet and educate in the Caucasus, the hero thinks to himself: "*Akh, kakoi vzdor*!" The text continues:

> But here they reached a post-station and he had to change into another sledge and give some tips. But his fancy again began searching for the 'nonsense' he had relinquished, and again fair Circassians, glory, and his return to Russia with an appointment as aide-de-camp and a lovely wife rose before his imagination. "But there's no such thing as love," he said to himself. "Fame is all rubbish. But the six hundred and seventy-eight rubles?...And the conquered land that will bring me more wealth than I need for myself. I shall have to distribute it. But to whom? Well, six hundred and seventy-eight rubles to Cappele and then we'll see." (12,94)

[42] Nicholas Chernyshevsky, in an 1856 article on Tolstoy, was the first critic to use the phrase "*dialektika dushi*" ["dialectic of the soul"], to refer to a characteristic aspect of Tolstoy's representation of the inner world of his characters, and "*vnutrennyi monolog*" ["interior monologue"], to describe the artistic technique used by Tolstoy to describe that inner world. See N. G. Chernyshevsky, "Detstvo i otrochestvo. Voennye rasskazy" in *L. N. Tolstoi v russkoi kritike* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1952).

This passage is an echo of several passages we have encountered in the previous pages. Olenin's thoughts here begin to gather up as it were the stray bits and pieces of his consciousness that have been posited for the reader in various places throughout the text. The "lovely wife" refers to the maiden that Olenin had been imagining just before he called his dreams nonsense. The reference to the "conquered land" probably refers to Olenin's dream of himself as a warrior who slays the hillsmen. The "six hundred and seventy-eight rubles to Cappele" refers to Olenin's earlier reflections about his debts to Cappele the tailor. And the lines "But there's no such thing as love" and "fame is all rubbish" echo the narrator's lines from the previous page:

> He had come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as love, yet his heart always overflowed in the presence of any young and attractive woman. He had long been aware that honors and position were nonsense, yet involuntarily he felt pleased when at a ball Prince Sergius came up and spoke to him affably. (8,90)

In these lines the narrator shows the reader both of the conflicting aspects of Olenin's inner world [*on reshil* ("he had come to the conclusion") versus *zhenshina zastavliala ego umirat'* ("his heart always overflowed in the presence of any young and attractive woman"); *on davno znal* ("he had long been aware") versus *no chuvstvoval nevol'no udovol'stvie* ("yet involuntarily he felt pleased")]. The quoted speech from Olenin a few pages later reveals in real time just what the narrator had told us constitutes the contradictory dynamic of Olenin's character. We now see Olenin actually uttering those very sentiments about the falseness of love and fame that the narrator told us he believed in his conscious, rational mind. Having been forewarned by the narrator that these rational beliefs conflict with the emotional, instinctual side of Olenin's character, the reader recognizes Olenin's words as an

example of the hero's tendency to delude himself. But just as in the earlier example of how Olenin repeats the narrator's *ne to*, there is more at work in this repetition than a mere sense of confirmation of the narrator's wisdom. After all, with all the other evidence in the novel to demonstrate Olenin's tendencies towards self-delusion and to reveal his divided nature, why would Tolstoy need this detail to illustrate that fact yet again? What is going on in this interplay between narrated discourse and Olenin's speech is similar to the dynamic we discussed above between the narrator's *ne to* and Olenin's *ne to*, *ne to*. Olenin's speech does not merely repeat the narrated speech. It also alters and expands on the narrator's voice both by removing it from the realm of omniscient, third-person discourse, and by shifting around the syntax and original meaning of the narrated speech. Olenin's words are not an exact repetition. They are more like an echo, both in form and in content. They subsume the narrated text into a new subjective consciousness, in which the narrator's language and Olenin's own previous thoughts are now brought together into a synthetic new whole. The overall feeling for the reader is one of surprise, of *dejá-vu*, a sense that we have heard these words before. Only now we are seeing the world from Olenin's vantage point. We have the sense when we read this text that we are in an artistic world that, like Olenin's own inner world, is richly vibrant, continually expanding, constantly destabilizing and recreating itself.

This process within Olenin can be seen not only in the way the hero synthesizes within his own consciousness elements from the previously narrated text, but also in the way he often erects, breaks down, and then erects again self-created, totalizing structures. An example of this process can be seen in a detail in the passage

we have discussed above. First Olenin muses about the proverbial *ona*, the imagined Caucasian girl of his dreams. Then suddenly, as we have seen, he distances himself from his own illusion with the phrase, "*Akh, kakoi vzdor*!" This "*kakoi vzdor*!" is then soon replaced by a search for a new illusion: "But his fancy again began searching for the 'nonsense' he had relinquished, and again fair Circassians, glory, and his return to Russia with an appointment as aide-de-camp and a lovely wife rose before his imagination." (12,94) This process within Olenin of creating, destroying, and then recreating illusions about the Caucasus is echoed later in the novel, when the italicized *ona* is repeated again in the tenth chapter during Olenin's visit to Granny Ulitka. When he enters the hut, Olenin sees Maryanka and thinks: "This is she." Then "'there will be many others like her' came at once into his head." (41,126). After having reinforced his ideal of the mysterious *ona*, Olenin immediately destroys that ideal by recognizing that there will be many "*ona*'s". This mirrors the dynamic in chapter two when Olenin first imagines the exotic Caucasian woman and then suddenly calls his dreams 'nonsense'. Just as in that earlier scene, in which Olenin begins searching again for the 'nonsense,' so in this later scene he attempts to reconstruct the ideal that he himself had demystified.

After having been vilified by Granny Ulitka, Olenin sees Maryanka again, and "the firm stately build of the young beauty struck Olenin even more powerfully than before. 'Yes, it must be she,' he thought, and troubling his head still less about the lodgings, he kept looking round at Maryanka as he approached Vanyusha." (42,127).The reader recalls that, according to Olenin's dream, she was supposed to be waiting at the threshold of a lonely hut in the mountains, and he was supposed to

return to her “tired and covered with dust, blood, and fame.” In this scene, she is in the house of her mother, and not only is Olenin not a celebrated military hero when he comes to her, he is castigated by her mother, Granny Ulitka, who has little respect for the Russian soldiers. In spite of this less than glorious reception, she persists in Olenin’s imagination as an abstraction. She finally remains for him an ossified concept, even as the evidence from his experience should suggest to him the contradiction between his earlier idealized image of the woman and what he sees before him. Olenin’s having fallen once again into illusion, it will require the intrusion of Tolstoy’s conscious artistry to remind the reader that there is an objective reality independent of Olenin’s subjective perception of things. Vanyusha’s ironic attitude towards Maryanka in this scene is closer to Tolstoy’s perception of the situation than to Olenin’s: “‘There you see, the girl too is quite savage, just like a wild filly!’ said Vanyusha, who though still busy with the luggage wagon had now cheered up a bit. *La fame*! he added in a loud triumphant voice and burst out laughing.” (42,127)

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Most readers of the novel agree that Tolstoy intends to demystify Olenin’s romantic illusions about the Caucasus by showing that the reality of the region does not square with Olenin’s imagination of what he will find there. But it is less often explained just how the image of the Caucasus acquires such poetic force in *The Cossacks*. Tolstoy intends to demonstrate in the novel that there is indeed something grand and romantic about the Caucasus. That grandness, however, is shown to lie not in dreamy abstractions, but in the *living*, evanescent beauty of the region. The poetry

of the Caucasus and the Cossacks who inhabit the area is shown in the novel to be a poetry of the concrete, ever-changing specificity of the natural surroundings and of each individual person living in those surroundings. Tolstoy thus demystifies the poetry of romantic abstraction and replaces it with the uniquely Tolstoyan poetry of the ungeneralized and the specific. For Olenin, the poetic quality of the region is often associated with abstract images that he has taken from the popular literature about the Caucasus widespread in his day: “All his dreams of the future were mingled with pictures of Amalat-Beks, Circassian women, mountains, precipices, terrible torrents, and perils. All these things were vague and dim, but the love of fame and the danger of death furnished the interest of that future.” (11,94) Tolstoy emphasizes that these images are “vague and dim” (“*smutno*, *neiasno*”), not only in order to contrast them with the author’s own more concrete rendition of the Caucasus, but also to contrast them with Olenin’s state of mind when he begins to recall specific details from his past:

> As soon as he pictured anything definite, familiar Moscow figures always appeared on the scene. Sashka B--fights with the Russians or the hillsmen against him. Even the tailor Cappele [to whom Olenin owes a debt of 678 rubles] in some strange way takes part in the conqueror’s triumph. If amid these he remembered his former humiliations, weaknesses, and mistakes, then these recollections were not disagreeable. It was clear that there among the mountains, waterfalls, fair Circassians, and dangers, such mistakes could not recur. (11,94)

Thus, the future is associated in Olenin’s mind with the abstract, the general, and the ideal; the past with the concrete, the specific, and the real. Tolstoy shows that Olenin’s desire to escape his past is also a desire to replace that which is real and specific in his life with the vague possibilities associated with an unknown future. By

the end of the novel Olenin will recognize that this vaguely ideal future he had once imagined for himself is replete with the same sorts of imperfections as the past he had wished to overcome. But even then, even after Olenin's disillusionment, the hero does not fully discover the higher truth offered by the novel. Olenin ultimately gives up his search for that elusive "it" as hopeless chimera, but the novel shows that "it" is not entirely an illusion never to be realized, but that it exists precisely in the concrete and specific realities of the world that surrounds him, not in general and abstract musings.

This, among other things, is what the reader is intended to see in the scene in which Olenin first encounters the Caucasian mountains. When Olenin expects to see the mountains as he had imagined them based on stories told by others, he fails to appreciate them:

> He could find nothing beautiful in the mountains of which he had so often read and heard. The mountains and the clouds appeared to him quite alike, and he thought the special beauty of the snow peaks, of which he had so often been told, was as much an invention as Bach's music and the love of women in which he did not believe. So he gave up looking forward to seeing the mountains. (13,96)

The first time Olenin sees the mountains, he *expects* something of them. He expects them to correspond to a mental image of Caucasian mountains that the hero has gleaned from the stories told by others, stories which are themselves influenced by previous literary sources. When Olenin gives up his mental expectations, the mountains come to him, as it were. They present themselves to him in all of their surprising and beautiful specificity. Olenin "suddenly" sees "pure white gigantic masses with delicate contours, the distinct fantastic outlines of their summits showing sharply against the far-off sky." (13,96) Significantly, the narrator does not use the

word “mountains” here to name what Olenin sees. Instead, the reader, like Olenin, is shown the highly specific features that make up the mountains: “delicate contours”, “distinct fantastic outlines,” “summits showing sharply.” By referring to the mountains by means of synecdoche, Tolstoy thus makes a distinction between the mountains as they are experienced by a fresh, unexpecting eye--that is, in the specific features that make them up--and the generalized concept of “mountains,” which existed in Olenin’s mind as a pre-fabricated and abstract mental construct the first time he encountered them on the previous day.

If the mountain scene in the novel were to end here, then we might claim that the originality of the scene vis a vis earlier works about the Caucasus in Russian literature lies in its debunking of the abstract and romanticized notions of the natural beauty of the region that come from those works, and which fill Olenin’s head. But Tolstoy, as we have been arguing in this chapter, both demystifies and remystifies at the same time the literary myth of the Caucasus in *The Cossacks*. In accordance with this overall pattern in the novel, no sooner do the old myths about the Caucasus begin to fade in Olenin’s mind than they begin to be replaced by a new one. This one, though, is not given to the hero from external sources; it is created from within. Olenin’s earlier dreams about the natural beauty of the Caucaus, based exclusively on the images given to him by others, is now being replaced by a new sort of dream, one that is a deeply personal response to the concrete facts before his eyes.

This newly discovered truth about the region gets subsumed by the hero into a fresh personal mythology. When Olenin discovers what is before him, the mountains begin to serve as a stimulus for a newly vitalized perception of the world:

> From that moment all he saw, all he thought, and all he felt, acquired for him a new character, sternly majestic like the mountains! All his Moscow reminiscences, shame, and repentance, and his trivial dreams about the Caucasus, vanished and did not return. 'Now it has begun,' a solemn voice seemed to say to him. (14,97)

Olenin subsumes the mountains into his personal world view by transforming them into a kind of grand new Truth against which the value of everything may be measured anew. Olenin effectively turns the mountains into *his* mountains. They become for him the external manifestation of his expansive, inner self. Everything that takes place in Olenin's inner world--"all he thought, and all he felt"-- now becomes "majestic like the mountains." Olenin's inner self and the majestic mountains with which that self is now associated in his mind become the center of the hero's internally created universe. At the center of that universe is Olenin himself, followed immediately by his servant, Vanyusha. Hence, the sentence: "He looks at himself, at Vanyusha--and the mountains." ["*Vzglianet na sebia, na Vanyushu--i opiat' gory*."] (14,97) Olenin's act of gazing at himself and then at his servant (and in that order, we must observe) exists on an even plane with the phenomenon of the mountains themselves.

Beginning in the next sentence, however, the mountains begin to play a different role in the text. The first half of each sentence contains the details of Olenin's surroundings, relayed to us by the objective narrator. Then, after an ellipsis, we hear the phrase "but the mountains" ("*a gory*"), bubbling forth as a kind of disembodied presence in the text, and existing in opposition to that which comes before it in each sentence:

> *Vot edut dva kazaka verkhom, i ruzhia v chekhlakh ravnomerno pomatyvaiutsia u nikh za spinami, i loshadi ikh peremeshivaiutsia gniedymi i serymi nogami, a gory... Za Terekom viden dym v aule, a gory...Solntse vskhodit i bleshchet na vidneiushchemsia iz-za kamysha Tereka, a gory...Iz stanitsy edet arba, zhenshchiny khodiat, krasivye zhenshchiny, molodye, a gory...*
>
> Two Cossacks ride by, their guns in their white cases swinging rhythmically behind their backs, the white and bay legs of their horses mingling confusedly...but the mountains... Beyond the Terek can be seen the smoke from a Tatar village, but the mountains...The sun has risen and glitters on the Terek, now visible beyond the reeds...but the mountains...From the village comes a Tatar wagon, and women, beautiful young women, pass by...but the mountains... (14,97)

The phrase "*a gory*" is to be taken as an expression of Olenin's internal voice, presented to the reader in an interior monologue. That voice comes to us as if from a void. In its use of the contrastive conjunction "*a*" ("but"), it poses an implicit challenge to the narrative details that come before it. The mountains, now associated in Olenin's mind with the mysterious grandness of both the Caucasian landscape and the hero's own inner self, begin to take over all of the other details of Olenin's surroundings. Olenin's inner world is beginning to assert itself, subsuming everything external to it into its expansive purview. This process is reinforced in the final sentence of the passage, in which Olenin's voice effectively merges with, and, we might even say, begins to take over, that of the narrator: "*Abreki ryskaiut v stepi, i **ia** edu, ikh ne boius', u **menia** ruzhie i sila, a gory...*" ["Abreks canter about the plain, and here **I** am driving along and do not fear them; **I** have a gun, and strength, and youth...but the mountains..."] (my emphasis) (14, 97)

Here we are given our first glimpse of the emergence of a unique selfhood on the part of the hero. That self emerges as an attenuated interior monologue from

within the narrative. The effect of this technique is to enact before the reader the subtle emergence of a self that gropes for self-assertion, but which does not yet have anything specific to say. It is a self that is full of youthful vigor and a feeling of endless possibility, but which has not yet discovered an adequate form through which to channel its abundant energies. The mountains, still a large and inchoate presence in Olenin's mind, continue to be for the hero the external manifestation of his expansive, inner self. But in his continued association of his inner world with the external world of nature, Olenin still shows himself lacking in a certain understanding that will come to him only later in the novel, in the scene in which he is alone in the thicket and enters the stag's lair. He still lacks a clear awareness of his particular *relationship* as a unique, individuated self to the outside natural world, and of the rich creative potential that such a relationship entails.

If in the mountain scene Olenin is only just beginning to understand where nature ends and he begins, then in the stag's lair scene this understanding will grow more refined. The stag's lair scene may thus be read as both an echo and an expansion of the mountain scene. Olenin goes from being fully immersed in his natural surroundings to becoming more consciously aware of his distinction from those surroundings. Olenin is finally able to dislodge his sense of himself from all association with the external natural world, and in so doing he begins to achieve an independent, creative vision of his own. It is of intrinsic interest how Tolstoy communicates artistically in the text the subtle process by which Olenin's conscious self begins to assert itself, first as a voice that merges ambiguously with that of the narrator (as in the mountain scene), and then as an actual spoken voice which exists

independently of the narrator's. We will trace this process, beginning with the following lines:

> Having been covered in the myriad of mosquitoes, Olenin was ready to run away from them and it seemed to him that it was impossible to live in this country in the summer. He was about to go home, but remembering that other people managed to endure such pain, he resolved to bear it and gave himself up to be devoured. And strange to say, by noontime the feeling became actually pleasant. (76,163)

These lines reveal not merely Hamlet-like doubt in our hero, but actually an inner world that, in its wavering, is continually moving forward, moving in the direction of some sort of resolution: "And strange to say, by noontime the feeling became actually pleasant." The words "*strannoe delo*" are not in quotation marks, and yet they seem to belong to Olenin's, and not to the narrator's, consciousness. Olenin's inner experience--the unexpectedness of his movement from discomfort to joy--is externalized and becoming part of the experience of the text itself. Olenin's consciousness has thus crept to the surface as it were and is beginning to exist on an even plane with the narrator's discourse.

Two sentences later we read:

> *Eti miriady nasekomykh tak shli k etoi dikoi, do bezobraziia bogatoi rastitel'nosti, k etoi bezdne zverei i ptits, napolniaiushchikh les, k etoi temnoi zeleni, k etomu pakhuchemu, zharkomu vozdukhu, k etim kanavkam mutnoi vody, vezde prosachivaiushchiesia iz Tereka bul'bul'kuiushchei gde-nibud' pod navisshimi listiami, chto emu stalo priiatno imenno to, chto prezhde kazalos' uzhasnym i nesterpimym*.
>
> These myriads of insects were so well suited to that monstrously lavish wild vegetation, these multitudes of birds and beasts which filled the forest, this dark foliage, this hot scented air, these runlets filled with turbid water which everywhere soaked through from the Terek and gurgled here and there under the overhanging leaves, that very thing which had at first seemed dreadful and intolerable now seemed pleasant. (76,163)

The length and construction of this sentence is essential to the impression it creates of an emotional experience that is continually intensifying, and of a narrative experience that is moving forward almost with exasperation as though towards some destination. This impression is created in part by the five-time repetition of the phrase "*k etikh*". There is another significant formal aspect to this sentence, in the primary phrase beginning with "*eti miriady nasekomykh tak shli k etoi dikoi, do bezobraziia bogatoi rastitel'nosti*" ("These myriads of insects were so well suited to that monstrously lavish wild vegetation"). This sentence is intended as a continuation of the previous sentence, as an explanation of why Olenin feels the irritation of the mosquitoes is an essential aspect of the entire experience. But is this sentence told from the omniscient narrator's, or from Olenin's, point of view? The reader is not quite certain. We feel ambiguity. We have the impression that there is a second consciousness alongside of the narrator's, bubbling forth in the text and groping for self-expression.

A few sentences later we arrive at the resolution towards which the text has been nudging us. Having discovered the stag's lair, Olenin lies down. "He felt cool and comfortable and did not think of or wish for anything." Olenin's complete harmony with his surrounding is suggested by the impersonal construction, "*emu bylo prokhladno, uiutno*." Here Olenin has attained a naive synthesis with the world. No sooner is that synthesis attained than Olenin begins to break it down a few lines later. Olenin's subjective "I" appears: "Suddenly, with extraordinary clearness, he thought that here I am, Dmitry Olenin, a being quite distinct from every other being...." Olenin's subjective "I" is now clearly present, but it is not yet fully individuated. It is still buried within the narrator's voice. But in the next sentence, Olenin's "I" fully

emerges as a distinct voice. It becomes the subject of a sentence placed in quotation marks: “Here I sit, and around me stand old and young trees, one of them festooned with wild grape vines, and pheasants are fluttering, driving one another about and perhaps scenting their murdered brothers.” (76,164) The language here is very specific, just as the narrator’s language has been throughout the passage. It therefore contrasts with much of the language Olenin used earlier to describe his impressions about the Caucasus during his trip southward. Tolstoy seems to be suggesting that the emergence of Olenin’s individuated self also leads him to a heightened awareness of the details in his surroundings, that Olenin’s self-awareness leads him to a sharper awareness of everything that lies outside of the self:

> He felt his pheasants, examined them, and wiped the warm blood off his hand onto his coat. ‘Perhaps the jackals scent them and with dissatisfied faces go off in another direction: above me, flying in among the leaves which to them seem enormous islands, mosquitoes hang in the air and buzz: one, two, three, four, a hundred, a thousand, a million mosquitoes, and all of them buzz something or other and each one of them is separate from all else and is just such a separate Dmitry Olenin as I am myself.’ He vividly imagined what the mosquitoes buzzed: ‘This way, this way, lads! Here’s some one we can eat!’ They buzzed and stuck to him. And it was clear to him that he was not a Russian nobleman, a member of Moscow society, the friend and relation of so-and-so and so-and-so, but just such a mosquito, or pheasant, or deer, as those that were now living all around him. (77,164)

Tolstoy shows here how Olenin’s awareness of himself as an individuated being also leads him to an awareness of the individuality of every element in his surroundings. Olenin’s transformation from a naive self into an individuated, aware self is thus shown by Tolstoy to be the beginning of a creative, dialogic relationship between the hero and his surrounding world. It may be tempting for the reader to idealize Olenin’s unself-conscious, naive state when “he felt cool and comfortable

and did not think of or wish for anything." To be sure, this is a privileged moment in the novel, as most scholars agree.[43] It is a moment in which all the confusion and contradictions of Olenin's inner world seem to melt away. But Tolstoy shows that there is in this naive subjectivity also an absence of something that will emerge only when Olenin's self-consciousness appears: both moral and intellectual awareness.

Olenin's moral awareness, that is, his awareness of his living relationship with, and thus responsibility towards, the other beings around him, emerges only at the moment in which the hero becomes conscious of himself. Olenin concludes that his ultimate goal is personal happiness, but that this goal conflicts with the immutable laws of nature which are indifferent to the wishes of the individual. He resolves this dilemma by concluding that personal happiness lies ultimately not in self-gratification, but in "living for others." "Love and self-sacrifice," Olenin concludes, are the only desires that may be satisfied "despite external circumstances," whereas desires aimed purely at self-gratification are subject to the whims of uncontrollable outside forces and therefore cannot ensure individual happiness.

Tolstoy is showing us here the importance for the hero of having a theoretical structure in which to interpret his experience in the stag's lair. Olenin, it seems, is incapable of continuing to exist in a state of natural, animal-like awareness of other beings. Rather, he has the need to impart some kind of intellectual *form* to that experience, to explain that experience to himself in terms of a rational theory. Olenin's program of self-sacrifice becomes the manifestation of that internal need.

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[43] Edward Wasiolek has rightly called it a "sacramental scene." Edward Wasiolek, *Tolstoy's Major Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.54. Robert Jackson calls Olenin's entry into the thicket "a journey into the core of existence." Robert L. Jackson, "The Archetypal Journey: Aesthetic and Ethical Imperative in the Art of Tolstoj," p. 395.

However noble Olenin's moral aspirations here, Tolstoy will show the contradictions inherent in the hero's attempt at such a systematic morality. When Olenin's theory is moved from the realm of thought and applied to concrete situations, as when he gives Lukashka his horse, it is ultimately deformed by its contact with the complexity of human interactions to such a degree that it ends up achieving the very opposite end from the intended one. In the stag's lair, when Olenin formulates his theory of self-abnegation in isolation from the realities of human relationships, it appears to be motivated by a genuine desire for self-sacrifice. But as soon as that theory is put into practice, it begins to take on other motivations, as well, such as Olenin's desire to be recognized by others:

> Olenin expected that Lukashka would go to share his joy with Maryanka, but though he did not do so Olenin still felt his soul more at ease than ever before in his life. He was delighted as a boy, and could not refrain from telling Vanyusha not only that he had given Lukashka the horse, but also why he had done it, as well as his new theory of happiness. (86,174)

Tolstoy is showing that the problem with Olenin's theory of self-abnegation lies in the fact that this theory, like most theories created by Tolstoy's characters, when applied to actual human relationships, reveals its own contradictory nature. This is shown in the text to be both a contradiction between the intention and result of the theory put into practice, as well as a contradiction contained within the internal structure of the theory itself. In the sphere of lived experience Olenin's desire to achieve an ideal of selflessness comes up against the reality of human interaction in which purely selfless behavior seems to be an impossibility. In the sphere of intellectual experience there is a parallel tension between what Olenin wants to express--his expansiveness of spirit, love of the whole world, and desire for self-transcendence--and *how* he expresses it--

through the limiting medium of rationally organized language, which in this case is embodied in his stated theory.

Tolstoy shows here a tension between the *content* of Olenin's inner life--his noble aspiration to a good that transcends the individual self--and the *form* in which that inner life seeks expression in the world: in the social sphere, through concrete actions intended for specific individuals, and in the mental sphere, through language and thought. Tolstoy thus uncovers here a more complex dynamic within Olenin than merely the movement from a "good" naive, unself-conscious state to a "bad" self-conscious state. Tolstoy shows rather the presence of a tension within Olenin, and thus of dialogue, between these two poles of human experience. The emergence of self-awareness within Olenin marks the beginning of this dialogue in its fullest, most distinct form. In the text this moment is represented by the presence of Olenin's quoted speech. This is the beginning of a self that consciously aspires to self-transcendence; of a self that is morally and intellectually alive, and which thus becomes a locus for all the struggles and contradictions that such an inner life entails.

This Tolstoyan idea of an aware self that becomes also an internally divided, or "dialogic," self has its roots in world literature, as Lidia Ginzburg has shown. "Psychologism," Ginzburg writes in *O psikhologicheskoi proze*, "was closely connected with moralism from ancient times before Tolstoy. Self-knowledge is a dual act of analysis and evaluation."[44] In Tolstoy's artistic world, tendencies towards "analysis and evaluation" are associated with a modern self that has lost its Eden-like spontaneity and wholeness. And yet they are also the very qualities that create the

[44] Lidiia Ginzburg, *O psikhologicheskoi proze* (Leningrad, 1971), pp. 290-297.

possibility for ethical impulses ("moralism"), intellectual reflection ("analysis"), and self-expression, such as writing. Tolstoy's attitude towards the loss of pre-modern wholeness is thus paradoxical. Tolstoy's intellect is an example of a modern paradox aptly described by Geoffrey Hartman, "The mind which acknowledges the existence or past existence of immediate life knows that its present strength is based on a separation from that life."[45]

Olenin's ability to imagine, to create, to enter into a living dialogic relationship with his world, appears only at the moment that he becomes an aware, perceiving subject of that world. It is precisely at the moment when Olenin's subjective "I" emerges that the hero begins to perceive his surroundings in a fresh and dynamic way. He begins to imagine what the jackals are thinking, what the mosquitoes are buzzing, and to transform himself mentally from a social being ("a Russian nobleman, a member of Moscow society, the friend and relation of so-and-so and so-and-so") into a natural being ("a mosquito, or pheasant, or deer"). He becomes a kind of artist, a human subject capable of reorganizing and even internalizing the external world through creative acts of the imagination. In this moment, Olenin becomes an active co-creator alongside his own creator. Just as Tolstoy throughout the novel often destabilizes and thereby heightens our sense of reality, so Olenin imagines his world here in a fresh, creative way, and in so doing, invites the reader to think differently about the relationship of the human individual to the natural order. In Olenin's capacity to recreate the world through his heightened moral and intellectual awareness lies one of the central ideas of the novel: the idea that, while there exists an

[45] Geoffrey Hartman, "Romanticism and 'Anti-Self-Consciousness," in *Romanticism and Consciousness*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1970), p. 49.

objective order of things that transcends the individual will, the individual mind also has the capacity mentally to reshape and even temporarily transform that order.

In just this moment of reflection, in which Olenin imagines the speech and thoughts of other beings, the hero comes closest to understanding and expressing something that is "true" in the novel. That is, it is precisely in the moment in which Olenin is acting as a conscious creator, as an *artist*, that he is able to know and say something meaningful and deep about his world. What for Olenin in the prior moment was a mere intuition about the existence of something ineffably great in the world has now been given a creative *form* in which to be expressed. And it is, not coincidentally, a characteristically Tolstoyan form. It is that organic, novelistic form, which we have discussed in relation to *The Cossacks*, and in which all of Tolstoy's novellic masterpieces are written. When Olenin transforms this creative, totalistic perspective into an ethical program a few moments later, the imaginative, synthetic truth of the world the hero has momentarily tapped into will become replaced by a narrowly systematic one. Olenin will then go from being a temporary creative subject of his world to the object, once again, of Tolstoy's ironic eye.

The stag's lair scene illustrates the extent to which Olenin's existential searchings in the novel are associated in the hero's mind with a search for a specifically moral order. There is no particular reason why this should be the case. The novel posits no *a priori* connection between the human search for existential meaning and the search for moral goodness. This linkage, it appears, is the created product of Olenin's mind. It is the result of the hero's inability to imagine an existential order that exists outside of moral categories. Indeed, for a brief few

moments in the stag's lair the hero experiences what such a supra-moral existential order might look like. This can be seen both in the naive, unselfconscious moment of communion with his surroundings *and* in the moment in which Olenin imparts to that experience an imaginative, intellectual form. The former is an experience of an almost complete loss of self; the latter of a self which comes into being only through the creative internal synthesis of the external world. These moments are fleeting in the novel, precisely because they represent existential possibilities which the hero is still unprepared, or unable, to realize.

Tolstoy emphasizes this point in the novel in the way in which the author contrasts Olenin's experience of nature in the stag's lair with Lukashka's experience of nature in the cordon. Both scenes are privileged moments in the novel. They both depict moments in which human beings are engaged in intense communion with nature. But there are some important differences in both content and form between these two scenes, which represent important differences between the two characters. In the stag's lair scene, we saw the way in which the emergence in Olenin of a conscious self capable of intellectual and moral reflection is partly represented in the text through Tolstoy's manipulation of the narrative. The emergence of Olenin's self-awareness is felt as Olenin's voice first begins to merge with that of the narrator and then ultimately supersedes it. In the scene where Lukashka is at the cordon, there is a very different relationship between the human individual and nature, and Tolstoy's manipulation of the narrative is correspondingly different.

If Olenin is portrayed as a human subject within whom there emerges an aware, perceiving intellect, then Lukashka is described almost entirely as the object of

his surroundings when he is at the cordon. Lukashka becomes more of an extension than a perceiving subject of his surroundings. He is described like a wild animal, incapable of moral or intellectual reflection, totally in tune with the rhythms of nature. There is a highly poetic quality to Tolstoy's language in this scene, which reveals traces of one of the earliest intended genres of the work, that of narrative poem:[46]

> *Ravnomernye nochnye zvuki, shurshanie kamyshin, khrapenie kazakov, zhuzhzhanie komarov i techenie vody preryvalis' izredka to dal'nym vystrelom, to bul'kaniem otvalivshegosia berega, to vspleskom bol'shoi ryby, to treskom zveria po dikomu, zaroshshemy lesu.*
>
> The rhythmic sounds of night--the rustling of the reeds, the snoring of the Cossacks, the hum of mosquitoes, and the rushing water, were every now and then broken by a shot fired in the distance, or by the gurgling of water when a piece of bank slipped down, the splash of a big fish, or the crashing of an animal breaking through the thick undergrowth in the wood. (31,115)

While in the distance shots can be heard, in the camp there appears to be a complete harmony between the natural and the human world. Both are shown to be mingled in a kind of poetic totality of life that is highlighted by Tolstoy in the rhymed phrases: *khrapenie kazakov*, *zhuzhzhanie komarov*. ("the snoring of the Cossacks, the hum of mosquitoes") Tolstoy creates a sense of poetic unity between the Cossacks and their natural surroundings in the rhyming of *kazakov* and *komarov*. Throughout the stag's lair scene we find many phrases of which Olenin is the subject: *Olenin gotov byl* ("Olenin was ready")*, on uzhe poshel* ("he was about to go home")*, on zakhotel otdokhnut'* ("he felt inclined to rest"), *on otyskal*, *on osmotrel* ("he searched out," "he examined"). These phrases indicate for the reader the presence of a mentally aware

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[46] For a discussion of this and other matters related to the composition of the novel, see A. E. Gruzinskii, "Istoriia pisaniia i pechataniia 'Kazakov,'" in PSS, vol. 6, pp. 271-293. For a thorough analysis of the many generic forms Tolstoy considered using for the work, see C. J. G. Turner, "Tolstoy's 'The Cossacks': The Question of Genre," *The Modern Language Review* (July 1978), vol. 73, pp. 563-72.

and active subject. However, in the scene describing Lukashka's presence in nature, we read an entire paragraph in which only nature is the subject of every sentence, such as the one quoted above.

That Tolstoy probably intended this scene to be read in comparison to the stag's lair scene is evident not only by the fact that both scenes depict the only extended moments in the novel in which an individual is alone in nature. The intended comparison is also evident in the nearly identical structure of the opening sentences of each scene. In the case of Lukashka at the cordon, "*Noch' byla temnaia, teplaia, i bezvetrennaia*." ("The night was dark, warm and still.") In the stag's lair scene: "*Den' byl sovershenno iasnyi, tikhii, zharkii*." ("The day was perfectly clear, calm, and hot.") Lukashka's privileged moment in the novel takes place in the darkness and mysterious atmosphere of the night; Olenin's in the full light of day. Lukashka's association with the night is intended to heighten for the reader the sense of the Cossack's mysterious and ultimately hidden inner nature. Lukashka is a kind of Rousseauian noble savage, a man of primitive sentiment and raw, unreflected action. He is described in this scene almost like a wild animal searching out his prey in the darkness of the night. With the exception of some perfunctory thoughts, the reader is given no sense of Lukashka's inner life in this scene or almost anywhere in the novel. It is as though his inner life does not exist, and when it does appear in the form of a brief thought about his mistress or excited anticipation about his killing of an *abrek*, it is devoid of any of the moral and intellectual awareness that animate Olenin's inner world in the stag's lair.

There is no commentary or moral rebuke on the author's part when describing Lukashka at the cordon, in the same way that Tolstoy expresses in his diaries of the period the need to substitute a Christian ethic of universal love for the supra-moral Homeric poetry of violence and nature.[47] We find in Tostoy's description of Lukashka at the cordon just such an expression of this Homer-like poetry of beautiful and essentially immoral nature that Tolstoy was attracted to but also apparently wished to suppress in himself. Tolstoy's art thus transcends his own intellectual desires as formulated in the diaries of the period. Robert Jackson has shown the way in which the struggle between Homeric and Christian ethics in Tolstoy is central to Olenin's search for himself.[48] I concur with Jackson and would add that Tolstoy's intention in comparing Lukashka's supra-moral, naive experience of nature with Olenin's self-conscious experience of nature is not to mystify one and demystify the other, but to create within the novel as a whole an internal dialogue between these two poles of human experience, just as these poles exist within Olenin himself and animate much of his inner struggle. In the description of Lukashka at the cordon we hear one sort of poetry: the pre-verbal, elemental poetry of natural man in harmony with his

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[47] The battle within Tolstoy between primitive immediacy and a religious, systematic morality in his work on *The Cossacks* seems to be especially sharp in 1857. One illustration of this conflict can be seen in the fact that Tolstoy is torn in 1857 by his simultaneous attraction to two books whose philosophical outlooks represent the two poles of Tolstoy's own divided vision of life at that time: *The Iliad*, with its celebration of the ecstasy of violence, its supra-moral acceptance of the plenitude of life with all of its good and evil, and *The Gospels*, with its didacticism and religious moralism. In August 1857 Tolstoy goes into ecstasies over his reading of the *Iliad*: "Read the *Iliad*. That's the thing! Wonderful! Wrote to Ryabinin. I must revise the whole of the Caucasian tale [*The Cossacks*]." (Quoted in R.F. Christian, ed., *Tolstoy's Diaries*, vol.1, 1847-1894, p. 141). Two days later Tolstoy repeats this thought: "The *Iliad* is making me completely rethink *The Fugitive* [*The Cossacks*]." *(Diaries*, vol.1, p. 141) Less than two weeks later, Tolstoy writes in his diary: "Finished reading the *unbelievably delightful* ending of the *Iliad*. [italics in original] Read the Gospels, which I haven't done for a long time. After the *Iliad*. How could Homer not have known that goodness is love! It's a revelation! There is no better explanation." (*Diaries*, vol.1, p.142.)

[48] Robert L. Jackson, "The Archetypal Journey: Aesthetic and Ethical Imperative in the Art of Tolstoj."

surroundings. In Olenin in the stag's lair we hear the poetry of a self-conscious, intellectually and morally aware self in dialogue with his surroundings and with himself. *The Cossacks* represents a tension between these two ways of being, and demonstrates that both are essential aspects of an ultimately unified, if never stable or finalized, totality of human experience.

The denouement of the Lukashka-Olenin juxtaposition in the novel can be found in the battle scene in the second to last chapter. The roles played by Lukashka and Olenin in that scene befit their respective characters. Lukashka is the fearless and brash warrior, leading the Cossack troops in their battle against the Chechens, and Olenin is described as the fumbling, if genuinely curious outsider attempting to make sense of an event in which he is clearly out of his element. While Tolstoy's emphasis in the scene is on the differing ways Lukashka and Olenin react to and participate in the battle, the author gives us a small, but highly significant detail which briefly deflects and then refocuses the reader's attention on the Lukashka-Olenin comparison. The cornet, who is described as no less confused and out of place in the scene than Olenin, sees the wounded Chechen who fired at Lukashka. "The cornet went up to him as if intending to pass by, and with a quick movement shot him in the ear." (145, 238).There is something ignoble and cowardly in the cornet's action. Lukashka's killing of the Chechens, however violent, is shown to be the result of some mysterious inner passion, of an irrational, Achilles-like love of battle. There is a mythic and noble savagery when Lukashka holds the wounded Chechen in his bare hands, shouting "Don't kill him. I'll take him alive!" There is in him the presence of that primitive instinct for violence that we witnessed in the cordon scene. That

excitement is raw and immoral, but it is also described by the young Tolstoy with a poetic admiration. In contrast, there is cowardice and slyness in the cornet's furtive act of shooting the Chechen in the ear after having pretended to walk by him. This cowardice is highlighted by its contrast not only to Lukashka's boldness, but also to the heroism of the Chechen himself: "Like a wounded hawk all covered with blood (blood was flowing from a wound under his right eye), pale and gloomy, he looked about him with wide-open eyes and teeth clenched as he crouched, dagger in hand, still prepared to defend himself." (145,237)

The purpose of the detail about the cornet in this scene is to depict the presence of a moral universe so removed from the poetic and ultimately noble spirit of the Cossacks in battle that the Olenin-Lukashka contrast pales in comparison to the contrast between the cornet and the other warriors. The cornet is, in fact, the only character in the novel who is described with consistent derision. When the author ironizes Olenin, it is with a light and playful humor and with the intention ultimately of humanizing his weaknesses and aspirations. When the author questions the immoral ways of Lukashka, it is always mingled with an admiration for the young man's mythic stature. But there is almost no playfulness or ambivalence in Tolstoy's treatment of the cornet. He is somehow beyond the pale of acceptability in Tolstoy's moral universe. His presence in the novel serves to remind the readers that, for all the contrasts between Lukashka's and Olenin's natures, they are ultimately more similar than different when compared with the cornet. In both Lukashka and Olenin there is an almost mythic fullness of life. Lukashka possesses an abundance of physical vitality; Olenin an abundance of inner vitality. The cornet has neither. In comparison

to the two youths, he appears small and petty. The reader is reminded in this scene, therefore, that, alongside of the ambivalent and objective portrait of life in the novel, there exists a subjective authorial consciousness that does finally possess a sense of right and wrong. In Tolstoy's artistic universe, characters who embody the fullness of life--either by means of an unconscious primitive spirit or through conscious moral strivings--are "right." They ennoble human life. Characters, such as the cornet, who are lacking in primitive authenticity and/or mental vitality, are "wrong." They impoverish and deaden life--both within themselves and in others.

If we think about all the scenes to which we have paid special attention in this chapter--the novel's opening, the mountain scene, the stag's lair scene, and the battle scene--then we detect a progression that runs throughout the work as a whole and links all of the scenes we have analyzed. We discover a certain philosophical movement from the novel's opening, in which Olenin's search for self is just beginning, to the mountain scene, in which Olenin's "I" begins to emerge more clearly, to the stag's lair scene, in which that "I" becomes a fully individuated and creative presence in the text, to the battle scene, in which Olenin's search for self becomes subsumed once again into a larger, more permanent Tolstoyan truth of life. Continual movement and growth amidst recurrent inner conflict: these are the defining features of Olenin's internal world, and they are mirrored in the progression of the text of the novel itself. Thus, alongside the intensive dialogue that takes place in the text between the narrator's voice and Olenin's exists also a deep unity between those two voices. Both the narrator and his character are engaged, finally, in a common and ever-expanding search for order in a chaotic world.

The Real and the Ideal: Nikolai Strakhov's Engagement with *War and Peace*

In the next two chapters I will perform close readings of various passages from *War and Peace*. By means of these close readings I will show that there is throughout the novel a pattern of mental ordering of facts by human subjects: both by the characters in relation to their surroundings, and also by the narrator in relation to his characters. By analyzing this dimension of the text, I will demonstrate the way in which *War and Peace* poetically explores, and itself embodies, the universal human aspiration to create inner order out of an inherently orderless external world. This abstract philosophical problem in *War and Peace*, which can be fruitfully examined on the basis of the text itself, also has its roots in a concrete intellectual-historical context of the 1860's in Russia. In this chapter, I will focus on one aspect of that context. I will analyze two important articles about *War and Peace*, one written in 1868, the other in 1870, by the prominent critic and Tolstoy's contemporary, Nikolai Strakhov.

The first of these two articles can offer us useful clues as to how *War and Peace* might be approached from a philosophical point of view, as well as shed light on the way in which Tolstoy's novel resonated with the existential searchings of some of its contemporary readers. In the later article Strakhov takes a more ideologically-motivated approach to the work. In so doing, he reveals to us how closely linked in the critic's mind were, on the one hand, an aspiration to discover in *War and Peace* a unifying philosophical order, and, on the other hand, his tendency to impose upon the

work a totalizing ideological order.[49] In this respect, Strakhov is intellectually similar to many of Tolstoy's own searching subjects, and to Tolstoy himself, in whom the aspiration to a unifying vision of life is never far removed from the tendency to impose totalizing systems upon the world. Strakhov thus becomes another character, as it were, in the drama of the searching subject in Tolstoy's novels, which I have been pursuing throughout this dissertation. His articles about *War and Peace*, juxtaposed against one another, reveal to us the way in which that drama took place outside of Tolstoy's novels, no less than within them. Strakhov's articles also reveal the extent to which that drama was part of the existential strivings of the age in which *War and Peace* was born.

Strakhov's 1868 article on *War and Peace* was written in an age in which literary criticism was becoming dominated by ideologically-motivated social and political concerns.[50] Strakhov's focus on the artistic merits of *War and Peace* is one of the things that distinguished his article from the radical criticism of the time. Strakhov's emphasis on this dimension of the work was not the result of some kind of aesthetic purism. There were in the 1860's in Russia proponents of the doctrine of

[49] By "unifying philosophical order" I mean a perception of the novel as an organically unified structure, held together by a certain set of philosophical and aesthetic principles intrinsic to the work itself. A "totalizing ideological order" is also a perception of the novel as a unified structure. Only in this case the structure is unified by a system of logic that is external, rather than internal, to the work. A "totalizing ideological order" tends to see the work as an expression of an ideological, as opposed to an aesthetic or metaphysical, vision. Now the work becomes an argument for a certain set of principles that lie entirely outside the work itself. In the case of Strakhov's article, this set of principles will belong to the realm of sociology. By looking outside the work for its organizing principle, Strakhov imposes upon the work his own unifying structure, rather than observing the way in which such a structure is expressed in the complex aesthetic and philosophical totality of the work itself.
[50] Two excellent studies of this period are Irina Paperno*, Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); and Charles Moser, *Esthetics as Nightmare: Russian Literary Theory, 1855-1870* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

"*l'art pour l'art*",[51] but Strakhov was not among them. Strakhov believed in the power of literature to speak to larger philosophical concerns, as we will see. The feature that distinguishes Strakhov's criticism from that of the radical mainstream lies not in his opposition to the interpretation of literature in the context of non-aesthetic issues, but rather in his desire--and ability--to show the way in which a superior work of literature represents these larger issues in a unique and unrepeatable way.

To appreciate more fully the uniqueness of Strakhov's approach to *War and Peace*, it might be helpful to compare it to another contemporary response to the novel by a representative of the radical mainstream, Dmitry Pisarev. Pisarev's article, "*Staroe Barstvo*" ("The Old Gentry"), published in 1868 in "Fatherland Notes," uses Tolstoy's novel as a springboard for his discussion of the "pathology of Russian society" of the era of Alexander I, and by extension, of the current era, as well.[52] In *War and Peace*, Pisarev argues, Tolstoy "poses and decides the question about what happens to human minds and characters in those conditions which create the possibility for people to get by without knowledge, without energy, and without labor."[53] Pisarev is referring here, of course, to the gentry class, which was a frequent object of attack among many representatives of the radical intelligentsia of the time. In the article Pisarev focuses his discussion on the figures of Boris Drubetskoi and Nicholas Rostov. Of the two characters Rostov is the far less admired by Pisarev. Boris is a practical-minded careerist who possesses some of the skills which could potentially make him a productive member of society. Rostov, on the other hand, is a

[51] One of the foremost proponents of this position was the poet and friend of Tolstoy's, Afanasy Fet.
[52] V.A. Zelinskii, ed., *Russkaia kriticheskaia literatura o proizvedeniiakh L.N. Tolstogo: khronologicheskii sbornik kritiko-bibliograficheskikh statei* (Ann Arbor, Mich., University Microfilms reprint, 1966), vol.2, p.146.
[53] Ibid..

spoiled and weak-willed child of privilege, according to Pisarev. Boris is a man of action, Rostov a man of sentiment. Boris "seeks solid and tangible benefits" for himself, whereas "Rostov wants more than anything, and come what may, bustle, glamour, strong sensations, effective scenes and bright pictures."[54]

Pisarev's analysis of these two characters from *War and Peace* provides a typical example of one dominant feature of contemporary criticism. The human qualities that are privileged in Pisarev's world view are the same qualities that were valued among many members of the radical mainstream: pragmatism, individualism, a faith in the Enlightenment value of reason, as opposed to the Romantic value of feeling, and an emphasis on the material, as opposed to the spiritual, sides of human life and society. The reason Boris "is more intelligent and has a deeper character than Rostov," according to Pisarev, is that "in Boris there is a far greater capacity to observe attentively and to make sensible generalizations about surrounding phenomena." [55] That is, Boris is the ideal materialist. He is able clearly to see the "surrounding facts" of his world, by which Pisarev means material facts. "With the proper development of his talents Boris would make a good investigator while Rostov with the same proper development of his would make in all probability an exceptional artist, poet, musician, or painter."[56] Without denigrating the value of art *per se*, Pisarev makes it clear that for him a rational, scientific understanding of the world is far more useful than an intuitive, artistic one.

But as a literary critic, Pisarev cannot deny the value of art altogether. He needs to come up with a justification for his study of *War and Peace*. He does so in

[54] Ibid., p.168.
[55] Ibid..
[56] Ibid..

"The Old Gentry" by reading the novel as though it were an objective sociological document. He overcomes the problem that scientific knowledge is more useful than artistic knowledge by arguing that *War and Peace* is, in spite of itself, a scientifically useful vision of the world.[57] In effect, Pisarev reads Tolstoy's novel as if it were one of Boris' future scientific experiments:

> Precisely because the author spent much time, labor, and love in studying and representing the epoch and its representatives; precisely for this reason the images created by him live their own life, independent of the author's intentions, enter into a spontaneous relationship with the reader, and lead the reader to such thoughts and conclusions which the author did not have in mind, and of which he would perhaps not even approve....That truth, throbbing with the life of the facts themselves, that truth, bursting forth apart from the personal sympathies and convictions of the story-teller, is especially valuable for its irresistible persuasiveness.[58]

Nowhere in his essay does Pisarev deny that *War and Peace* is a great work of art. In fact, he suggests that precisely because the novel is a superior work of art it reveals social truths that even the author could not have recognized. The author's eye becomes for Pisarev a kind of photographic lens, capable of showing reality to the reader in a unique and accurate way, in spite of the personality beneath that lens. This

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[57] This is the same strategy that Pisarev used in his 1862 essay, "Bazarov" [*Bazarov*]. In that essay Pisarev holds up Turgenev's hero, Bazarov, of *Fathers and Sons*, as the embodiment of the admirable traits of egoism and self-affirmation, qualities towards which Pisarev believed all Russians should strive. In speaking of Bazarov as if he were a real person in society, rather than a literary hero, Pisarev demonstrates his tendency to read Turgenev's novel as if it were a social document, rather than a work of art. In so doing, Pisarev's discussion of the hero elides entirely the ambivalence with which Bazarov is represented by Turgenev in the novel. Edward J. Brown has discussed Pisarev's "transformation" of "art" into "non-art":

...Pisarev's treatment of Turgenev and Dostoevsky is a special case of translation, or paraphrase, or transformation, as I have called it. Here he appropriates two verbal objects that he acknowledges as art and transforms each into non-art, into social meanings. In Kenneth Burke's phrase, he transforms a complexity into a simplicity.

[Edward J. Brown, "Pisarev and the Transformation of Two Novels," in William Mills Todd III, ed., *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia, 1800-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978), pp.151-172.]

[58] Zelinskii, p.147.

strategy of reading the novel as a sociological document is a second feature of Pisarev's article that makes it similar to some of the other radical criticism of the era.

Another prominent example of such a critical approach to literature can be found, for instance, in the article published in 1859 by the sociologically and civically-oriented critic, Nikolai Dobroliubov, "What is Oblomovism?" [*Chto takoe oblomovshchina*?]. In that article Dobroliubov discusses the hero of Goncharov's eponymous novel, *Oblomov*, as the close relative of the so-called "superfluous men" in Russian literature, the progenitor of whom was Pushkin's Eugene Onegin.[59] The critic speaks of Oblomov as if he were an actual social type, and uses him as a whipping boy for his own ideological attack against the liberal gentry. This is not so different from the way in which Pisarev uses Rostov in "The Old Gentry" to illustrate his point "about what happens to human minds and characters in those conditions which create the possibility for people to get by without knowledge, without energy, and without labor."[60] There is, however, at least one important difference between the two essays. While Dobroliubov simply takes for granted that a work of art is an objective mirror of the social reality of its era, Pisarev's "The Old Gentry" displays at least some appreciation of the complex nature of this assumption. Pisarev recognizes the need to justify this assumption, and he does so, although without the rigor and depth one might wish for, on the ground that there is in the novel an objective "truth" about life that exists "apart from the personal sympathies and convictions of the story-teller." There is in the work, Pisarev insists, an objective truthfulness about the world

[59] On the subject of the "superfluous man" in Russian literature, see, for instance, Ellen B. Chances, *Conformity's Children: An Approach to the Superfluous Man in Russian Literature* (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, 1978); and Michael Holquist, *Dostoevsky and the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp.19-20.
[60] Ibid., p.146.

that "you can't conceal in a bag" [*nel'zia utait' v meshke*],[61] as Rostov so often attempts to do.

Strakhov's article about *War and Peace* shares at least two important assumptions with Pisarev's article. The first is that the novel presents an indisputable truth about the world. And the second is that the capacity of the novel to reveal this truth lies in its superior artistry. But here is where the similarity between the arguments of the two critics ends. In Strakhov's article, the assumption that the novel's communicative power lies in its artistry leads to different conclusions than in the case of Pisarev's article. In Pisarev's argument it follows from this assumption that the novel reveals objective truths about the external world, and primarily the social world, that exist independently of the author's perception. Precisely because of the intensive labor that went into the research and writing of the novel, the work unwittingly becomes, according to Pisarev, an accurate mirror of the social reality of the era which the author portrayed. In other words, Tolstoy's hard work and artistic talent lead him, necessarily and unwittingly, to a faithful reproduction of the "truth":

> No matter what [Tolstoy's] goals and intentions may be, no matter how lofty and important are the subjects he is concerned with, the success of his work depends not on these intentions and subjects, but on the *great artistic execution* with which he accomplished these goals and intentions.... [62]

For Strakhov, "what" Tolstoy's novel reveals about the world is not illustrated by, but contained precisely *in*, its artistic "how." Whereas Pisarev focuses on the way in which the work becomes an objective sociological document, Strakhov remains attuned in his analysis to the complex internal workings of the novel itself. He is more

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[61] Ibid., p.147.
[62] Nikolai Strakhov, *Kriticheskie stat'i ob I. S. Turgeneve i L. N. Tolstom (1862-1885)*, vol. 1 (Kiev: I. P. Matchenko, 1901), Ann Arbor, Mi., University Microfilms, pp. 187-88.

aware than Pisarev of the aesthetic and philosophic dimensions of the work. And unlike Pisarev Strakhov remains attuned to the constant presence of a unique authorial subject behind the creation of the work: “If Count L. N. Tolstoy achieved his goals, if he forced everyone to fix their eyes on that which occupied his soul [*to, chto zanimalo ego dushu*], then he accomplished this only because he entirely mastered his instrument, art.”[63]

Strakhov’s concern with the authorial “I” that produced *War and Peace*, and his focus on the internal strivings of the characters within the work, are what distinguishes his reading of the novel most sharply from Pisarev’s. Pisarev is concerned with the capacity of the author--and his characters--to perceive the world as it objectively is. To the extent that they succeed in this effort, they are praised by Pisarev. To the extent that they fail--as Rostov has--they are castigated by the critic. Strakhov, on the other hand, does not share Pisarev’s implicit assumption that there is an objective and immutable reality to be discovered or reproduced by human individuals. Strakhov is concerned with the way in which reality is *created* by the author and by his characters, as well. Strakhov is primarily concerned, that is, with the productive *act*, and not merely with the *fact*, of man’s interaction with his world. In Strakhov’s reading, the human subject--both the author and his characters--do not

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[63] Ibid., p.188. Like Nikolai Chernyshevsky, who coined the phrase “dialectic of the soul” [“*dialektika dushi*”] in his famous reading of Tolstoy’s early military tales and trilogy, “Childhood, Boyhood, Youth,” Strakhov is interested in Tolstoy’s representation of the inner life of man. [N. G. Chernyshevsky, “Detstvo i Otrochestvo. Voennye rasskazy” in *L. N. Tolstoi v russkoi kritike* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1952).] But Strakhov takes Chernyshevsky’s idea one step further. Chernyshevsky is primarily interested in the internal conflict that exists within Tolstoy’s characters. Like Pisarev in “The Old Gentry,” he is concerned with the way in which objective truths about human behavior are depicted in Tolstoy’s prose. Strakhov argues that Tolstoy’s prose depicts the inner philosophical and psychological strivings of the author himself. For Strakhov the strivings of the characters in Tolstoy’s novel are interesting because they are a microcosm of the strivings of the author himself, of “that which occupied [the writer’s] soul.”

merely exist in the world. They act upon it. They do not merely see or fail to see external reality for what it is. They participate in the creation of that reality. A superior artist, according to Strakhov, does not merely present the world according to some pre-conceived idea or ideological scheme. Rather, he participates in the world. His perception of the world is never static, but alive. He looks at the world through a uniquely powerful, and transformative, set of lenses.

"Not all kinds of realism are the same," Strakhov writes in the article. "Art essentially can never reject the ideal and always strives for it; and the more clearly and vividly one senses that striving in the creation of realism, the loftier that realism is, the nearer it is to being truly artistic."[64] Herein lies the difference, according to Strakhov, between Tolstoy's realism and that of his less gifted contemporaries who

> turn their souls into a simple photographic instrument and photograph with it whatever pictures happen to arise: Then simple-minded readers, imagining that before them appear genuine artists, will be not a little surprised upon seeing that absolutely nothing becomes of these writers. The matter, however, is understandable; these writers were faithful to reality not because it was brightly illuminated by their ideal, but because they themselves did not see further than that which they depicted. They stood on the same level as the reality that they described.[65]

Although Strakhov does not name specifically the practitioners of what he calls "photographic realism," we may assume that he is referring to those prose writers who became popular in Russia in the 1860's for their stark reportage of the various social ills of the time. Among the most prominent of this group of minor novelists, who are sometimes called "the plebeian novelists of the sixties" (*belletristy-*

[64] Ibid., p.194. Charles Moser also quotes these lines from Strakhov's article, and in his book he places them in the context of the larger contemporary debate about the nature and proper function of art in society. Specifically, Moser places Strakhov's article in the context of the debate about the extent to which art should depict the real, and the extent to which it should aspire to create an ideal. See Charles A. Moser, *Esthetics as Nightmare: Russian Literary Theory, 1855-1870*, pp.153-154.
[65] Strakhov, p.194.

raznochintsy) by literary historians, were Nikolai Uspensky, Reshetnikov, and Pomyalovsky. Uspensky and Reshetnikov became popular for their unadorned portrayal of ugly truths of peasant life. Pomyalovsky was best known for his novel *Molotov* (1861), which describes the frustrations of a typical young idealist of the 1860's. These novelists drew on the form of the physiological sketch, practiced by Turgenev and Gogol before them, in order to expose the evils of the contemporary social order.[66] Presumably, Strakhov's distaste for the work of such prose writers stemmed, in part, from their advocacy of radical political positions. Interestingly, though, Strakhov's criticism of "photographic realism" is based here on a judgment, not of the politics, but of the artistic quality, of such realism. Apparently, what Strakhov disliked most about the politics of the "Enlightened" radicals of his generation--their privileging of the material over the spiritual dimensions of the world; their mechanistic and atomistic, rather than organic, sense of human life; their inability to recognize an ideal of human beauty and transcendent order amidst the corruption and chaos of the world--is precisely what he disliked in the art of the "photographic realists," as well. Like their counterparts in the political sphere, these realist writers do not go beyond their perception of the unfortunate facts of the world in order to discover in those facts a higher unifying truth. They fail, through the unique power of art, to transform the objective ugliness of life into a subjective vision of beauty at the same time.

Tolstoy, on the other hand, is able to rise above this "photographic" sort of realism in his art and to describe the ordinary in an extraordinary way, to "penetrate

[66] See Joachim T. Baer, "The 'Physiological Sketch' in Russian Literature" in Joachim T. Baer and Norman W. Ingham, eds., *Mnemozina: Studia litteraria russica in honorem Vsevolod Setchkarev* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1974), pp.l-12.

that poetry which is hidden in reality."[67] This, according to Strakhov, is one of Tolstoy's major contributions to Russian literature, and the organizing principle of his art, as expressed in *War and Peace*. Tolstoy, for Strakhov, creates a sort of artistic realism that is inspired also by the ideal in human life:

> We would be mistaken here if we were to stop on the issue of the realistic strivings of the artist, exhibited with such unusual power, and forget about the source which inspired these strivings. A realistic depiction of the human soul was essential [to Tolstoy] in order that a genuine realization of the ideal, however weak, might appear before us all the more powerfully and all the more truthfully. In these souls, worried and overwhelmed by their desires and external events, sharply imprinted upon by their own indelible particularities, the artist was able to capture each feature, each trace of genuine inner beauty, of genuine human dignity.[68]

As these lines reveal, Strakhov's interest in Tolstoy's unique form of realism in *War and Peace* stems from the critic's deeper philosophical interest in the way in which the novel celebrates the beauty and dignity of the human individual. It does this, according to Strakhov, not by means of abstract generalization or romanticization of the individual, but by representing him in all his concrete and multi-faceted manifestations. Strakhov shows the way in which Tolstoy's form of realist poetics, which captures the particularity of each human being, evokes in the reader a sense of the sheer living presence of the human individual in the face of the large and impersonal historical forces that threaten to overpower him. Tolstoy's realism, for Strakhov, represents the human individual with such depth and ennobling honesty as to cause that individual, however small and imperfect, to appear before the reader as the manifestation of the ideal itself, as the embodiment of the ultimate good itself in

[67] Ibid., p. 202.
[68] Ibid., p. 208.

life. “The broader subject of the author,” Strakhov writes at another point in the article, “is, simply, *man*.”[69]

When Strakhov speaks of Tolstoy’s striving for the ideal in his realistic depiction of human life in *War and Peace*, then, the critic is not referring to the author’s aspiration to represent a Utopian ideal which would replace the imperfect real world as it now exists. The critic has in mind rather Tolstoy’s aspiration to discover a higher meaning in the here-and-now, in the world as it exists in actuality. For Strakhov, the ideal in Tolstoy’s novel does not emerge, therefore, only during special moments, or in certain privileged scenes. It is not represented in the novel in the unattainable “wonderful life” (*prekrasnaia zhizn’*), which we imagine to be superior to our “ordinary everyday reality” (*obyknovennaia budnichnaia deistvitel’nost’*).[70] That is, the ideal in Tolstoy’s novel does not exist in a romanticized “that” towards which the real aspires, or in an imaginary superior “other” being, which “we” ordinary mortals should seek to emulate. It exists, rather, within *this* imperfect world, and within every ordinary *real* human being that lives and struggles in this world. The ideal, for Strakhov, exists *in the midst of* the real in Tolstoy’s novel. It is embodied in the presence of a subtle authorial spirit that hovers constantly over the fictional universe of the novel, organizing that universe for us according to some

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[69] Ibid., p.205.

[70] These are phrases that Strakhov himself uses in the article:

> What is an ordinary man in comparison with the hero? What is the private man in relation to history? In a more general form this is just the question which has long since been worked out by our artistic realism: what is the ordinary, everyday reality in comparison with the ideal, the wonderful life? [*chto takoe obyknovennaia, budnichnaia deistvitel’nost’--v sravnenii s idealom, s prekrasnoiu zhizniu*?] (Strakhov, p. 197).

mysterious principle of verisimilitude that represents the world to us both as it is, and also as somehow more perfect than it is, in reality.

One of the underlying theoretical assumptions of Strakhov's article on *War and Peace*--that the novel expresses the author's ability to depict the ordinary in an extraordinary way, and thereby to infuse the real with the spirit of his ideal--posits a notion of Tolstoyan authorship that is close to the motif of the searching subject in Tolstoy's fiction that I have been developing throughout this dissertation: the idea of the human being as the object of forces and truths that are larger than he, and at the same time as the creative subject, who is capable of internalizing the external world and mentally transforming it according to his private, inner vision. Indeed, in Strakhov's analysis of Tolstoy's novel, the artist becomes both a kind of conduit through which external reality is relayed to the reader in a pure, unadorned fashion, and at the same time an actively creative subject, who leaves the stamp of his individuality and his unique mode of self-expression on the portrait of reality he offers. Tolstoy, in Strakhov's analysis, becomes both a transferor *and* a transformer of reality.

In one respect, Strakhov's article about *War and Peace*, written in 1868, fully reflects the spirit of the time and place in which it was written. It was an era in Russian history in which many Russian intellectuals, inspired by the growing influence of philosophical ideas that emphasized man's capacity to create a better world for himself in the here-and-now,[71] believed in the transformative powers of the

[71] The ideas of Ludwig Feuerbach, for instance, whose theory of anthropocentrism placed man at the center of the universe, played an important role in this philosophical development in the 1860's. See Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, trans. Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka (Stanford University Press, 1979), pp. 191-198.

human intellect. To the extent that Strakhov shared this faith in the potential of the human mind to transform reality--a faith he clearly expresses with respect to Tolstoy's artistic powers--the critic's ideas are in step with one of the dominant intellectual currents of his time. But Strakhov's concern in his article is with Tolstoy's specifically philosophical striving, with the way in which the author aspires artistically to create out of the material of the world a higher intellectual order. Such an emphasis on this more abstract universal human aspiration has more in common with the philosophical debates of the previous decades, which focused on the problem of the place of the human individual in relation to the infinite,[72] than it does with the materialist proclivities of the radical new intelligentsia of the 1860's, whose intellectual program tended to focus on the concrete social and political concerns of contemporary society.[73] The earlier concern among intellectuals with the strivings of the inner, spiritual world of human beings was becoming replaced by an emphasis on and debates about man in the context of social and political institutions. To be sure, Strakhov does not deny the fact that Tolstoy represents his characters in their social and political contexts. But his analysis of Tolstoy's representation of human beings in such contexts attempts to penetrate the deeper philosophical significance of that representation. It attempts to understand the way in which *War and Peace* artistically

[72] I am referring here to philosophical ideas, which were inspired by the German Idealist thought of Schelling, among others, and which were current among Russian intellectuals from the 1820's through the 1830's. Walicki describes the similarly philosophical tendency of the thought of the 1840's:

> It was the epoch when the progressive intelligentsia, bitterly disappointed by the failure of the Decembrist uprising, lost faith in the efficacy of political action. Instead, intellectuals became preoccupied with philosophical problems, such as the meaning of history, the individual's relationship to supraindividual social and cultural structures, and Russia's place in universal history. (Ibid., pp. 115-116).

[73] Ibid., Chapter 11, "Nikolai Chernyshevsky and the 'Enlighteners' of the Sixties," pp. 183-221.

transforms such realistic descriptions of man in the context of the real-world institutions and situations in which he lives into a meditation on the deeper spiritual strivings of human beings.

Strakhov thus offers a way of thinking about *War and Peace*, whereby the novel as a whole becomes an expression of the searching spirit of Tolstoy himself. Like his characters, Tolstoy is not satisfied with, or perhaps not even capable of, merely mentally organizing his existence for himself. He must impart to that existence some higher poetic order. In so doing, Strakhov insists, the writer gives us entry into the reality that surrounds us, and into the human beings that inhabit that reality, in a way that is not merely different from, but also richer and deeper than, the way in which it is seen by less perceptive eyes. In Pisarev Boris Drubetskoi's scientific eye is considered more perceptive than Rostov's artistic eye, because the scientific eye is better able to perceive the facts of the world. In Strakhov just the opposite is the case. The artistic eye is valuable precisely because its perception goes beyond objective reality, beyond the material facts of life.

In spite of Strakhov's own claim in his article that the power of the ideas contained in Tolstoy's novel lies in the artistry with which those ideas are communicated, the critic himself, it seems, wants to move beyond the realm of form and into the realm of essence in his discussion of the novel. Strakhov is not concerned as much with the way in which Tolstoy manipulates various artistic techniques to achieve his effect in the work, as with the holistic impression of the final product itself. Strakhov seems always to want to get at that essential core of the novel, in which the artistic and philosophical dimensions of the work are so closely interlinked

as to be indistinguishable from one another. He wants to know and say what *War and Peace* means in the deepest, fullest sense. But nowhere in his article does Strakhov actually tell us what "*that which occupied* [*Tolstoy's*] *soul*" is. Instead, he defines for us certain characteristics of the artistic manifestation of "*that*" in the novel. He explains to us the way in which "*that*" is embodied in a certain philosophical current and a particular artistic spirit that run throughout the novel, but he does not tell us how we are to understand "*that*" outside of the way in which it is artistically expressed. In his attempt to articulate that essential Tolstoyan idea of which *War and Peace* is for him an expression, the critic thus speaks not about the idea itself, but about the artistic *form* in which that idea--the idea of human striving for an ideal in life--is communicated. Strakhov's effort to give expression to his experience of that mysterious truth of life that permeates Tolstoy's second novel thus becomes a mere attempt, a mere groping in that direction. The article embodies one man's aspiration to express a deep and inchoate intuition, to articulate, in the limited medium of language, that which, finally, is inarticulable.

"It is very difficult, even in broad outline," Strakhov admits, "to paraphrase the idea of a profound artistic work; [the idea] is embodied in [the work] with such fullness and versatility that an abstract paraphrasal of it will always be somehow imprecise, insufficient; it will not, so to speak, completely exhaust the object [of study]."[74] And yet, in spite of his stated belief about the near impossibility of such a venture, Strakhov goes on to formulate a tentative thesis about the main idea of the novel: "We might say, for example, that the guiding idea of the work is the *idea of the*

[74] Strakhov, p.196.

heroic life."[75] As becomes apparent in the article, what Strakhov means by the idea of the "heroic life" in the novel is not the sort of grand, idealized heroism of which Napoleon is an emblem and towards which some of the male Russian characters, notably Prince Andrew and Pierre, aspire during various periods of their lives, but rather the more humble and for Strakhov more profound heroism which is exhibited by ordinary human beings in their inglorious everyday strivings. That is, Strakhov is not referring to the sort of heroism which can be readily identified and labeled, and which, for generations of young Russian men and women, had come in the form of pre-packaged, idealized images of power, fame, and/or military conquest. He is referring rather to a kind of human heroism that eludes such artistic formulas, and indeed labels and categorizations of all sorts. The idea of heroism in Tolstoy's novel is contained, for Strakhov, not in any pre-formulated image, or in some identifiable end, but in the very process, of human striving itself. "The artist," Strakhov writes,

> wants to illustrate to us that life which we usually call heroic, but illustrate it in a real sense, and not in those false images handed down to us from antiquity. He wants us to *get out of the habit of* [accepting these] false representations, and so he gives us true representations. In the place of the ideal we are to receive the real.[76]

Might we detect in Strakhov's article the active striving of a literary critic to find a sufficiently rich and flexible critical language in which to express his own conflicting thoughts and feelings about *War and Peace*? At the heart of Strakhov's article is a playful paradoxality, embodied in the critic's contradictory impulses both to want to speak and to want not to speak; both to want to describe critically the main idea of Tolstoy's work, and to remain at the same time in a state of child-like silence and

[75] Ibid., p.196.
[76] Ibid., pp.196-97.

wonder before the power of the author's artistry. Strakhov's conflicted relationship to *War and Peace* exemplifies his ambivalent attitude towards the very definition of heroism, which is so important to him, and which he has attributed to Tolstoy's novel. On the one hand, the critic admires Tolstoy's work for its redefinition of the concept of heroism, for its privileging of the ordinary over the extraordinary in human life. On the other hand, given the awe-inspired way in which the critic speaks of the novel, Strakhov is clearly also attracted precisely to those qualities of the work that make it extraordinary, that make it an act of heroism in the "pre-Tolstoyan" sense of the word. Strakhov heralds Tolstoy's novel for its democratic impulses, and yet he approaches the work in a decidedly "undemocratic" manner. He approaches it with a sense of mystery and cautiousness, as a peasant might approach his master. This is the underlying internal structure of Strakhov's argument. It reveals to us something of the conflicting psychological impulses inherent in Strakhov's response to the novel. These conflicting impulses contribute to, rather than detract from, the intrinsic richness of Strakhov's response, precisely because of their capacity to recreate for us the paradoxical philosophical and artistic dynamic that is at the heart of *War and Peace* itself. In Strakhov's response to Tolstoy's novel, combining as it does an awareness of its own expressive limitations with an aspiration to defy those limitations, and to impart some coherent meaning to its object of study, we hear vicariously the voice of Tolstoy's own searching subjects.

Strakhov's aspiration to move beyond the limited medium of language in order to articulate the deeper core of Tolstoy's work thus leads the critic not to a kind of Wittgensteinian silence--"Whereof we cannot speak we must remain silent"--but

rather back to the realm of language itself; back to a highly Tolstoyan sort of language, in fact, which is both conscious of its own limitations, and full of expressive and suggestive possibility at the same time. In its capacity to evoke this sense of existential and expressive struggle that is explored and embodied in Tolstoy's own novel, Strakhov's article becomes more than a mere critical response to *War and Peace*. It becomes also a kind of artistic and philosophical echo of the novel itself.

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A few years later, in an article published in 1870 in the journal, *Zaria*, Strakhov would write once again about *War and Peace*, but in that article he would take a more politically-motivated approach to the novel, concentrating on the way in which the novel celebrates a specifically Russian form of heroism, embodied in the qualities of "simplicity, goodness, and truth" [*prostoty*, *dobra i pravdy*].[77] "A purely Russian heroism, a purely Russian heroic ideal in all spheres of life--this is what Tolstoy has given us," Strakhov writes. "This is his main subject."[78] Strakhov's earlier, almost lyrical response to the inner strivings of human individuals expressed in Tolstoy's novel is thus replaced in his 1870 article by an interpretation which is equally passionate and full of verve, but which focuses on the way in which *War and Peace* expresses a search for a specifically Russian *national* ideal. Strakhov thus shifts from his earlier concern with the way in which Tolstoy's novel speaks to

[77] Ibid., p.281.
[78] Ibid., p.282.

philosophical problems of a universal nature to a concern with the way in which the work speaks to the contemporary issue of national self-definition.[79]

There are a few practical explanations for Strakhov's shift in critical focus. One of them is that Strakhov's articles were written in response to the serial publication of Tolstoy's novel. His focus on the problem of national identity in the 1870 review can be explained, in part, by the fact that by the time he published that review he had read the scenes in the novel which dealt with such nationalistic themes as the Battle of Borodino, Pierre's meeting of Platon Karataev in captivity, and Tolstoy's meditation in Book Fourteen on the distinctly national character of the war. If we view Strakhov's reorientation of his discussion of heroism in *War and Peace* in an historical context, then we might also conclude that such a reorientation was motivated, in part, by the critic's desire to oppose the growing influence of Western-oriented currents of thought in the 1860's, and to disseminate in their stead his own Slavophile-inspired views of Russian art and culture.[80]

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[79] Laura Olson has recently interpreted the novel in this context. Her reading of the novel, which draws on recent theoretical paradigms in literary studies, is provocative and original. See Laura Olson, "Exploring the Boundaries of Realism and Romanticism: Myth, Sententiousness, and Irony in Tolstoy's 'War and Peace,' Doctoral dissertation, Yale University, 1995.

[80] There is evidence for this historical interpretation of Strakhov's shift of emphasis in a passage from the article itself. Strakhov argues that with the creation of *War and Peace* Russian culture has finally achieved an equal footing with, and even passed, that of the West:

> If foreigners now ask us about our literature, then we will say to them in response that it has wonderful hopes, that it contains terrific potentialities. We won't begin to enter into provisos and adduce mitigating circumstances in order to explain the deformity and one-sidedness of our contemporary literary authorities; we will directly point to *War and Peace* as the mature fruit of our literary movement, as a work which we ourselves revere, which for us is dear and important not for lack of anything better, but because it belongs to the greatest, the best creations of poetry, with which we are familiar or could even imagine. Western literature at the present time offers nothing equal, and not even anything approaching that which we possess. (Strakhov, p.308.)

But if we think about Strakhov's intellectual reorientation in the context of the larger philosophical ideas that have motivated our analysis of the searching subject in Tolstoy's fiction, then we might discover in that reorientation another, ahistorical significance, which contributes to our understanding of the deeper philosophical searchings contained in the critic's own engagement with Tolstoy's novel. In his 1868 article on the novel, Strakhov hesitates to articulate that essential core of the novel that he so passionately senses, because to *name* the core of Tolstoy's novel would be to turn it into a static intellectual concept, rather than allow it to remain the elusive presence and powerfully generative artistic force that, for Strakhov, it is. Indeed, what creates the intellectual excitement of Tolstoy's novel in that article, for Strakhov, is just this sense of the mysteriously indefinable power of Tolstoy's artistry; this sense of how tantalizingly close Tolstoy's prose comes to portraying an essential truth of human life, without finally defining it for us, or telling us exactly wherein it lies.

Strakhov does, hesitantly, finally attach a label to the essential idea of Tolstoy's novel. He calls the central idea of the work "the idea of the heroic life." But as we have seen, the critic's discussion of this idea in his article remains sufficiently open-ended as to permit various interpretations and even to encourage a degree of uncertainty about the exact meaning of the concept. Strakhov's articulation of the main idea of Tolstoy's novel thus does not so much resolve, as deepen, the sense of mystery and paradox inherent in the novel. The critic does not so much solve, as engage, the interpretive challenge of the novel, by embodying that challenge in the very language and spirit of his own writing about the work.

This sense of excitement before the novel's creative paradoxes and unanswerable philosophical questions now begins to give way in Strakhov's 1870 article to a slightly different critical impulse: the impulse to give a definitive label to the essential truth of Tolstoy's novel, the impulse to *name* that truth and to link it to a specific cultural concept. The part of the article in which Strakhov speaks about the ideal of national heroism expressed in Tolstoy's novel is immediately preceded by a discussion of the literary greatness of the work. In this earlier section Strakhov writes in the same effusive and praising spirit as in the 1868 article. And as in that earlier article, here, too, Strakhov's discussion is motivated by an apparent desire to get at the essential core of the work: "But what is the meaning of the great work? Couldn't we, in a few short words, illustrate the essential thought poured out in this huge epic, point to that soul, for whom all the details of the story are only the embodiment, but not the essence?"[81] "It is a difficult matter," Strakhov evasively answers his own question, and the critic goes on to discuss why it is so difficult adequately to explain or even fully understand the meaning of *War and Peace*:

> *War and Peace* is undergoing the fate of everything true and great. That which is true and great often goes completely unrecognized by people. Sometimes it fascinates them, forces them to surrender to its power; but it is almost *never understood*, almost without exception. The most ordinary course of events is such that people *feel* greatness, but *don't understand* it.[82]

"One could say," Strakhov writes a few paragraphs later, "that *War and Peace* is the most incomprehensible of all works of Russian literature, just as incomprehensible as Pushkin himself....In fact, *War and Peace*, you see, rises to such heights of human thoughts and feelings, to heights usually inaccessible to people."[83] Most people, the

[81] Strakhov, p. 277.
[82] Ibid., p. 275.
[83] Ibid., p. 279.

critic argues, lack the required “breadth of mind” [*shirina uma*] and “life’s experience” [*zhiznennyi opyt*] to understand the work. Strakhov then enumerates the various kinds of second-rate critics of the novel--those who feign deep thoughts and feelings, and those who combine intellectual mediocrity with arrogance--who “have judged, judge, and will judge”[84] *War and Peace*, only to discover that the novel will remain as great and incomprehensible after their commentary as before it.

Strakhov was not the only critic to comment on the incomprehensibility of the novel. There were many critics both within Russia and abroad who remarked on this aspect of the work. The author of an unsigned review of the first parts of *War and Peace*, published in 1866 in *Knizhnyi Vestnik*, remarks that Tolstoy’s novel “seems strange and indeterminate. Evidently the author himself does not know what he is writing.”[85] The critic focuses in his review on the confusing intermingling of French and Russian words and on the staggering number of characters in the work. In 1867 the critic and minor novelist, N.D. Akhsharumov, echoes this point by emphasizing the specifically generic indeterminacy of the work: “We cannot place this work categorically in any of the usual literary genres.”[86] A common theme of the criticism about the novel was the notion that the work lacked a guiding idea or principle. In his 1868 review of the work, for instance, Annenkov writes: “The big wheel of the novel in our opinion can only be the plot and the central idea of the work which is inextricably connected with it. The plot is nowhere to be seen, not even in the scenes of political and social life, however remarkable they might be.”[87] The author of an

[84] Ibid., pp.279- 280.
[85] Zelinskii, vol.3, p.3.
[86] Ibid., p.29.
[87] Ibid., p.72.

unsigned review in the journal *Delo* writes that “the pictures and characters are not united by any controlling idea or anything which would give an inner life or logic to the events: everything is mixed up into a general mass where one can see neither the reasons for nor the consequences of the events or the appearance of heroes or facts.”[88]

For some of Tolstoy’s contemporary critics, the formlessness and largeness of the work was to be taken as a sign of Tolstoy’s own unformed, prodigious personality. In a letter to I.P. Borisov, for instance, Ivan Turgenev remarks that “Tolstoy is a real giant among the rest of our literary fraternity--and he produces on me the impression of an elephant at the zoo: clumsy, even preposterous, but enormous--and how intelligent!”[89] A reviewer for the *Westminster Review* in England speaks of the novel as “this prodigal outpouring of a careless genius.”[90] For these critics, the awkwardness and incomprehensibility of the work implies the awkwardness and incomprehensibility of the author’s own personality. The uniqueness of the novel lies in the uniqueness and sheer largeness of the personality that produced it. Strakhov’s 1870 article belongs to just this tradition of criticism about the novel. Like the other contemporary reviewers, Strakhov interprets the the strangeness and formlessness of the work as its unique strength. For Strakhov the author of *War and Peace* is a prophet and a giant among men. He has produced a work whose greatness lies precisely in its strangeness, precisely in the fact that it is beyond the reach of the intellect of ordinary men:

> Count L. N. Tolstoy is a poet in the old and best sense of the word. He carries within him the deepest questions of which man is capable. He sees things

[88] Ibid., p.144.
[89] A.V. Knowles, ed. *Tolstoy: The Critical Heritage* (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, Henley and Boston, 1978), p.182.
[90] Ibid., p.216.

> clearly and opens up to us the most sacred secrets of life and death. How do you want people to understand him, people for whom such questions completely fail to exist, and who are so obtuse or, if you wish, so intelligent that they don't find any secrets either within themselves or around them? The meaning of history, the strength of peoples, the secret of death, the essence of love, of family life, etc.--here, after all, are the subjects of L.N. Tolstoy. So then, are these and other such subjects really such light things that the first passerby can understand them? There really is something wise in the fact that, in order to understand them, many, many people have neither sufficient breadth of mind nor life's experience.[91]

At another point in his article, Strakhov offers a justification for the unprecedented range of characters and topics covered in Tolstoy's novel: "A complete picture of human life. A complete picture of Russia of those days. A complete picture of the things in which men set their happiness and greatness, their sorrow and their shame. That is what *War and Peace* is."[92] Here again, the novel's qualities of incomprehensibility and unrecognizability are interpreted positively, rather than negatively, by the critic. These qualities are for Strakhov a sign, not of the formlessness, but of the epic largeness of the work.

Beneath Strakhov's inspired words about the greatness of Tolstoy's novel lies the implication that, in spite of the profundity and incomprehensibility of the work, there nevertheless does exist a truly gifted reader of the novel who is able to understand its meaning and communicate it to others: Strakhov himself. The authorial "I" of Strakhov's 1868 article, which struggles self-consciously with its own limited capacity to describe the richness contained within Tolstoy's work, is thus now replaced by an authorial "I" which seems less concerned with creatively confronting the mysteries and paradoxes embodied in the work than with resolving them.

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[91] Strakhov, pp.278-79.
[92] Ibid., p.277.

Strakhov begins to take on the role of Tolstoy's messenger, as it were, to contemporary society. Concomitant with this implied new role for himself as a public reader and teacher of the novel is a subtle narrowing of the broad philosophical vision that permeates Strakhov's 1868 article. The complex relationship between the real and the ideal in *War and Peace*, which Strakhov discusses in his earlier article, is now no longer the focus of the critic's analysis. Strakhov is less concerned here with the complex *act*, than with the accomplished *fact*, of Tolstoy's transformation of reality through art. Whereas Strakhov's emphasis in the earlier article is on the way in which Tolstoy's novel expresses the tension between an objective reality and the human aspiration towards a higher metaphysical order within that reality, now the critic's emphasis is on the way in which the work may be seen as the undisputed *possessor* of a higher order, as the clear expression of a national ideal, which Russians would do well to learn: "*War and Peace* will soon become the favorite bedside book of every educated Russian, the classical reading of our children, an object of reflection and edification for our youth."[93]

If we view it from Strakhov's own perspective, the nationalist approach of the 1870 article may be seen to be an expansion, rather than a contradiction, of the more universal philosophical ideas developed in his earlier articles. Like other members of the *pochvennichestvo* ("Back to the Soil") movement in the 1860's in Russia, Strakhov believed that one of the distinctive features of Russian national identity was its breadth and synthetic quality, its capacity to subsume a broad range of human and national characteristics. In Strakhov's own mind, therefore, the idea of "a Russian

[93] Ibid., p.309.

heroic ideal" may not have been so different from the more universal idea of "the heroic life," developed in his earlier article. The transition from the one concept to the other follows precisely the logic of one of the recurrent motifs of *pochvennichestvo* thought: that universal human experience and Russian national experience are one and the same. While it may be true, then, that from Strakhov's own point of view, his earlier and later reading of the novel are consistent, we detect an unmistakable tension between the two. This tension manifests itself not only in the "what," but also in the "how," of the two articles.

The sense of excitement before the artistic and philosophical possibilities contained in the novel, which is evident in Strakhov's 1868 article, is now superseded by an excitement of a different sort: an enthusiasm about the undisputed, canonical greatness of Tolstoy's novel. Closely related to this change in the overall critical attitude towards the novel is also a distinctive shift in one of the central paradigms contained in each article. There is a qualitative difference between Strakhov's "*idea of the heroic life*", developed in his 1868 article on the novel, and his idea of "a Russian heroic ideal," developed in the later article. The former is a generative concept. It evokes a sense of the intellectual and spiritual dynamism present in both the content and form of the work, a sense of the constant and universal human aspiration towards an ultimately unattainable ideal in life. Furthermore, in his formulation of the "*idea of the heroic life*" Strakhov invites the reader to take part in the very struggle for meaning which the critic has attributed to Tolstoy's novel. Strakhov does this, in part, by stimulating the reader into an active intellectual engagement with the philosophical paradoxes of Strakhov's own response to the

novel, paradoxes which, as we have seen, in some ways echo those present in *War and Peace* itself.

The idea of "a Russian heroic ideal," on the other hand, is a more static and totalizing concept. It tends to close, rather than open up, the interpretive possibilities contained in the novel. It encourages the reader passively to accept the work as an illustration of an undisputed ideal--a national ideal--rather than invite the reader to attempt to penetrate the artistic and philosophical complexity of the work, and to see in that complexity the manifestation of one man's persistent, never finalized *search* for an ideal amidst the real. From the work's teeming internal paradoxes Strakhov now extracts an *idea*, a nationalist idea, and he equates that idea with the meaning of the artistic whole. Thus begins the canonization of *War and Peace* in Russia. Ironically, it begins with an article by a critic who, only two years earlier, powerfully illuminated one of the very reasons that make it so difficult to fit *War and Peace* into any canon at all: the novel's capacity to speak in an unrepeatable way about existential human concerns that transcend time and place.

The Searching Subject in *War and Peace* I: Prince Andrew and Nicholas Rostov

In a notebook entry from 1870, approximately one year after the completion of *War and Peace*, Tolstoy meditates on the relationship between art and history. The writer explains the reason that art is for him a superior means of understanding historical truth:

> The first condition of history, like that of every art must be lucidity, simplicity, and affirmativeness, not conjecture. But therefore *history-art* does not have the constraint and the unachievable goal of *history-science*. *History-art*, like every art, does not go into breadth but depth [*ne v shir*', *a v glub*'], and its subject-matter can be the description of the life of all of Europe and the description of one month in the life of a 16th century peasant. [94]

Tolstoy considers "history-art" a superior form of knowledge of the past to that of "history-science," because "history-art" peers into the inner reality, penetrates the deeper significance of historical facts, whereas "history-science" contents itself with an enumeration of the facts themselves. The limitation that Tolstoy is pointing to in "history-science" is its tendency to focus on the external, as opposed to the internal, reality, of an historical era; its failure to incorporate into its narrative of the past the intangible aspects of human life that play a crucial role, according to Tolstoy, in the movement of history. In another passage from the same notebook entry, Tolstoy emphasizes this point:

> History wants to describe the life of a nation--millions of people. But whoever has himself not only described the life of even one person--let alone a period in the life of a nation--but of a person, knows, from his description, how much is necessary for this. A knowledge of *all* the details of life is necessary. Art--the gift of artistry--is necessary. Love is necessary.[95]

[94]Notebook, 5 April, 1870. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1928-1958), pp.125-26.
[95] Ibid., pp.124-25.

Although Tolstoy is speaking here specifically about the relationship between art and historical facts, the writer is, at a deeper level, also talking about the relationship between art and facts, in general. In an era dominated by the flowering of the hard sciences, which tended to privilege the empirically provable over the intuitive and the spiritual realms of life, Tolstoy is insisting on the importance of forms of thought which are capable of illuminating the intangible, irrational sides of human life, as well. Art, for him, is one such form of knowledge. In a notebook entry from a few weeks earlier, the writer explains in more detail his understanding of the difference between art and other forms of thought:

> The work of thought leads to the vanity of thought. It is not necessary to return to thought. There is another tool: art. Thought requires lines, symmetry, movement in space and time and thereby destroys itself....What does chemistry, physics, astronomy, and especially the most fashionable zoology do? They bring everything under their requirements of symmetry, continuity--the circle, and arrive at a thought, but the essence of the object [of study] remains....Only art knows neither the conditions of time, nor space, nor movement. Only art, always inimical to symmetry and the circle, gives the essence [*sushchnost'*].[96]

Thought, by which Tolstoy apparently means scientific thought, "bring[s] everything under [its] requirements of symmetry, continuity," whereas art, according to Tolstoy, is not bound by such requirements. It exists outside of space and time. Unlike scientific thought, which reveals only the external forms of the world, art illuminates that which lies beneath those forms. Only art, for Tolstoy, "gives the essence."

Conspicuously absent from Tolstoy's reflections here on the superiority of art to scientific thought is any reference to the human subject, to the artist himself, who creates an artistic work. In the writer's tendency to speak about art, as well as other

[96] Notebook, 13 March, 1870. (PSS, vol.48, p.118.)

forms of knowledge, as though they existed in the abstract, outside of the participation and manipulation by human beings, Tolstoy reveals to us just how deep was his own instinct to believe in a pure and unconstructed truth of human life. And yet, the writer was equally aware of just how necessary, and even empowering, humanly imposed intellectual structures can be. Indeed, it is precisely through the medium of artistic *form* that Tolstoy speaks to us in *War and Peace*. Tolstoy himself once stated: "*War and Peace* is what the author wished and was able to express *in the form in which it is expressed*." [italics added] [97]

How are we to reconcile this statement with Tolstoy's idea of art as existing outside of space and time, as a kind of unmediated expression of the essence of life? I propose that we must not attempt to reconcile these two contradictory ideas, that we should regard them rather as two conflicting poles of Tolstoy's intellect. They creatively coexist in his art, just as they coexist in his extra-literary reflections. What Tolstoy offers us in *War and Peace* is neither pure essence nor pure form; neither an expression of some core Truth of life, nor a rejection of the possibility of any such truth. Rather, Tolstoy gives us in *War and Peace* an illustration, indeed an artistic enactment, of the constant *process* by which human beings strive, as the author himself has, for a vision of the ideal amidst the real. In the novel we witness the human striving for deeper and truer ways of apprehending the world, and for ever richer expressive forms in which to communicate that understanding. Let us see how this process takes place in the text itself.

[97] *Lev Tolstoi ob iskusstve i literature*, (Moscow: *Sovetskii Pisatel'*, 1958), vol. 1, p.386. (Translation: Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, ed., George Gibian, p.1366.)

In Part Two, Chapter 6 of *War and Peace*, Tolstoy describes Prince Andrew's experiences on the night before the battle of Schoen Grabern. This chapter is an important one both for what it tells us about Prince Andrew's psychology and for the way in which it encapsulates some of the larger thematic concerns of the novel. It therefore deserves close attention. The chapter opens with the following paragraph:

> Having ridden round the whole line from right flank to left, Prince Andrew made his way up to the battery from which the staff officer had told him the whole field could be seen." [*na tu batereiu, s kotoroi po slovam shtab-ofitsera, vse pole bylo vidno.*] Here he dismounted, and stopped beside the farthest of the four unlimbered cannons. Before the guns an artillery sentry was pacing up and down; he stood at attention when the officer arrived, but at a sign resumed his measured, monotonous pacing. Behind the guns were their limbers and still farther back picket ropes and artillerymen's bonfires. To the left, not far from the farthest cannon, was a small, newly constructed wattle shed from which came [*iz kotorogo slyshalis'*] the sound of officer's voices in eager conversation. (9, 215; 188)[98]

The phrases in the opening sentence *na tu batereiu* and *po slovam shtab-ofitsera* highlight, respectively, the specificity and the arbitrariness of Andrew's choice of survey position. It is neither from an objective nor an omniscient vantage point that Andrew will look over the field, the narrator tells us, but from a specific, and therefore, limited position, and from a position, moreover, that was suggested to him by the staff officer. What Andrew wants to do in this scene is to understand the whole picture of the upcoming battle by means of a single, panoramic view of the battle sight taken from a single point of view. By showing the reader details of camp life--the pacing of the sentry, the bonfires of the artillery men, and the wattle shed from which come the officer's voices--the author creates a sense of the interaction of diverse human experiences which no single perspective could fully embrace. Tolstoy

[98] The first two numbers refer to the volume and page number in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*. The third number refers to the page numer in the Maude translation of the novel in the Norton Critical Edition, from which I quote making changes when necessary, in Leo Tolstoy

thus juxtaposes Andrew's focus on the "the whole field" against the reality of the many individuals whose lives have patterns of their own, and who will populate that field on the next day during the battle. Pages later Tolstoy will present the chaos of the battle in such a way as to highlight the discrepancy between the orders of the high commanders and the actions of their underlings. In those scenes, as in many battle scenes throughout the novel, Tolstoy's artistic emphasis is on the way in which battle follows laws that are less rational and predictable than many of those who are in command are able to understand. In the paragraph we are analyzing, we are offered a subtle variant of this larger novelistic idea. By means of a few well-chosen details, Tolstoy hints at the dissonance between Andrew's attempt at an all-encompassing vision and the reality of military life, which is made up of details of mundane human activity and interaction. The significance of those details cannot be fully understood from a point of view removed from the quotidian experiences of the soldiers themselves, as Andrew positions himself. Tolstoy reinforces this idea of Andrew's limited perspective in the paragraph by having his narrator describe for the reader what is happening in three physical locations, which Andrew could not possibly embrace in a single glance: "before the guns" [*vperedi orudii*], "behind the guns" [*szadi orudii*], and "to the left, not far from the farthest cannon" [*nalevo, nedaleko ot krainego orudiia*]. By showing the reader all of these locations simultaneously, Tolstoy reminds us that, in comparison to Andrew's ostensibly wide vision of the field, there is a perspective that is even wider, because it perceives all at once that which Andrew could only possibly see in isolated segments. This perspective is the narrator's point-of-view.

The second paragraph in the scene we are analyzing begins with this sentence: “It was true [*deistvitel’no*] that a view over nearly the whole Russian position and the greater part of the enemy’s opened out from this battery.” (9, 215-16; 188) The word *deistvitel’no* [“it was true”] reinforces the reader’s sense of a narrative consciousness separate from Andrew’s, intimated in the previous paragraph. Now the narrator emerges as a fully individuated voice, capable of “conversing” with the reader and commenting on the ideas and actions of the characters. The word *deistvitel’no* may be read as the narrator’s confirmation of the staff officer’s suggestion to Andrew, relayed in the previous paragraph, that the battery which Andrew has chosen is indeed a superior position from which to survey the field. But this word of confirmation is ironic. The very fact that the narrator approves of the staff captain’s recommendation reminds us that only the narrator himself, and not the staff captain, has access to the truly superior position. Only the narrator is completely omniscient. The narrator can comment on the staff captain, but not the other way around. In this paragraph we have a tension, then, between a narrative consciousness that is engaged in dialogue with the characters and one that stands above them at the same time. This rhetorical tension points, in turn, to a deeper metaphysical reality. Andrew’s attempt to locate a vantage point from which he may see the “whole” exists in tension with the fact that there is a larger whole of which he is himself unconsciously part. So, too, the novel presents a vision of nineteenth-century Russian life in which each human being is both finite and limited in his or her awareness, and also an unconscious participant in a major moment in Russian history and in a larger unity of human life.

In the paragraph beginning with the word *deistvitel'no*, Tolstoy's narrative itself begins to develop these parallels. Two closely related things begin to happen in the text. First, with the word *deistvitel'no*, the narrator actually begins to take over Andrew's role as surveyor of his surroundings. It becomes clear to the reader that Tolstoy's primary concern here is not in what Andrew sees, but in what he fails to see. The interest therefore is not so much in Andrew as the surveying subject as in Andrew as the surveyed object of the narrator's omniscient eye. This slight refocussing of the narrative perspective from the previous paragraph parallels and reinforces a deeper phenomenon occuring in this paragraph: Andrew's act of surveying the field itself now becomes subsumed as an "event" into the narrator's "story" of the night before the Battle of Schoen Grabern:

> *Deistvitel'no, s baterei otkryvalsia vid pochti vsego raspolozheniia russkikh voisk i bol'shei chasti nepriiatelia. Priamo protiv batereii, na gorizonte protivopolozhnogo burga, vidnelas' derevnia Shengraben; levee i pravee mozhno bylo razlichit' v trekh mestakh, sredi dyma ikh kostrov, massy frantsuzskikh voisk, kotorykh, ochevidno, bol'shaia chast' nakhodilas' v samoi derevne i za goroiiu. Levee derevni, v dymu, kazalos' chto-to pokhozhe na batereiu, no prostym glazom nel'zia bylo rassmotret' khoroshen'ko. Pravyi flang nash raspologalsia na dovol'no krutom vozvyshenii, kotoroe gospodstvovalo nad pozitsiiei frantsuzov. Po nem raspolozhena byla nasha pekhota, i na samom kraiu vidny byli draguny. V tsentre, gde i nakhodilas' ta batereia Tushina,* ***s kotoroi rassmatrival positsiiu kniaz' Andrei****, byl samyi otlogii i priamoi spusk i pod'iem k ruch'iu, otdeliavshemu nas ot Shengrabena. Nalevo voiska nashi primykateli k lesu, gde dymilis' kostry nashei, rubivshei drova, pekhoty. Liniia frantsuzov byla shire nashei, i iasno bylo, chto frantsuzy legko mogli oboiti nas s obeikh storon. Szadi nashei pozitsii byl krutoi i glubokii ovrag, po kotoromu trudno bylo otstupat' artillerii i konnitse. Kniaz' Andrei, oblokotias' na pushku i dostav bumazhnik, nachertil dlia sebia plan raspolozheniia voisk. V dvukh mestakh on karandashom postavil zametki, namerevaias' soobshchit' ikh Bagrationu. On predlagal, vo-pervykh, sosredotochit' vsiu artilleriiu v tsentre, vo-vtorykh, kavaleriiu perevesti nazad, na tu storonu ovraga. Kniaz' Andrei, postoianno nakhodias' pri glavnokomanduiushchem, sledia za dvizheniiami mass i obshchimi rasporiazheniiami i postoianno zanimaias' istoricheskimi*

opisaniiami srazhenii, i v etom predstoiashchem dele nevol'no soobrazhal budushchii khod voennykh deistvii tol'ko v obshchikh chertakh. [Emphasis mine]

It was true that a view over nearly the whole Russian position and the greater part of the enemy's opened out from this battery. Just facing it, on the crest of the opposite hill, the village of Schoen Grabern could be seen, and in three places to the left and right the French troops amid the smoke of their campfires, the greater part of whom were evidently in the village itself and behind the hill. To the left from that village, amid the smoke, was something resembling a battery, but it was impossible to see it clearly with the naked eye. Our right flank was posted on a rather steep incline which dominated the French position. Our infantry were stationed there, and at the farthest point the dragoons. In the center, where Tushin's battery stood, *and from which Prince Andrew was surveying the position*, was the easiest and most direct descent and ascent to the brook separating us from Schoen Grabern. On the left our troops were close to a copse, in which smoked the bonfires of our infantry who were felling wood. The French line was wider than ours, and it was plain that they could easily outflank us on both sides. Behind our position was a steep and deep dip, making it difficulty for artillery and cavalry to retire. Prince Andrew took out his notebook and, leaning on the cannon, sketched a plan of the position. He made some notes on two points, intending to mention them to Bagration. His idea was, first, to concentrate all the artillery in the center, and secondly, to withdraw the cavalry to the other side of the dip. Prince Andrew, being always near the commander in chief, closely following the mass movements and general orders, and constantly studying historical accounts of battles, involuntarily pictured to himself the course of events in the forthcoming action in broad outline. [Italics mine] (9, 215-16; 188)

Tolstoy's narrator has now become a story-teller in the truest sense of the word. He does not merely relay facts in an objective, impersonal manner, but becomes a conscious, humanized *raconteur* with an ability to combine god-like omniscience with a unique human voice and an awareness of his own limitations. Words and phrases like "*ochevidno*" ["evidently"], "*kazalos' chto-to pokhozhe na batereiu*" ["was something resembling a battery"], and *nel'zia bylo smotret' khoroshen'ko* ["was impossible to see it clearly"] reveal the narrator's awareness of his inability to perceive everything that falls within his purview. This, combined with the colloquial

expression *khoroshen'ko* and frequent reference to "our" flank, infantry, and position, lend a particularized, human quality to the narrator's voice. And yet concurrent with this humanization of the narrator's voice is also an elevation of that voice. At the same time that the narrator comes down to earth and momentarily becomes one of "us," he also rises above "us" and reveals things that "we," in our limited awareness, fail to perceive. The narrator therefore leads the reader's vision outward, not from Andrew's point of view, but from an even wider vantage point, from which Andrew's location is seen in relation to his surroundings.

As if to emphasize this subsumption of Andrew's perception by a higher awareness, the narrator tells us that the position Andrew occupies "was the easiest and most direct descent and ascent to the brook separating us from Schoen Grabern." This becomes an important detail several lines later when Andrew is seen drawing up plans for the upcoming battle. Andrew's position affords him a naive enthusiasm about the prospects of success in the battle that the more "realistic" narrator does not have: "The French line was wider than ours, and it was plain that they could easily outflank us on both sides. Behind our position was a steep and deep dip, making it difficult for artillery and cavalry to retire." The narrator follows this sentence with the description of how Andrew takes out a notebook and begins to sketch his battle plan. The reader understands the irony here: Andrew will not be able to prepare a fully adequate plan because he fails to see *all* of the details that such a plan would need to include.

The fact of Andrew's limited perspective is underscored in another detail, as well: "All the time he had been beside the gun, he had heard the voices of the officers

distinctly, but as often happens [*kak eto chasto byvaet*] had not understood a word of what they were saying." (9, 216-17; 189) The inclusion of the phrase *kak eto chasto byvaet* in this sentence serves to remind the reader of something we have already seen in the previous paragraph: that there is a higher consciousness of which Andrew is himself the object. In the previous paragraph, however, we were made aware of this consciousness in the way the narrator placed Andrew's act of surveying in its larger physical context, as well as through the narrator's slightly ironic description of the hero's actions. We are now made aware of this higher consciousness by means of a closely related, but distinct, artistic technique: authorial generalization. The effect of such generalization is to develop further from the previous paragraph the authorial stance towards his hero. In the same way that Andrew's act of surveying the field in the previous paragraph was seen in a larger physical context of which Andrew himself was not fully aware, so, too, his failure to understand the officers' voices is now shown to be one instance of a larger pattern of human nature, to which only the narrator is privy. It seems that Andrew's failure to pay full attention to his surroundings is both a unique event occurring in a specific time and place, and also an expression of a universal human shortcoming: the tendency of human beings, "as it often happens," to overlook the details of their immediate surroundings as they aspire to create elegant ordering systems to explain their world.[99]

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[99] This is an essential point made by Gary Saul Morson in his *Hidden in Plain View: Narrative and Creative Potentials in 'War and Peace'* (Stanford University Press, 1987), and developed further by him in his "Prosaics and Anna Karenina," *Tolstoy Studies Journal* 1 (1988): 1-12. Morson discusses his theory of prosaics in the context of contemporary critical debate in "Prosaics," *The American Scholar* (Autumn, 1988): 515-528; and in "Bakhtin and the Present Moment," *The American Scholar* (Spring, 1991): 201-222.

Thus, this sentence completes a line of artistic and philosophical development whose beginning was found in the chapter's opening paragraph. Now the higher narrative consciousness, of which we were first made aware in the opening paragraph, has asserted itself in such a way as to imply that it is privy to universal human truths, of which Andrew's actions are a single instance. Artistically, then, the text has transformed the act of Andrew's surveying of the field from, in the first paragraph, an ostensibly sign-less, mundane "fact," into a "fact" in the narrator's self-consciously told "story" in the second paragraph, into a "fact" of human nature in the third paragraph. The reader's perception of Andrew's actions thus continually expands outward towards an ever-increasing level of universality. Paradoxically, this process is mirrored by an opposite movement in Andrew's own perception of his surroundings. After having meditated on the field and the mass movements of troops, Andrew suddenly becomes aware of the sounds coming from the shed: "*Vdrug zvuk golosov iz balagana porazil ego takim zadushevnym tonom, chto on nevol'no stal prislushivats'ia*." ["Suddenly, however, he was struck by voices coming from the shed, and its tone was so sincere that he could not but listen."] (9, 217; 189)

Significantly, Andrew is not described here as an actively perceiving subject. The hero is still described more like an object than a subject of his surroundings. Andrew has been "struck" by the sound of the voices [*zvuk...porazil ego*], and when he does begin to listen to the sound, he does so "involuntarily" [*nevol'no*], as though under the influence of a higher force. The rhymed pair of words, *vdrug-zvuk*, in this sentence serves to underscore the suddenness of the sound by suggesting through the verbal association of the vowel *u* that "suddenly" [*vdrug*] and "sound" [*zvuk*] possess

some sort of inherent interlinkage. This interlinkage serves another function, as well. It creates the impression of an elusive unity of experience, of a self-reflexive wholeness and completeness of the moment itself.[100] We may also note in this connection that the *u* sound rhymes with the final verb in the sentence, *pri**slush**ivat'sia*, as well. The words *vdrug*, *zvuk*, and *prislushivat'sia* are thus linked poetically in a way that transcends their different meanings and grammatical functions. Such poetic association suggests also a deeper philosophical association in this sentence: Andrew's act of listening and the sound which is the object of that act become two elements in a unified totality of experience that ultimately transcends the distinction between who is listening and what is being heard, between the perceiving subject and the object of his perceptions. The dancer and the dance, to paraphrase Yeats, become one. At the very moment, then, that Andrew's perception begins to focus on the minute details of his surroundings, the text begins to create the impression of a larger unifying order with which those details are organically linked. The simultaneity of these two realms of minute specificity and overarching unity in this sentence thus parallels the larger interaction taking place in the paragraph as a whole: The reader's vision, which is becoming wider and directed towards universals (*kak eto chasto byvaet*), coexists with Andrew's perception, which is now becoming narrower and more focussed on specific details. It is as though Tolstoy intends for the reader to recognize that minute details and universal experience are so organically

[100] My thinking about how Tolstoy uses repetition to create a sense of unity in diversity has been stimulated by Natasha Sankovitch, "Readers' Experience of Repetition in Tolstoy," *Tolstoy Studies Journal* 3 (1990): 49-61.

linked in this text that an increase in our perception of one necessarily occurs simultaneously with an increase in our awareness of the other.

Beginning with the next sentence, the reader is taken by Tolstoy inside the shed from which the voices are emanating. The reader's attention, like Andrew's, is being drawn from the outside to the inside, both literally and figuratively. Our movement inside the shed parallels a similar movement into the inner world of the soldiers who are conversing there. The officers are discussing their thoughts and apprehensions about death. Tolstoy's choice of subjects for the conversing soldiers is not arbitrary. It has deep internal connections to the chapter as a whole. The soldiers' reflections about death on the night before the battle may be linked to Andrew's own meditations on the upcoming battle. Just as the soldiers find some solace in their ability to give verbal expression to fears about their own finitude, so does Andrew seek to apply a mental structure to the inherent chaos of battle in the hopes of being able somehow to harness that chaos, and to direct it to his own end. This, of course, is not necessarily how Andrew himself perceives what he is doing when he prepares his battle plan. But as we have seen, the hero's actions are the object of an authorial eye that recognizes meaningful implications even in an ostensibly "sign-less" event. It is up to the reader to discover and articulate those implications that are inherent in the text itself.

The deeper meaning we have attributed to Andrew's action is the result of our interpretation of Andrew's character as represented throughout the novel. Like Olenin in *The Cossacks*, Andrew is a truth-seeker. In Andrew's desire for fame and glory lies an Olenin-like aspiration to discover that magical *to*, to find that special something

which will allow him to reconcile the contradictions and struggles of his life. We are therefore intended to read Andrew's desire for glory in the novel as a manifestation of his deeper existential searchings. This aspect of Andrew's character is most evident in the novel in those moments when he is philosophizing with Pierre or alone to himself.[101] But the artistic richness of *War and Peace* lies, in part, in the author's capacity to see in even a most unphilosophical and seemingly unprivileged moment, such as Andrew's surveying of the field, a manifestation of this deeper philosophical and psychological core of Andrew's character. Andrew's aspiration to discover a philosophical order in the chaos of his world is here reflected in his desire mentally to "order" his surroundings. What Andrew seeks in this moment is an embodiment of what he seeks at the philosophical level throughout the work: a sense of mastery over his environment, a sense that he is a creative subject, and not merely a created object, of his world. It is this psychological need mentally to "conquer" the world that motivates Andrew's aspiration throughout the novel to become, like Napoleon, a literal conqueror. Andrew's imaginative narrative of the upcoming battle may thus be read as an act of authorship in the deepest sense of the word: authorship as an act of sense-making, of creating meaning out of chaos; authorship as an act of self-mastery.

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[101] We might recall, for instance, Andrew's private meditation in Book Three before the Battle of Austerlitz. Andrew expresses his desire to leave his mark on the world. The existential angst underlying Andrew's words is unmistakable here:

> "I don't know what will happen and don't want to know, and can't, but if I want this--want glory, want to be known to men, want to be loved by them, it is not my fault that I want it and want nothing but that and live only for that. Yes, for that alone! I shall never tell anyone, but, oh God! what am I to do if I love nothing but fame and men's esteem? Death, wounds, the loss of family--I fear nothing. And precious and dear as many persons are to me--father, sister, wife--those dearest to me--yet dreadful and unnatural as it seems, I would give them all at once for a moment of glory, of triumph over men, of love from men I don't know and never shall know, for the love of these men here [the military leadership]." (9, 324; 283-4)

Indeed, there is a similarity between Andrew's surveying of the field of battle and Tolstoy's own "surveying" of the massive landscape of human life in this novel. It seems that the instinct for mastery over his world that we find in Andrew has been implanted in him by a creator who himself possesses a deep instinct to harness and give form, artistic form, to the staggering vastness of human life.

Given this similarity between the philosophical aspirations of the author and his character, it is all the more interesting that Tolstoy's attitude towards his hero in this chapter is decidedly ambivalent. For all of the obvious sympathy and warmth that motivates the author's portrayal of his hero, there is also an unmistakable ironic distance in the author's handling of Andrew. In this chapter, that distance is created in the voice of the narrator. The omniscient narrator, who sees the "whole" picture, speaks, as we have seen, with mild irony about the hero's attempts to embrace a similarly full vision of his surroundings. The reader accepts the narrator's ironic stance as justified. The reader senses that Andrew *is* deluding himself here, and this we know even before we are given an account of the actual battle in the following chapters, in which almost nothing happens according to Andrew's, or Bagration's, or anybody else's plans. Clearly the narrator possesses some form of insight that Andrew does not, for it is the narrator's description of Andrew that convinces the reader that the hero is deceiving himself. What exactly is it that Andrew lacks and that the narrator possesses? It cannot merely be his inability to see the same number of raw details that the narrator sees, for the narrator, by his own admission, cannot see *all* the details of the surroundings. Furthermore, the quantity of details perceived by the narrator is superior to the quantity seen by Andrew only by a finite number. And the

power and richness of the narrative voice in this passage must not be reduced to a matter of mathematical comparison. What Andrew fails to see when he surveys the battlefield is not the so-called "facts" of his surroundings. He lacks rather the narrator's capacity to internalize his world, to organize and to master the limited number of facts available to his finite awareness in such a way as to transform those facts into a totalistic, indeed epic, sense of life.[102] Andrew lacks the narrator's capacity to combine the microscopic observation of a single Russian officer leaning against a cannon and sketching in his notebook with a sense of the human whole with which that event is organically linked--with the masses of French and Russian troops preparing to fight, with the soldiers who create bonfires, fell wood, and converse about life and death in a wattle shed on the night before battle.

When Andrew meditates on his surroundings, he produces a battle plan, a narrative construct held together by the glue of his rational intellect. When Tolstoy meditates on these same surroundings, he produces a fictional account, an imaginative construct held together by a narrative voice that creates a sense of the organic connection among things, and an awareness that one of the truest ways of speaking about and interacting with the world is not to attempt to define or control that world, as does Andrew, but to accept it as an irreducible totality, to embrace its inexhaustible complexity.[103] To be sure, there is a difference between Andrew's prospective plan

[102] Here and elsewhere in my analysis of *War and Peace*, I use the word "epic" to refer to the philosophical, rather than the formal, or generic, qualities of the work: its totalistic vision, its capacity to show the interconnection between individual and universal human experience. For an analysis of Tolstoy's "epic vision," see George Steiner, *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky: An Essay in the Old Criticism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959). For a discussion of the roots of the formal elements of the novel in the Homeric tradition, see F.T. Griffiths and S. J. Rabinowitz, "Tolstoy and Homer," *Comparative Literature*, vol. 35, no. 2 (1983): 97-125.

[103] Tolstoy considered such manner of speaking to be the trademark of a good artist: "The artist's goal is not to resolve a question indisputably, but to force people to love life in all its innumerable, inexhaustible phenomena." (61, 100)

and the narrator's retrospective point of view. This would partly account for the difference in their respective abilities to perceive the world. The narrator always has the advantage of hindsight. But the capacity of the narrator to embrace complexity is expressed not merely in his ability to see a wide range of details. It lies also in his ability to speak in multiple registers at once, to speak both as one of "us" and as somebody who is superior to us, to speak as the personalized and humble teller of the story of the night before the Battle of Schoen Grabern, and as the ironic commentator on our human foibles at the same time.

Andrew is incapable of speaking in such a way, because his perception of the world is more limited than that of the narrator. It is true that of all the characters in the novel, Andrew is one of the most clear-sighted. Andrew sees much in the world. He sees the ineffectiveness of the political and military leadership. He sees the limitations of his sister's religious convictions. He sees the mundane reality of married life. He even eventually comes to see the falseness of his aspirations to heroic greatness. Andrew's perceptiveness combined with his noble virtues--his intelligence, his strong patriotic instinct, and his wish to make something of himself and his life--make him an object of the author's admiration in the novel. But alongside this admiration we find an unmistakable touch of authorial irony--of that playful, yet tragic irony with which Tolstoy described Olenin in *The Cossacks*, and which may be regarded as a cornerstone of Tolstoy's tragi-comic view of life. For all his clear-sightedness, Andrew ultimately never fully understands that one significant, elusive aspect of his existence that only his creator seems able to understand: the ultimate order of things of which Andrew is himself both part and microcosm. To be sure, Andrew senses that

he is part of something much bigger than himself. His famous meditation on the sky at Austerlitz is testimony to this. But that moment is short-lived. For him it is a momentary epiphany, and not a way of being in the world. What Andrew lacks is that Kutuzov-like wisdom always to know what can and cannot be known; the ability to accept the inherent contradiction of things; the capacity to recognize in the smallest moment or detail or event an expression of a more universal situation or human condition.[104] He lacks, too, the ability to submit, instinctively and not self-consciously, to the impersonal forces over which we have no control, and in that act of submission, to become empowered, rather than defeated, by those very forces. In spite of his searchings and strivings, Andrew never finally discovers that unifying order of life that he seeks throughout the novel. He never discovers it, because it does not exist in the form in which the hero seeks it. That order, for Tolstoy, is not something that can be rationally defined or consciously sought after. It does not lie in any single aspiration or ideal. Nor, on the other hand, is it something to be denied as non-existent, as Andrew sometimes does in his worst moments of despair. That order is shown to exist in Tolstoy's universe at the point where prosaic and epic experience

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[104] With one fell swoop of the eye, Kutuzov *understands* an entire situation, even if he does not know all the details. On his survey of the troops in Book Two, for instance, he immediately recognizes the embarrassment of Timokhin who had been reprimanded by the regimental commander: "Kutuzov, who evidently [*vidimo*] understood his case and wished him nothing but good, quickly turned away, a scarcely perceptible smile flitting over his scarred and puffy face." (9, 143; 122). The use of the adverb *vidimo* in this sentence is significant. It suggests the narrator's own uncertainty about what his character actually knows. And yet, in spite of that uncertainty, the narrator ventures a guess. The narrator thus gives us entry into the inner thoughts of his character, just as Kutuzov is himself is an acute observer here, capable of perceiving the underlying significance of that which he sees. The use of the adverb *vidimo*, whose root is *videt'*, to see, creates for the reader a visual association. Kutuzov, like the narrator, mentally perceives the inner essence of a scene based on what he *sees* with his eye. (9, 143; 122) While Andrew is frequently treated as the object of the narrator's ironic vision, Kutuzov is treated without a hint of irony. It is as though he becomes here a co-author along with the narrator, capable of sharing in and complementing the narrator's penetrating insight.

intersect, at the point where the small moments, meaningful in themselves, are also felt to be microcosms of larger, more permanent patterns of human life and history.

Only a certain type of narrative consciousness would have the capacity to envision and articulate such moments of interlinkage. It is a consciousness that is able to combine an acute awareness of prosaic experience with the power to imagine the epic forces that coexist along with and ultimately subsume that experience. The power of that consciousness lies not in what it sees, but in *how* it sees, for even the lengthiest and most diverse conglomeration of isolated facts would likely fail to produce the same sense of organic wholeness of so many different aspects of human life as Tolstoy has created for his reader in the few pages from *War and Peace* that we have been analyzing. It seems that only a voice that can envision and *itself internalize* at once conflicting poles of human life--the real and the ideal, the prosaic and the epic, the part and the whole--would have the capacity to convey the artistic and philosophical spirit of *War and Peace*. Tolstoy has created such a voice in the omniscient narrator. The power of that voice lies in its self-conscious combination of an epic-like wisdom about the way things are, about human smallness and folly, with a sympathetic awareness of the vast significance of even the smallest moments in human life.

This is *what* that voice tells us in the novel. *How* this voice speaks to us is an embodiment and a deepening of the message itself: The union of a personalized playfulness with a sense of impersonal objectivity creates the impression that this voice somehow emanates from among us, even as it resounds above us. This combination of qualities in the narrative voice is one of the defining features of

Tolstoy's artistic and philosophical "realism" in *War and Peace*. That realism is characterized by an artistic union of subjective authorial participation with an "objective" narrative relayed with such lucidity and control that it almost appears to tell itself.[105] The personal and the impersonal are thus combined in the artistic technique of the novel just as these two aspects of life are united in the experience of the characters themselves. If Sartre was right that "the technique of the novel always refers us back to the metaphysics of the novelist,"[106] then we may say that Tolstoy's "realist" technique in *War and Peace*, as I have described it, bespeaks the author's own metaphysics of a highly personalized impersonality. That metaphysics expresses a vision of the world in which each individual human action, experience, and utterance is both full of individualized nuance and therefore deeply meaningful in itself, and is also seen to be a tiny part of a something much larger, part of a universal human experience and the impersonal forces of history. "Tolstoy, as did no one else," writes Lidiia Ginzburg, "achieved the sense of discrete character, but for him the limits of creative cognition lie not in the individual person, but in the fullness of the superpersonal human experience.... Tolstoy's hero is more than a character, that is, he

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[105] Matthew Arnold was one of the first critics to express this view of Tolstoy's art. In 1888 the critic wrote: "But the truth is we are not to take *Anna Karenina* as a work of art; we are to take it as a piece of life. A piece of life it is." See Matthew Arnold, "Count Leo Tolstoi," in Arnold, *Essays in Criticism: Second Series* (London, 1888), p.260. Closer to our time, Philip Rahv has suggested that this life-like quality of Tolstoy's writing makes analysis of his art seem superfluous: "The art of Tolstoy," Rahv writes, "is of such irresistable simplicity and truth, is at once so intense and so transparent in all of its effects, that the need is seldom felt to analyze the means by which it becomes what it is, that is to say, its method or sum of its techniques." Through my analysis of the scene in which Prince Andrew surveys the battlefield, I hope to have shown that the "simplicity and truth" of Tolstoy's writing, although perhaps "transparent in its effects," is not quite as transparent in its means. I hope to have shown that the illusion of verisimilitude is achieved by means of many subtle artistic techniques. See Philip Rahv, "Tolstoy: The Green Twig and the Black Trunk," in Rahv, *Literature and the Sixth Sense* (Boston, 1970), p.134.
[106] Quoted in George Steiner, *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky: An Essay in the Old Criticism*, p.6. Steiner discusses throughout his book the way in which poetics and metaphysics are intertwined in Tolstoy's fiction.

acts not just as character, but also as the medium through which the laws and forms of the common life make their appearance."[107]

Perhaps the author's ability to create a fictional world in the novel that seems so similar to the one we inhabit in reality stems from the fact that we recognize in Tolstoy's metaphysics a truth about the nature of our own lives: that this life is both lived by us and happens in spite of us, that it consists both in the minute details of everyday experience, of which we seem to be the masters, and in the vast, impersonal forces over which we have no control. The passage we have been analyzing is a good one in which to see how Tolstoy artistically creates a sense of the ultimate unity of these two planes. We have seen this both in Tolstoy's use of details, and in the narrative voice he uses to relate those details. That narrative voice reveals a rare artistic mastery, of which so many of Tolstoy's contemporaries and subsequent critics have spoken. But underlying this artistic mastery lies also, I would like to suggest, a uniquely Tolstoyan version of existential *self-mastery*. If we may transgress for a moment the distinction between author and narrator that contemporary literary theory has taught us, then we may speak of the narrative voice in *War and Peace* as the voice of Tolstoy's alter-ego, of his ideal "other": This voice synthesizes an individualized perception of the world with a self-effacing impersonal reportage on the "objective" order of things. It thus combines the personal and the impersonal in a way that Tolstoy, the man, wavering in his own life between an intense individualism and a radical self-renunciation, could never achieve.[108] Unlike Tolstoy, the man, Tolstoy, the

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[107] Lidiia Ginzburg, *O psikhologicheskoi proze*. (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1977), p.302.

[108] At the heart of Merezhkovsky's classic *Tolstoy as Man and Artist* lies the argument that both of these aspects of the writer's personality stem from the same essential core. "...The primary cause and link between these two apparently conflicting feelings," Merezhkovsky writes, "is the 'ego' either

artist, then, speaking through his narrator, has internalized these opposing poles of human experience in *War and Peace* and seems temporarily to have transformed that opposition into a vision of human completeness and metaphysical order.

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If we distance ourselves for a moment from the passage we have been analyzing and view it and its denouement [the battle that begins in the next chapter] in their relation to the rest of the novel, then we discover that in these few scenes Tolstoy tells a story that has been told over and again throughout Book Two and throughout the novel as a whole: It is the story of how an individual experiences the painful dissolution of his idealistic vision of the world. Bernard Shaw's famous dictum, "You have learned something; it always feels at first as if you have lost something" may be applied to Andrew's experience of military life. What Andrew will learn is that battles do not happen in reality as they do in the imagination. What he will lose is the illusion that the elegant constructs of his intellect may be reincarnated in the context of lived reality. Andrew has begun to recognize the impossibility of mentally organizing his world in a neat fashion. He aspires to mental roundness and order in his world, but discovers that the reality he confronts is full of edges, disharmony, and chaos. Such confrontation within Andrew between idealism and the imperfect realities of his world is an abstract philosophical theme that is given

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asserted to the utmost or denied to the utmost. All begins and ends with the self." Might we say then that the ostensible objectivity and impersonality of Tolstoy's narrative technique reflect not Tolstoy's distance from the world he creates, but, in fact, a deep participation in that world? It is just this possibility that I consider here with my argument that Tolstoy's ostensible distance from his fictional world actually masks his profound penetration of that world, his synthesis and internalization of its many contradictory aspects. See Dmitri Merezhkovsky, *Tolstoy as Man and Artist with an Essay on Dostoevsky*, p. 8. In the original: *L. Tolstoi i Dostoevskii*, vol. 1 (Petersburg: Izdanie M. V. Pizoskhova, 1903), p. 20.

concrete artistic expression in specific scenes throughout the novel. We have seen one such moment in our analysis of Andrew's surveying of the battlefield in Book Two.

Andrew is not the only character for whom the confrontation of the real and the ideal is a central philosophical and psychological dynamic in the novel. Nicholas Rostov is another such character. In moving our attention from Andrew to Nicholas, we are not so much changing the direction of our analysis as we are shifting our lens from one to another manifestation of the same essential storyline. For all the differences among them, Rostov and Bolkonsky are united by a deep human commonality: both of them, each in his own way, are idealists whose military experiences force them to confront challenges to their idealistic visions of the world. Tolstoy artistically creates a sense of this commonality in the way he structures, for instance, the plot of Book Two. The book shifts back and forth between descriptions of Andrew's and Rostov's experience of their first battle. We see them both first in the context of camp life, and then in the midst of battle. In both venues, they are shown to confront the breakdown of their initially roseate visions of life in the military. Tolstoy first describes how Andrew becomes impatient with two soldiers who joke after the news of a lost campaign. "What's the matter?" exclaimed Prince Andrew standing still in his excitement. "Don't you understand that either we are officers serving our Tsar and our country, rejoicing in the successes and grieving at the misfortunes of our common cause, or we are merely lackeys who care nothing for their master's business." (9, 155; 133) What appears to be an expression of Prince Andrew's unwavering patriotic spirit is also a manifestation of his rigidity of mind, which is a psychological response in Andrew to the recent news of the Russian defeat.

The joking soldiers are able to separate the import of this news from their personal lives. For Andrew, that defeat becomes a personal defeat, a challenge to his personal sense of meaning, which for him is here, as throughout the novel, closely bound up with the outcome of history. Andrew's patriotic instinct here is thus shown to stem from a deep psychological need for a sense of clarity and purpose in his world--a world in which laughing soldiers, like history, continue to make light of the nobleman's high-minded aspirations. Of course, we are able to contrast Prince Andrew's courage with the relative cowardice of one of the laughing soldiers, Nesvitski. Still, this contrast does not quite vindicate Prince Andrew. Tolstoy does not take sides in the debate. He simply presents to us the complex interaction of the various human personalities involved. And he reveals to us the various ways in which each of those personalities constructs, individually and arbitrarily, personal meaning.

Later in the same book, the young Rostov learns, like Andrew, that his noble intentions are not always admired or shared by those around him. After Rostov publicly exposes a certain Telyanin, an elderly soldier, who has stolen Denisov's money, he is chided by the staff captain for confronting Telyanin in front of other officers. "I'm not to blame that the conversation began in the presence of other officers," Rostov responds. Perhaps I ought not to have spoken before them, but I am not a diplomatist. That's why I joined the hussars, thinking that here one would not need finesse." (9, 164; 141) Rostov believes he is protecting the honor of his regiment by exposing Telyanin. Or perhaps he is more concerned with the honor of his friend, Denisov, from whom the money has been taken. It is unclear. What is clear, however, is that Rostov believes there is an absolute honor, and that it is his responsibility to

defend it. The scene reveals that there are, in fact, many competing systems of honor, and that Rostov's is only one among them.

Both Bolkonsky and Rostov, then, share a pride, an intensity of spirit, and often a single-mindedness in their worldviews. And both confront the imperfect realities of a world in which history does not happen as they would wish and in which the definition of the good is not absolute. The unique experiences of these two very different characters are united artistically by Tolstoy in Book Two. Their private stories unfold separately and without direct relation to the other. The two are not even aware of each other's existence at this point in the novel. And yet, even as their stories are told separately in this book, they also echo one another, like two parallel subjects of a single musical fugue. Tolstoy thus conveys the commonality of their experiences and creates the impression that these two personality types, however different, are ultimately conjoined by some deeper unifying principle. That unity is subtly, yet powerfully evident in the double ending of Book Two, in which Tolstoy juxtaposes the disenchanted Andrew against the wounded Rostov. Andrew's story ends with these lines: "Prince Andrew gave him [Tushin] a look, but said nothing and went away. He felt sad and depressed. It was all so strange, so unlike what he had hoped." (9, 243; 212). Then with his characteristically cinematic intuition, Tolstoy shifts the lens immediately to Rostov, who lies wounded and reflects in agony on his pain: "Nobody wants me!" he exclaims several paragraphs later. "There is no one to help me or pity me. Yet I was once at home, strong, happy, and loved." (9, 244; 213) Both of these moments occur simultaneously, however in distinct scenes, and both of them poignantly express the disintegration of each character's earlier ideals and each

one's feeling of isolation in the world. By juxtaposing these parallel situations, Tolstoy artistically creates for the reader the sense of a common human experience that connects the confusion and isolation felt by each character individually. While it appears to each character that he suffers alone, the reader recognizes that their suffering is part of some larger order of things to which only their creator, and we, the readers, are privy.

From the point of view of the characters themselves, this is perhaps shallow consolation; it surely does not lessen their emotional pain. But the early Tolstoy was too honest a writer to offer artificial solutions to the burden of life. Instead, in *War and Peace* he gives us another sort of "answer" to that burden: the aesthetic response. He transforms the tragedy of life into an art-form which combines the rhythmic principle of poetry with an unflinching attention to the particular details of lived experience, characteristic of realist prose. As we see in this passage, the rhythmic principle in the novel is not only verbal[109]; it is also thematic. There are situations and experiences that play off of one another in a manner similar to the way that parallel sounds and rhythms interact with one another in poetry.[110] By means of internal resonances within the text itself, Tolstoy thus artistically links the truth of a single moment in an individual's life to the larger truth of our shared human experience. When we read this novel, we thus feel as though we are in an artistic world that both

[109] For an interesting analysis of the verbal poetry in in the novel, see David Sloane, "The Poetry in *War and Peace*," *Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 40, 1 (Spring, 1988): 63-84.
[110] There is evidence from Tolstoy's own writings that he viewed prose and poetry as closely related forms of artistic expression. In 1851 the author notes in his diary: "Where the border is between prose and poetry I will never understand; although there is a question about this subject in the study of verbal arts. But it's impossible to understand the answer. Poetry is verse. Prose is not verse. Or: poetry is everything excluding business papers and text books." Quoted in *Lev Tolstoi ob iskusstvo i literature* (Moscow: Sovetskii Pisatel', 1958), vol. 1, p.71.

reveals the imperfections of each individual's lived experience and is saturated at the same time with the reconciling harmonies of a Tiutchev poem, or a musical perfomance.[111] It is this sense of a union of individual and universal experience, and of the real and the ideal in human life, that Tolstoy creates by telling, in parallel, the stories of Andrew Bolkonsky and Nicholas Rostov in Book Two.[112]

This is one of the ways in which Tolstoy, by manipulating the formal structure of the novel, artistically transforms the inherently disconnected details of reality into a vision of a unified human experience. This act of transforming discordant details into a unified picture of life is an artistic counterpart to the philosophical searchings of the characters themselves. Isaiah Berlin was right when he saw the aspiration to a unifying principle and a vexing awareness of distinct details as two conflicting impulses in Tolstoy's vision of the world.[113] But by associating the hedgehog with the

[111] Of Tiutchev Tolstoy remarked in 1886: "Tiutchev. Profundity." Quoted in F. I. Tiutchev, *Lirika*, vol.2 (Moscow: Nauka, 1965), p.424.

[112] By comparing two other scenes in the novel--the one in which Nicholas returns home after having gambled away his money and the hunt scene--Sergei Bocharov has come to a conclusion similar to mine about the nature of the unifying principle in the novel. Bocharov writes: "Episodes in *War and Peace* are interconnected not by the unity of action, in which one and the same heroes participate, as we might find in a usual novel. These connections have a secondary character and are themselves determined by another, more hidden, inner connection. From the point of view of the poetics of the novel, the action in *War and Peace* is very unfocused and unconcentrated [*nesosredotochenno i nesobranno*]. It spreads out in various directions, develops in parallel lines. The internal connection forming the "basis of cohesion" consists in a situation, a basic situation of human life, which Tolstoy uncovers in its most various manifestations and occurrences." For Bocharov, the unifying situation in the novel is the way in which human beings experience and overcome crisis situations. For me, it is the confrontation between the ideal and the real in human life. See Sergei Bocharov, *Roman L. Tolstogo "Voina i mir*" (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1987, p.11.

[113] Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History* (New York, 1953). Here I am in agreement with the general thrust of Donna Orwin's analysis of *War and Peace*. The scholar sees her work as a partial corrective to the Berlin school of thought on Tolstoy, which regards relativism as the core of Tolstoy's vision of the world. That school of thought, according to Orwin, "however attractive it may be in and of itself, and despite the fact that it does properly attempt to account for Tolstoy's love of diversity and particularity, is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of what Tolstoy himself intended." Orwin and I come to similar conclusions about the union of the real and the ideal in Tolstoy's fiction, although we approach the author from different angles. Orwin's emphasis is on the intellectual roots of Tolstoy's art and thought, whereas mine is on the way in which Tolstoy's metaphysics is expressed in the poetics of the texts themselves. See Donna Tussing Orwin, *Tolstoy's Art and Thought, 1847-1880* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p.9.

thinker and the fox with the artist in Tolstoy, Berlin draws the distinction too sharply. He fails to consider the way in which these two impulses both exist within Tolstoy's poetics and are ultimately conjoined there.

In my reading of *War and Peace*, the novel becomes like a giant oak tree with proliferating branches extending in all directions. Each individual scene that we analyze is a single branch of that tree. It possesses a unique contour and combination of texture, color, and smell, and may therefore be regarded as a complete creation in itself. But it is also connected to the large trunk from which it protrudes. In my interpretation, the unifying "truth" of the work lies neither in the combination of finely wrought details that make up the branches, nor in the massive breadth of the trunk, but at the point where the trunk may be seen to inhere in each of its branches, at the point of intersection between the unifying order and the minute manifestations of the single artistic organism.[114]

In the artistic side of the work, Tolstoy does not create the illusion of order by moving logically, or linearly, from a perception of the real to a vision of the ideal, as his characters often do in their own minds. An example of such linear movement would be Andrew's attempt rationally to order the facts of his surroundings in order to create a battle strategy. Rather, Tolstoy artistically embraces both realms at the

[114] My image of the oak tree to describe the architectonics of *War and Peace* is similar to the description of the Soviet critic O. V. Slivitskaia, who, expanding on the work of V. D. Dneprov, describes the structure of *War and Peace* with the term "*federativnost*'," or literally, "federativeness." The root of the word is "*feder*," related to the Latin word for "league," which is the same root as in the Russian word, *federatsiia*, or "federation." In this scholar's interpretation, *War and Peace* thus becomes a kind of artistic counterpart to the political concept of "federation". Slivitskaia writes: "The word *federativnost*'... signifies the dialectical mutuality of each component's dependence on and independence from all the 'cohesions' of the book. Each artistic component is at once both an element of the whole system and possesses inherent value in itself [*samotsennost'*]; it both gravitates towards the artistic center and is independent of it." See O. V. Slivitskaia, "*Voina i mir" L. N. Tolstogo: Problemy chelovecheskogo obshcheniia*," p.14.

same time. He shows us facts at once in their real and in their transformed state. He demystifies and mystifies the world in a single artistic brush-stroke. Tolstoy wreaks artistic havoc on the world, as the Formalists showed us[115]; and in so doing he destroys many human ordering systems and ideals. Yet this act of destruction is also an act of affirmation and creation. Indeed, out of the artistic and philosophical nihilism inherent in *War and Peace* emerges a uniquely Tolstoyan vision of metaphysical order. It is a vision that combines an idealized sense of life's unity with an acute awareness of the discord that underlies that unity. It is a vision that explores and itself expresses modern man's longing for a unifying order, and implicitly recognizes at the same time that modern man's intellectual and creative strength is based, paradoxically, on his separation from that ideal.

The part and the whole, the real and the ideal, do not therefore exist in permanent opposition in Tolstoy's novel. They enter finally into a symbiotic

[115] The Russian Formalists were the first to argue systematically that the concept of *ostranenie*, or estrangement, is a defining feature of Tolstoy's poetics. But in their zeal to see in Tolstoy a "Fellow-Traveller," the Formalists did not sufficiently consider in their reevaluation of the writer the significant ways in which his vision differed markedly from theirs. For Tolstoy, the technique of defamiliarization was not an end in itself, as it was in much of the Formalist fiction. It was for Tolstoy not an ultimate expression of the inherent lack of stable meaning in the world. It was rather a means of destabilizing false ordering systems in order to discover in the world what was for him a "truer" order, a "truer" unifying principle. I think the Formalists underestimated the intensity of this impulse towards a unifying principle in Tolstoy's art and thought. Viktor Shklovsky's biography of Tolstoy exemplifies in its very form this Formalist instinct to interpret Tolstoy through the lens of their own era. The biography is impressionistic, erratic, and in its form meant to communicate, I believe, a sense of the social and spiritual chaos that Shklovsky saw as the defining context for Tolstoy's life and art, just as it was for his own life in the 1920's. Of course, Shklovsky, like most of the Formalists, was concerned primarily with the artistic function of *ostranenie*, whereas I am concerned more with its cognitive, or epistemological, function. This discrepancy partly explains the differences in our respective conclusions. [See V. Shkovskii, *Lev Tolstoy*, trans. Progress Publishers (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978). In his classic study, *Material i stil' v romane "Voina i mir" L'va Tolstogo*, Viktor Shklovsky analyzes the way in which Tolstoy deforms some of the sources he used in writing the novel. See Viktor Shklovskii, *Mater'ial i stil' v romane 'Voina i mir*' (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo 'Federatsiia') Reprint: University of Michigan, 1967. For an interesting and well-informed analysis of the way in which Tolstoy became for Shklovsky and Eikhenbaum a model of authorship in an age of social transformation, see Samuel Eisen, *Politics, Poetics, and Profession: Viktor Shklovsky, Boris Eikenbaum, and the Understanding of Literature (1919-1936)*, Dissertation, Stanford University, 1994.]

relationship. Tolstoy's vision of a unifying order is not ultimately a rejection of *what is* in favor of *what might be*. It is rather a bold and creative synthesis of these two realms. While Tolstoy's searching characters strive for an ideal vision or experience of life by attempting to transcend the real, Tolstoy creates a vision of life in which the real itself, when perceived through the eye of an artist who senses the organic relationship among all things, begins to acquire transcendent meaning. The raw materials of everyday human experience are subsumed into an artistic experience in which even the smallest detail begins to take on larger significance when seen in the context of the whole poetic fabric of which it is part. The real is itself transformed by the artist into the ideal.

If we were to strike from our analysis of the work the concept of the real--*what is*--then we would fail to recognize in *War and Peace* an art-form which takes us inside the world as it is and recreates that world for us in all of its fluidity and teeming particularity. And yet at the same time, if we fail to perceive the way in which Tolstoy takes very seriously his characters' striving for the ideal, and the way in which a sense of the ideal is created in the poetic fabric of the work itself, then we will misunderstand an essential problem that is explored both philosophically and poetically throughout the novel: the problem of how the human individual struggles to find a unifying order in the chaos of reality.

The novel may thus be read as both an artistic representation and itself an embodiment of one of the basic philosophical and psychological paradoxes of our modernity: in our groping for self-transcendence, for that which lies beyond the reality of our world, we become immersed in our world ever more deeply. We

confront the vast distance separating who we are from who we would like to become. In our striving for the ideal, we necessarily sharpen our perception of the real. And in that act of sharpening, we begin to see too much, too many rough edges, too many discordant facts. Like Prince Andrew and Nicholas Rostov, we aspire to return, once again, to a simpler and more unified experience of the world. We seek to create out of the chaos a vision of order. This story, familiar to most of us, and a common theme in nineteenth-century Russian literature, is one that is told again and again, in many forms and specific contexts, throughout *War and Peace*, and indeed throughout Tolstoy's *oeuvre*.

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Above we analyzed this story as it was told in Book Two, in the scene in which Prince Andrew surveys the battlefield. We will now turn to the final chapter of Book Five, in which Nicholas Rostov witnesses and attempts to make sense of the events surrounding Alexander's meeting with Napoleon at Tilsit. The earlier scene opens with a description of Prince Andrew as he rides "round the whole line from right flank to left," and makes his way up to the battery in order to survey the field. In the concluding chapter of Book Five, Tolstoy describes Rostov as he is engaged in a similar act of "surveying" his surroundings. There is an important and telling difference here. Whereas Prince Andrew attempts to view his surroundings from a supposedly omniscient vantage point, Nicholas is fully immersed in the crowd of troops, and from that position, as one of the soldiers, he attempts to make sense of the meeting between Alexander and Napoleon.

Herein lies an essential difference between the way in which Rostov's and Prince Andrew's patriotic impulses are represented in the novel. Prince Andrew wishes to associate himself with the upper echelons of power, with the political elite. It is from his association with these circles that he derives his sense of personal power and defines his contribution to the Russian cause against the French. Rostov aspires to a heroism similar to the kind that Prince Andrew desires: he seeks glory and wishes for recognition from his superiors. And yet this instinct for self-assertion coexists with his countervailing instinct for selfless immersion in his surroundings and submission to the will of the collective. Nicholas' instinct for submersion among the crowd is suggested in this detail: "*Tolpa ochutilas' neozhidanno tak blizko k imperatoram, chto Rostovu, stoiavshemu v perdednikh riadakh eiu, stalo strashno, kak by ego ne uznali.*" ["The crowd unexpectedly found itself so close to the Emperors that Rostov, standing in the front row, was afraid he might be recognized."] (10, 147; 449) Of course, Rostov's desire for anonymity is motivated partly by the fact that he has come to Tilsit without permission. But in fact there is a deeper philosophical implication, as well: Even Rostov, who often clings to the comfort of community, acts indepedently of that community when it is necessary. In this particular instance, Rostov acts independently in order to help his friend, Denisov, who awaits a demotion for having stolen provisions from a passing caravan of troops. It seems, then, that Rostov *is* capable of independent decision. The risk of embarrassment and punishment he is willing to face at Tilsit is evidence of this. The scene creates the impression that Rostov enjoys the risky excitement of voyeurism while clutching instinctively to his anonymity among the crowd.

What Rostov clutches to, at a deeper level, is an ideal that has motivated him throughout the novel: the image of himself as part of a larger communal experience. Rostov often mentally returns to this communal ideal in moments of confusion and despair. It is just this ideal that gives his life meaning and order. But it is also this ideal

that often prevents him from seeing the world as a place in which human beings are also called upon to act as individuals and to make independent decisions. By attaching himself so passionately to the ideal of community, Rostov never fully permits himself to take the risk of acting as a free moral agent. Rostov fears the freedom that human individuality demands. He fears the challenge of reality. The sentence quoted above thus encapsulates in miniature a central feature of the young Rostov's personality.

This sentence faintly echoes the scene in Book Three, in which Rostov, seeing Alexander alone on the battlefield, swoons "as a youth in love" with the thought of approaching his beloved Emperor (whom the narrator likens, in fact, to a feminine lover). Rostov refrains from doing so, however, out of fear of upsetting the Emperor and of not knowing how to speak to him. (9, 352-3; 308-9) What Rostov fears, at another level, is the dissolution of a pleasant and idealized image of his long-awaited encounter with the Tsar. In Rostov's mind that encounter is to occur "at a moment of victory and triumph, generally when he was dying of wounds and the sovereign had thanked him for heroic deeds, and while dying he expressed the love his actions had proved." (9, 352; 309) In this instance, none of the pre-requisites for the imagined encounter apply. The Russians appear to have lost the battle, Rostov is not wounded, and he has not performed any heroic deeds. Sensing that the given context is an

inappropriate one in which to meet his Tsar, Rostov rides away "sorrowfully and with a heart full of despair." This is the despair of a disappointed lover, spurned not so much by his beloved, as by his confrontation with reality itself.

When Rostov ends his leave of absence and returns to the front in the middle of Book Five, he welcomes military life as an escape from the anxieties of home life. What begins as a pleasant reentry into a world of moral order and certainty, however, quickly devolves into a state of confusion. Step by step, Rostov's world begins to unravel once again. His friend, Denisov, is arrested for seizing transports of food. Rostov visits him in the hospital and confronts the stark realities of sickness and death. Rostov then makes an unsuccessful attempt at presenting Denisov's petition to the Emperor. In the final chapter of Book Five, Rostov witnesses the truce between Alexander, Rostov's "beloved," and Napoleon, the "enemy." For Rostov this is the coup de grâce. It marks both the culmination and the epitome of a world gone awry. Rostov's sense of identity and moral order is now completely undermined. The world shows itself to Rostov as a hopelessly imperfect place. Confronted with the reality of an imperfect world, can Rostov discover an ordering principle that accepts both the reality of chaos and embraces the possibility of order? Will Rostov have the courage to assert himself as a creative individual, even as he accepts that there are objective forces and painful truths of life over which he has no control? This existential challenge, posed to so many of Tolstoy's characters, will now be posed to the young Rostov, as well.

The way in which Rostov is represented in the concluding chapter of Book Five is both an echo and an expansion of the way in which he is represented in an

earlier scene in Book Three, depicting Alexander's review of the Russian troops. In that scene we are first given a description of the magnificent gathering of the troops. We are told by the narrator that "every general and every soldier was conscious of his own insignificance, aware of being but a drop in that ocean of men, and yet at the same time was conscious of his strength as a part of that enormous whole." (9, 299; 262). Two realities coexist: the presence of an enormous whole and the presence of each individual within that whole. The narrative emphasis in this scene, however, is on the totality of the troops. This can be seen several lines later when the reader is taken inside Rostov's head and given a glimpse of Rostov's private experience of the review. Even then, even as we are given entry into Rostov's private world, our attention is immediately drawn back to the "whole" picture. This happens because Rostov's private experience, however concretely and uniquely described, is immediately linked to the experience of all of the others present:

> Rostov, standing in the front lines of Kutuzov's army which the Tsar approached first, experienced the same feeling as every other man in that army: a feeling of self-forgetfulness, a proud consciousness of might, and a passionate attraction to him who was the cause of this triumph. (9, 300; 263)

Rostov's private reflections are interrupted several lines later by the clamor of the shouting troops. The reader's attention is drawn once again to the totality of the event. Rostov's private experience, although significant, is ultimately subsumed into the ecstatic experience of the larger collective:

> "Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!" thundered from all sides, one regiment after another greeting the Tsar with strains of the march, and then "Hurrah!"...Then the general march, and again "Hurrah! hurrah!" growing ever stronger and fuller and merging into a deafening roar. (9, 300; 263)

At the end of Book Five, Rostov will be depicted as a member of the collective of troops, just as in the review scene. There is an important difference between the two scenes, however. Whereas in the review scene Rostov was fully and comfortably part of an ecstatic collective, now he is clearly where he does not belong. He has come to Tilsit without permission. The narrative description of Rostov is correspondingly different, as well. Rostov's perceptions and feelings are no longer placed among descriptions of the full parade of troops and the shouting chorus of soldiers. Rostov is artistically lifted, as it were, from that collective, and his individual experience becomes the primary focus of the reader's attention. Whereas in the earlier scene Rostov mentally takes in, with the reader, the aesthetic beauty of the Russian army gathered on the field, now he becomes much more actively involved in making sense out of what it sees. Rostov is no longer a passive and awe-filled admirer of his world. He is a confused, yet active, interpreter. At the end of the chapter Rostov will rediscover that internal order which he has temporarily lost. But he will do so in a disappointingly ignoble way: by drinking himself into a stupor. It seems that the only way for Rostov to recreate that sense of intoxicating ecstasy and purpose that he experienced in the review scene is by literally intoxicating himself. He relies on a basic form of self-deception in order to hold onto a cherished ideal.[116] The chapter can

[116] In his, "Staroe barstvo" ["The Old Gentry"], discussed earlier, Dmitry Pisarev sees such self-deception as one of the defining characteristics of Rostov's character. Pisarev writes:

> Rostov remains faithful to the formula he discovers in the Tilsit cafe under the influence of two bottles of wine. Thought will have no influence on his later life. Doubts will no longer disturb his peace of mind. He knows and wants to know only his military service and the noble diversions proper to the rich landlord and the dashing hussar. His mind refuses all work, even that which is necessary to save his family's property from the machinations of the swindling but evidently not very literate steward, Mitinka.... [Dmitry Pisarev, "Staroe barstvo" ["The Old Gentry"], quoted in A. V. Knowles, ed., *Tolstoy: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge &Kegan Paul, 1978), p.122.]

be read as a kind of summing up of the Nicholas Rostov storyline as it unfolds in the first portion of the novel. It can also be read as a minor manifestation of a major theme in the work: the story of how an individual, confronting confusion in the world, seeks to create out of the discord an internal vision of order. In this chapter Tolstoy thus delicately plants a seed of latent significance for the entire novel. He presents to us yet another link in that vast chain of cohesions that forms the basis of *War and Peace*.

Throughout most of the chapter, Nicholas is submerged among the crowd, and yet the reader is made aware of his individual presence in that crowd. The narrative is structured so that the reader watches the meeting of the two Emperors partly through the eyes of the omniscient narrator, and partly through Nicholas'own eyes: "*V to vremia kak gosudar' pod'ezhal k odnomu flangu batal'onov, sdelavshikh na karaul, k protivopolozhnomu flangu podskakivala drugaia tolpa vsadnikov i vperedi ikh Rostov uznal Napoleona. Eto ne mog byt' nikto drugoi*." ["As the Tsar rode up to one flank of the battalions, which presented arms, another group of horsemen galloped up to the opposite flank, and at the head of them Rostov recognized Napoleon. It could be no one else."] (10, 147; 449) The final sentence in this passage, *Eto ne mog byt' nikto drugoi*, are Rostov's thoughts, not the narrator's. They are presented to us in the form of an attenuated interior monologue, a technique Tolstoy frequently uses to

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At another point in the essay Pisarev explains Rostov's weakness in more general terms:

> Not everyone is able manfully to bear the first disillusionment. One of these is Rostov himself. Instead of looking at the facts which have destroyed his youthful illusions he screws up his eyes with cowardly obstinacy and faint-hearted bitterness and chases his thoughts away as soon as they begin to take on too accustomed a form. Rostov not only shuts his own eyes but also with a fanatical zeal tries to shut those of others too. (Ibid., p.121)

communicate the inner thoughts of his characters. In this case the technique has the effect of subtly communicating to the reader the presence of Rostov's subjective consciousness, emerging, as it were, from the objective narration.

It is a very different sort of consciousness from that of the omniscient narrator. The narrator here, as elsewhere in the novel frequently destabilizes the reader's perceptions. Rostov's perspective, on the other hand, emerges from the text here as a finalized and absolute commentary on what he sees: "It could be no one else." Rostov is absolutely certain that the person he sees is Napoleon. The double negative structure of the sentence in the original reinforces the impression that, in Rostov's eyes, the fact of Napoleon's presence is a *fait accompli*. It is as though for Rostov there could be no possibility of dissonance between the external signs of the man and whom they signify. In this sentence the text thus creates the dual impression that facts are being objectively presented to the reader, and at the same time that there is an individuated subjective consciousness, separate from that of the omniscient narrator, which perceives and interprets those facts.

A few sentences later we read: *Pod'ekhav k Aleksandru, on* [*Napoleon*] *pripodnial shliapu i pri etom dvizhenii kavaleriiskii glaz Rostova ne mog ne zametit', chto Napoleon durno i ne tverdo sidel na loshadi*." ["On approaching Alexander he raised his hat, and as he did so, Rostov, with his cavalryman's eye, could not help noticing that Napoleon did not sit well or firmly in the saddle."](10, 147; 449) The phrase *kavaleriiskii glaz Rostova ne mog ne zametit'* is a verbal echo of the earlier sentence, *Eto ne mog byt' nikto drugoi*. The similar grammatical structure of the two phrases, *ne mog byt' nikto drugoi* and *ne mog ne zametit'* , parallels their similar

philosophical import, as well. Just as in the earlier sentence, here, too there is a tension between what appears to be an objective reality and the presence of a subjective consciousness which perceives that reality for us. Rostov's "cavalryman's eye" cannot fail to recognize that Napoleon, who is about to be welcomed by Alexander, does not know how to ride a horse properly.[117] In this scene we have a subtle foreshadowing of the larger confusion that Rostov will experience in this scene. Napoleon, Rostov senses, is not one of "us," and yet he will be treated as an equal by the Tsar. How this confusion is poetically communicated in the text is a matter of intrinsic interest. The text establishes a dynamic interaction between Rostov's subjective consciousness and the external world.

Just as Rostov is aware that something is amiss in the way Napoleon sits in his saddle, so the reader is aware that something is "amiss" in the text itself. There is a playful dissonance in the text between what appears to be happening on the surface, and what is actually happening beneath the external details. The text begins to offer hints that, beneath the apparently clear and visible imagery, there lies another reality that does not quite correspond to, or is not fully explained by, this imagery. What is it that Napoleon says to Alexander? The text only tells us that he says "something" [*chto-to*] to him. What is the significance of Napoleon's "unpleasantly artificial smile" [*nepriiatno pritvornaia ulybka*]?[118] Again the text is silent. The epistemological confusion at the heart of this passage is given concrete verbal

[117] This is a subtle piece of Tolstoyan propaganda. Napoleon is, of course, an experienced horseman who rode cavalry his entire life. Still, his skill and form are not admired by Rostov, who expects the French Emperor to ride like a Russian cavalryman.

[118] Maude incorrectly translates "*nepriiatno pritvornaia ulybka*" as "unpleasant and artificial smile." Tolstoy's emphasis is clearly on the artificiality of the smile. Such artificiality suggests the gap between sign and meaning in that smile, which gap embodies the deeper epistemological confusion at the heart of this passage. Maude's translation inappropriately diminishes and shifts that emphasis.

expression in the intermingling of French and Russian words in the sentence, *Batal'ony zakrichali: Ura i Vive l'Empereur!* ["The battalions shouted 'Hurrah!' and '*Vive l'Empereur*!'"] (10, 147; 449) In this phrase the text poetically produces a linguistic disorientation that bespeaks the epistemological confusion of Rostov and the other Russian troops as they witness the meeting of the Emperors.

The text bespeaks that confusion here by verbally reproducing it for the reader. It does not, however, offer a resolution of that confusion in this passage. Like Rostov and his fellow soldiers, the reader feels that he is immersed here in a world--a fictional world--in which meaning is not given, but must be actively sought out by the conscious mind. In his own search for a clear ordering principle in the world, Rostov remains frustrated by the epistemological chaos surrounding him. The narrator, on the other hand, artistically embraces that chaos, and in so doing, transforms it into an intrinsically meaningful philosophical and artistic order. While Rostov seeks to understand his world in terms of absolute principles, a tendency of his manifested throughout the novel, the reader is invited by the text here to perceive a different sort of ordering principle at work in the world. It is a principle that both allows for more philosophical ambiguity than the young Rostov is willing to accept. It also posits at the same time a deep, organic union among the details of the world.

One example of the way in which the text realizes the creative potential contained in epistemological chaos can be seen in the detail of Napoleon's artificial smile. The detail of Napoleon's artificial smile goes from being a single detail, possessing at first no readily apparent significance, to becoming one of the chapter's central literary and philosophical motifs: the motif of artificiality inherent in the

ceremonial forms and signs associated with the presentation of the Legion of Honor. Napoleon's entourage in order to impress the Russian and French bystanders. When we speak about the connection between the detail of Napoleon's smile and the ceremonial scene, then, we are speaking about a phenomenon slightly different than the text's capacity merely to create "powerful associations."[119] We are speaking also about the capacity of the text, on the basis of such associations, to create a sense of the world in which meaning is neither stable nor self-evident, but always in the process of being created, broken down, and recreated by the perceiving human consciousness. In the case of the particular textual association, which we are now considering, the consciousness creating meaning for us is the narrator's. The narrator generates meaning through the subsumption of the detail of Napoleon's artificial smile into the larger poetic and philosophical fabric of the story-line. This act of narrative internalization, and concomitant expansion, of the idea of Napoleon's "artificially unpleasant smile" thus becomes the artistic vehicle by which the text realizes the rich artistic and philosophical possibility associated with that detail. The narrative consciousness becomes in this way a powerful creative force in this chapter.

But we must recognize that the narrator's capacity to create meaning for us stems also from his tendency to destabilize meaning at the same time, from his tendency to destroy the illusion of the existence of an absolute or *a priori* truth in the world. Meaning, the narrator shows us through his own act of story-telling, is always in the process of being made, and remade, by the creative human consciousness. It

[119] Rimvydas Silbajoris writes: "Tolstoy works not through metaphorical deformations, as does Verlaine, but through the placement of delicately perceived facts exactly where they will link up with the most crucial events and with the most powerful associations." See Rimydas Silbajoris, *Tolstoy's Art and His Aesthetics* (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, Inc., 1990), p.169.

requires for its construction, furthermore, the participation of a second perceiving consciousness--in this case, that of the reader--which engages alongside the narrator in what Natasha Sankovitch has called a process of "constructing the text."[120] By inviting the reader to participate in this way in the construction of meaning, the text involves the reader in a dynamic of sense-making similar to that of Rostov himself. The reader is thus invited not merely to observe, but actively to take part in, the very search for meaning that drives Rostov in this chapter.

The empathy the reader develops for Rostov and his struggles may be sharply distinguished from the ironic distance the reader is made to feel from Napoleon in this chapter, even though Napoleon, too, is engaged in a kind of process of sense-making. Whereas Rostov seeks to discover meaning for his own sake, Napoleon attempts to create meaning for the purpose of making an impression on, and thereby gaining power over, his onlookers. Rostov's efforts to understand the meaning of the events witnessed by him is shown to stem from an internal need for epistemological order in the face of confusion and uncertainty in his world. Napoleon attempts to create the impression that he is the controller of those events and the ultimate shaper of meaning for other human beings. That there is nothing universally, or even intrinsically, significant in Napoleon's constructed system of symbols and gestures, however, is suggested by the narrator in the description of Lazarev and his Russian comrades. Lazarev, on whom Napoleon supposes he is bestowing a great honor, is uncertain wherein lies the significance of the event of which he is part, and what his proper role in that event should be. He periodically looks to his own Tsar for cues on how

[120] Natasha Sankovitch, "Readers' Experience of Repetition in Tolstoy," *Tolstoy Studies Journal* 3(1990), p.52.

properly to behave during the ceremony. As for the other Russian soldiers, the event witnessed by them contains none of the transcendent significance apparently intended by Napoleon. One Russian soldier, for instance, locates Lazarev's good fortune in the financial security that his reception of the Legion of Honor implies, and not in his having been granted eternal happiness by the touch of Napoleon's hand (as Napoleon wishes to believe).

The paragraphs describing the presentation of the Legion of Honor by Napoleon thus set up a dynamic whereby many different perspectives and realities are played off of one another. Napoleon is shown here to be part of a larger human collective whose members participate in the ceremony, not as mesmerized believers, but as a mass of unresistant followers, vaguely interested in what is happening and perfunctorally obedient to the demands made by the French leader. This may be contrasted with the sense of mystery and excitement that attends the Emperor's review of the troops in Book Three. In that scene, even the narrator participated in the mystification of the moment by brilliantly describing the parade of troops. Now the narrator acts more as a demystifying force. In the review scene, the narrator showed us the "whole" scene so that we, too, might take part in Rostov's sense of ecstasy. Now the narrator shows us the "whole" in order to mock Napoleon. By revealing to us in this way the "whole" event, the narrator undermines the impression that Napoleon wishes to create throughout the scene that he is in control of the event and that meaning is created by him alone.

The way in which the scene challenges Napoleon's implicit claim to power is by artistically creating a sense of a larger human reality, of which Napoleon is but a

single element. The reader is thus challenged to engage in an intepretive act that differs in an essential way from that undertaken by the members of Napoleon's suite. While Napoleon's underlings are quick to assign clear symbolic meanings, and thus worldly power, to Napoleon's slightest gestures, the reader is challenged by the text to look beyond the surface appearance of things. The reader recognizes that the symbolic meanings which are attached to Napoleon's movements tell us more about those doing the interpreting than about the meaning of the movements being interpreted: "Napoleon slightly turned his head, and put his plump little hand out behind him as if to take something. The members of his suite, **guessing at once what he wanted**, moved about and whispered as they passed something from one to another...." [emphasis mine] (10, 148; 450) The question of what lies beneath Napoleon's semiotics remains unanswered by the text. Instead, the text describes Napoleon's gestures and signs in such a way as to focus the reader's attention not on the meaning of those gestures and signs themselves, but on the power that is accorded them by the members of Napoleon's suite. Napoleon's actions are shown to be meaningful, only insofar as the participants and onlookers assign them meaning, and act accordingly.

The deflation of Napoleon's "performance" in this passage is devoid of that polemical, sometimes sententious, tone that we find in the theoretical essays throughout the work, which debunk the notion of leaders and "great men" as the movers of history. Instead of a polemical argument against the idea of great men, we find here instead an ironic portrait of Napoleon, which, like the theoretical essays, invites the reader to question the nature and extent of Napoleon's power over his environment. The text moves the reader to question Napoleon's assumed power,

however, not by means of rational argument, as in the essays, but by artistically creating a sense of the larger human reality in which Napoleon operates and to which he and his power are subject.

Not only does the text remind us of the presence of a larger human reality that Napoleon fails to see, but it also creates the sense of a higher *metaphysical* reality, as well, which exists alongside the physical reality being described. This metaphysical reality is poetically created in the passage by means of the frequent repetition of the phrase *kak budto* ("as if") throughout the description. Each time this phrase appears, it introduces an element of epistemological uncertainty into what appears otherwise to be an objectively accurate description of the events taking place. The use of this phrase thus has the effect of destabilizing the reader's sense of reality in this passage. The reader is reminded here, just as we were reminded earlier in the chapter, that we are in the midst of a world full of external signs and symbols, which do not necessarily point, either individually or collectively, to deeper meanings. Things merely appear and act *as if* they mean something or other. Taken together, however, the multiple appearances of the phrase *kak budto* have quite a different effect: not of challenging meaning, but of establishing, in fact, the presence of a higher unifying order, of creating the feeling of a musical poetry that emerges from within the text itself.

The reader is invited, and indeed challenged, to perform the same sort of existential task of mental ordering that is undertaken by the narrator himself. In order to discover the deeper meaning which exists behind the external signs and details of the world, the reader must penetrate beneath the surface of those signs and details and

perceive the deeper poetic fabric of which they are part. It requires a capacity to recognize and embrace at once two contradictory realities: both the discord of the external, physical sphere, and the metaphysical order that exists alongside of, and ultimately supercedes, that sphere. The text demands of the reader a willingness to look unflinchingly at the epistemological chaos of the world, and to listen at the same time for that higher unifying music that links the disparate parts.

We have in this brief passage, then, an instance of an artistic technique, which we find throughout the chapter, and throughout the novel. The text demystifies the world and remystifies it at the same time. The narrator destabilizes the external details of the world and recreates them in a context that is both different from, and also richer than, the context in which they originally appeared. In the passage just analyzed, this process occurs simultaneously. The world appears at once both inherently meaningless and deeply meaningful, both chaotic and ordered. The real and the ideal exist simultaneously in this passage, but not necessarily in harmony. There is a slight, but constant tension between the two realms in this passage. The reader senses this, because he is always moving back and forth between an awareness of discord, on the one hand, and a recognition of that barely perceptible poetic music that permeates this discord, on the other. The truth of life that Tolstoy presents in this passage lies neither in the one realm nor in the other, neither in the real nor in the ideal. It lies, rather, in an artistic and philosophical sphere in which the two poles coexist simultaneously; in a sphere in which life appears to us both as it is in actuality, and also as more perfect than it is in reality, when perceived through the lens of the creative human imagination.

It is appropriate, then, that the chapter concludes by juxtaposing these two philosophical visions against one another, just as they have been played off one another throughout the chapter. Just as at the end of Book Two, when the wounded and disillusioned Rostov exclaims “Nobody wants me!”, here, too, the young Count once again comes to terms with his own existential isolation in the world. It is an isolation that shows itself to Rostov at precisely the moment in which he confronts the vast distance separating the world as it exists in actuality from the world as it exists in his head. Just as in the concluding scene in Book Two, in which a confused Rostov begins to create an idealized image of his happy home life in order to comfort himself, so, too, at the end of Book Five Rostov mentally recreates the ideal of unquestioned devotion to the Tsar’s will in order to rid himself of his new confusion: “If the Emperor pleases to recognize Bonaparte as Emperor and to conclude an alliance with him, it means that that is the right thing to do,” Rostov exclaims to his fellow soldiers. “If once we begin judging and arguing about him, nothing sacred will be left! That way we shall be saying there is no God--nothing!...Our business is to do our duty, to fight and not to think! That’s all.” (10, 151; 453) Rostov cannot understand how *his* divinely sanctioned Emperor, Alexander I, on whose behalf he has been willing to risk his own life, could possibly recognize *their* Emperor, Napoleon, the enemy, as an equal. As we have seen, such a distinction is not a mere intellectual abstraction for the young Rostov. It is central to his entire world view. It is what defines his military mission in his own eyes. When this distinction has been undermined--and by his very own hero, Alexander himself!--a central organizing principle in Rostov’s world has been shattered. He must replace it with another ideal.

Rostov utters the injunction to his fellow soldiers at least as much for the purpose of convincing himself as for the the sake of persuading others. Even as Rostov speaks to others, he is ultimately immersed in his private world. He never truly connects with those whom he exhorts. This is reinforced in the detail of how one of the soldiers responds with confusion to Rostov's outburst at the soldiers for doubting the will of the Emperor: "'But I never said a word about the Emperor!' said the officer, justifying himself, and unable to understand Rostov's outburst, except on the supposition that he was drunk." (10, 150; 452) "But Rostov did not listen to him," we learn in the next sentence. At the moment in which Rostov verbally challenges his fellow soldiers, then, Rostov is shown to be psychically disconnected from them. The form in which Rostov delivers his appeal is at odds with the very idea he is attempting to express. Rostov argues for an ideal of selflessness and community precisely by separating himself from the others and entering into an intellectual jousting match with them. The contradiction here between the form and content of Rostov's words points to the contradiction inherent in Rostov's attempt itself at verbally articulating his ideal. Such articulation is a conscious mental act; it is therefore at odds with the very notion of selfless immersion into a communal whole. Self-assertion and self-abnegation, the two contradictory poles of Rostov's personality, are thus momentarily combined in the text.

With his assent to drink with the soldiers, Rostov re-immerses himself in the community from which he has momentarily distanced himself. Rostov submerges himself in the group of drinking soldiers. He does this not by means of silent submission to the will of the collective, but rather, through an act of verbal assertion:

"Yes, and to drink....Hullo there! Another bottle!" he shouts. (10, 151; 453) These words are an echo of those spoken by the officer in the previous sentence. Rostov mentally internalizes those words and repeats them in a new context. Rostov is subsumed once again into the flow of life. Significantly, this happens to Rostov only when he is drunk. The intoxicating stupor of alcohol is now all that can provide the hero with a sense of higher purpose. It seems that it is no longer possible for Rostov to experience the ideal in a state of sobriety. He must first transform himself in order to rediscover his sense of meaning in the world. Can the ideal only be experienced by the human individual in a state of stupefied self-deception? Tolstoy posits this possibility here. And in so doing, he offers a possible answer to a question he would pose many years later in an essay entitled, "Why Do Men Stupefy Themselves?" (1890) At the end of this chapter, the reader feels a sense of temporary philosophical and artistic resolution. The struggle within Rostov for epistemological order dissipates. Internal dialogue between Rostov's consciousness and the narrative consciousness disappears. Rostov now becomes part of a communal experience that is larger than even he himself imagines. He becomes a character in that universal human story that is told again and again throughout *War and Peace*: the story of man's isolation from and reintigration into the objective forces of history and the sad-sweet musical flow of life.

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Rostov will become the survivor and Bolkonsky the tragic hero in the novel. Even in his worst moments of despair, Rostov always seems to be deeply rooted to the world. He remains grounded by a communal instinct that is a uniquely Rostovian

principle in the novel. It is just this instinct that Prince Andrew lacks. Whereas Rostov's noble character is linked to his communalism, Andrew's is manifested in an aristocratic iciness that tends to erect, rather than break down, borders between himself and others. To be sure, there is something mysteriously attractive in Andrew's cool-headed self-possession. Even Rostov, who meets Bolkonsky briefly in Book Three, experiences "a strange feeling of exasperation and yet of respect for this man's self-possession." (9, 297; 261). But the very self-confidence and noble aspirations that sometimes make Andrew attractive to the reader and to those around him in the novel are also the source of his downfall. Bolkonsky has too much trust in his ability to make an impact on history. He is too attached to his individual self and not sufficiently in tune with that deeper communal self which, for Tolstoy, is the one form of selfhood capable of withstanding the pressures of time and the vagaries of an often indifferent universe. If the loss of the instinct for self-preservation is an early sign of deterioration in one's healthy sense of selfhood, then we may say that the decay in Bolkonsky's sense of self culiminates in the scene in Book Ten in which Prince Andrew, without making an effort to protect himself, allows a shell to explode in front of him. In this moment we witness Andrew's resignation to the world. It is not a Karataev-like act of giving up the self in order to integrate more fully with the immediacy of the present moment. Rather, there is in this moment something of what T.S. Eliot would in our century describe as the whimper with which the world ends. It is not with a bang, not with a heroic and glorious struggle, but with a defeated acceptance of the futility of struggle, that Andrew watches with an almost eerie passivity as his world, his personal world, is destroyed by the bursting shell.

There is a tragic irony to the way in which Prince Andrew suffers his eventually fatal wound. Andrew, the character who wants most of all to attain Napoleonic greatness in the novel, comes to embody the ultimate form of human impotence: the failure to fight for self-preservation. Andrew's aspiration to Napoleonic greatness and his loss of faith in himself as a conqueror are not to be regarded merely as two distinct and contradictory aspects of Andrew's personality. They are also two organically linked aspects of that same personality. The one extreme exists not merely alongside of, nor in spite of, but precisely because of, the other. Andrew's aspiration to Napoleonic greatness stems from a desire to transcend his acutely perceived sense of his own smallness in the world. And that aspiration itself forces Andrew to come face to face, again and again, with the very reality he seeks to transcend. The more he strives for self-transcendence, the more acute his awareness of his own limited self becomes. There is in this paradox an instance of what André Malraux had in mind when he said in *The Voices of Silence* that man is trapped between the finiteness of the human condition and the infinity of the stars. Malraux speaks of a universal human condition. Tolstoy's emphasis as an artist, however, lies not in the presentation of philosophical abstractions, but rather in the representation of philosophy in action. Tolstoy shows us the psychological *process* Prince Andrew goes through as he attempts actively to materialize the ideals of his mind in the world of reality. He shows us not merely an abstract relationship between the ideal and the real, but the process by which an active, searching mind attempts--and ultimately fails--to give expression to its ideal visions in the world of reality. Tolstoy shows us how Prince Andrew's heroic impulse ultimately gets transformed

within him into a faded flame, into an acute sense of human impotence and frustration with the world.[121]

This is a theme we find in other works of nineteeth-century Russian literature. One of poignant and succinct articulation of this theme can be found in Pechorin's famous words: "How many people, in the beginning of their life, think they will finish it as Alexander the Great, or Lord Byron, and instead, retain the whole of their existence, the rank of titulary counsellor?" [122] Like Lermontov, Tolstoy understood well that aspirations to self-transcendence can lead human beings to a deep and frustrated awareness of the very self they seek to transcend.[123] In this respect, we may even say that the psychological type of Pechorin becomes a forerunner of many of Tolstoy's own searching heroes, including Prince Andrew. In spite of the obvious differences between Pechorin and Tolstoy's hero, there is also an important commonality between them. In that commonality lies an essential element of

[121] If we translate this psychological pattern into the language of metaphysics, then we might describe Andrew's mental trajectory in the novel as an instantiation of the Hegelian dialectic. Prince Andrew's movement from idealism (thesis) to realism (antithesis) becomes a single instance of a process of ideal creation and destruction that is part of an eternal pattern of life described in *War and Peace*. Tolstoy's internalization of this process in the larger artistic and philosophical fabric of the novel is itself an act of authorial synthesis of the opposing poles of the human experience. Donna Orwin has also recognized parallel elements between Tolstoy's and Hegel's thought, but she rightly points out that, given Tolstoy's expressed hostility to Hegel, the author could not be said to be influenced directly by Hegel. Orwin provocatively develops the thesis that the intermediary between Tolstoy and Hegel might have been Goethe, whom Tolstoy admired throughout his lifetime, and who shared some of the "Hegelian" ideas we find in Tolstoy's writing. See Donna Orwin, *Tolstoy's Art and Thought, 1847-1880*, pp.26-30.

[122] M. Iu. Lermontov, "Geroi nashego vremeni," *Sobranie sochinenii M. Iu. Lermontova v chetyriekh tomakh*, vol. iv (Moscow, Leningrad: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1962), p.411.

[123] As I asserted in my introduction, I think Gary Saul Morson underestimates the productive role played in Tolstoy's art by the human aspiration towards self-transcendence. This applies to both the experience of Tolstoy's characters and to Tolstoy as an artist. As I have been arguing, a central artistic and philosophical dynamic in Tolstoy's fiction is between the ideals created by the subjective human consciousness and the raw, "objective" facts of reality. Morson sees the facts of everyday life as the privileged realm in Tolstoy's fiction, and he argues that the novel intends to present a thesis demonstrating that fact. I am arguing that neither the real nor the ideal is privileged, but both are engaged in a dynamic, shifting, and highly productive relationship throughout the work. The "meaning" of *War and Peace* lies, I believe, not in any Tolstoyan thesis about the superiority of one realm or another, but in the continual and generative interaction between the two realms.

Tolstoy's philosophical and spiritual kinship with his Romantic predecessor. Like Lermontov's Pechorin, Tolstoy's searching subjects are living embodiments of the notion that a heroic idea conceived in a rational mind contains the seeds of its own destruction.[124]

But Tolstoy's sense of the fate of the human being in the world differs in an essential way from that of his predecessor. Unlike Lermontov's novel, whose inconclusive ending implies the dissolution of all possibility for idealism, Tolstoy's novel posits a vision of life in which inconclusiveness suggests the possibility for human change and growth amidst the indifferent forces of nature and history. "Man is flowing," Tolstoy once wrote. "In him there are all possibilities: he was stupid, now he is clever; he was evil, now he is good, and the other way around. In this is the greatness of man."[125] These lines, written in 1898, when Tolstoy was already an old man, express an idea that the writer held throughout his lifetime. Indeed, what Olenin, Andrew, Nicholas, Pierre, Levin, and Nekhliudov have in common is their intense inner vitality, their capacity for change and growth, even as their lives are ultimately shown to be determined by forces over which they have no control. [126] Tolstoy's genius as a writer lies in part in his ability to communicate both of these aspects of

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[124] George Steiner notes that Dostoevsky himself considered Prince Andrew to be typical of the "dark heroes" of romantic mythology. It is telling that Dostoevsky would see in Tolstoy's hero a character type similar to his own tragic heroes, who were developed under the influence of the Romantic tradition in Russian and European literature. See Steiner, p. 205.

[125] Diary, 3 February, 1898. (PSS 53, 179).

[126] In a recent article discussing Bakhtin's comparison of the art of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Caryl Emerson makes the insightful point that, in contrast to Dostoevsky's artistic world view, the idea of a fluid self is a cornerstone of Tolstoy's artistic thought. She writes: "[In Tolstoy] the major structural unit is the individual personality itself--perceived not as an ideological position but as an accumulation of life experience. It survives by its flexibility and its capacity to adjust. Instead of passing one idea through many characters--Dostoevsky's route--Tolstoy tends to create his plots by passing many ideas through one personality. The ability to assume and shed ideas, to pass through and remain open to as many situations as possible, is precisely what defines a major Tolstoyan hero." Caryl Emerson, "The Tolstoy Connection in Bakhtin," *PMLA*, vol.100, no.1 (January, 1985): 76.

characters' existence at once. At the same time that Tolstoy describes the objective physical and natural world in which human beings dwell, he also continually takes us inside his character's inner worlds. He reveals to us the subtle workings of character's intellects and shows us the minute stirrings of their unconscious. He thus always makes us aware of the spiritual strivings of the human subject.

Nikolai Kareev, the author of an important study of Tolstoy's theory of history in the novel, elides entirely this important aspect of Tolstoy' world view when he writes: "The whole philosophy of history in *War and Peace* in actuality comes down to denying the role of individuality and individual initiative in history: history for Tolstoy is mass movement, which takes place in a fatalistic way, and great people are only the tag ends of history."[127] To be sure, there is much evidence in both the artistic and theoretical portions of the novel that Tolstoy saw history in terms of mass movements, and that he recognized the futility of great men in the historical process. But to reduce Tolstoy's philosophy of history to a belief in pure determinism, as Kareev does, is to fail to recognize that this aspect of the novel exists, as we have seen, in constant tension with an acute awareness of the strivings of the individual person amidst those deterministic forces.

In *War and Peace* human beings are shown to be in a constant process of registering, evaluating, and challenging their world. They always seem to be moving, or attempting to move, towards some form of understanding of their place in the universe. Tolstoy's descriptions of his characters point to the presence of some mysterious inner vitality within them, even in those moments when characters seem to

[127] Nikolai Ivanovich Kareev, *Istoricheskaia filosofiia gr. L. N. Tolstogo v 'Voine i mire*,' (St. Petersburg, 1888), p.43.

have fallen into despair over the futility of their existence in the world. This can be seen, for instance, in the scene in which Prince Andrew fails to protect himself from the exploding shell. At the very moment that Andrew appears to have given up his physical battle for life, there still appears within him a flicker of mental vitality. He is still searching, still asking questions. He still clings to life in his mind:

> "*Neuzheli eto smert'?*" *dumal kniaz' Andrei, sovershenno novym, zavistlivym vzgliadom gliadia na travu, na polyn' i na struiku dyma, viushchuiusia ot vertiashchegosia chernogo miachika. "Ia ne mogu, ia ne khochu umeret', ia liubliu zhizn', liubliu etu travu, zemliu, vozdukh....*" *On dumal eto i vmeste s tem pomnil o tom, chto na nego smotriat*.
>
> "Can this be death?" thought Prince Andrew, looking with a quite new, envious glance at the grass, the wormword, and the streamlet of smoke that curled up from the rotating black ball. "I cannot, I do not wish to die. I love life--I love this grass, this earth, this air...." He thought this, and at the same time remembered that people were looking at him. (11, 251; 904)

The grass, the wormword, and the streamlet of smoke are an intensely real and concrete presence before Andrew's eyes. And at the same time they exist independently of Andrew's subjective perception of them. They are indifferent to his questioning and aspirations. Andrew's glance at them is described as "envious" because they represent for him the life which he feels at this moment to be fleeting and towards which he experiences a brief spell of attraction. Significantly, however, this newly found love of life does not lead Andrew to an active resistance to the bursting shell. It does not become an impetus for action or signify a major spiritual rebirth in the hero. It is rather a sudden spark of self-awareness, a flickering flame of inner struggle against death. This moment will be faintly echoed by Tolstoy years later in the scene in *Anna Karenina*, in which Anna, having thrown herself in front of the train, experiences a sudden pang of regret for what she is doing. Even Anna, a

more tragic figure than Andrew, and caught in a web of spiritual confusion even more immediately pressing than that which binds Andrew, exhibits an attachment to life in her most despairing moment, in her moment of literal suicide. It seems that no matter how hopeless things become for Tolstoy's characters, they always exhibit a mysterious attraction to life and an impulse for self-assertion. The forces of nature and history and society never fully squelch the inner voice of the human subject in Tolstoy's fictional universe.

Nor does that voice become resoundingly triumphant in Tolstoy's world. The mental strivings of the human subject are often expressed artistically by Tolstoy in the most subtle way, as an attenuated effluence of an inner spirit, as a hint of some mysterious internal voice bubbling forth. Such a subtle presentation of that inner voice is in part a manifestation of Tolstoy's concern for artistic verisimilitude, of his stated belief that art begins where the "wee bit begins."[128] But as we saw in our analysis of the scene in which Andrew surveys the battlefield, Tolstoy's artistic technique in the novel is closely intertwined with his metaphysics; by penetrating the former, we better understand the latter. It is true in this passage, as well. Here the transient presence of the "wee bit"--Andrew's internal voice expressing a love of life just before he is hit by the shell--bespeaks a deeper metaphysical truth presented to the reader throughout the novel: that Andrew is a small human presence in a vast universe in which he attempts--but ultimately fails--to leave a permanent vestige of himself. "I cannot, I do not wish to die," Andrew thinks to himself. "I love this grass, this earth, this air...." In these silent thoughts, presented by Tolstoy without pathos,

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[128] Tolstoy quotes the painter, Briullov, in "What is Art?": "'Art begins where the wee-bit begins,' said Briullov, expressing with these words the most characteristic aspect of art." (30, 127).

lies the heart of the author's metaphysics. In this passing moment of Andrew's self-expression, we witness the reality of the fleeting human subject attempting to assert himself, attempting to cling to some sense of permanency, in a universe controlled by forces that are greater than he.

Significantly, that moment of self-expression in this passage is very short. It dissipates into an ellipsis, and is cut off by the narrator's description of how Andrew is aware that others are watching him: "He thought this, and at the same time remembered that people were looking at him." ["*On dumal eto i vmeste s tem pomnil o tom, chto na nego smotriat*."] At the very moment that Andrew is expressing his inner thoughts, he is thus also aware of himself as the object of the gaze of others. "It is shameful, sir," he says to the adjutant. Is it shameful for him to have thought about his love for life? Is it shameful for him to have experienced a fear of death? The text does not let the reader know explicitly. But in this mysterious line there is a hint that Andrew is carrying on some sort of dialogue either with himself or with the adjutant, or maybe with both at the same time.

Tolstoy is showing here how powerful is this instinct for analytical distance in Andrew. It is never far removed from even his most sincere expression of inner sentiment. Andrew is thus not not fully immersed in the moment. Tolstoy emphasizes this fact by contrasting Andrew's intellectualized reaction to the bursting shell with that of a horse, who, "regardless of whether it was right or wrong to show fear [*ne sprashivaia togo, khorosho ili durno bylo vyskazyvat' strakh*], snorted, reared almost throwing the major, and galloped aside." (11, 251; 904) The next line reads: "The horse's terror infected the men." ["*Uzhas loshadi soobshchilsia liudiam*]." It infected

all the men except one: Prince Andrew. He is physically present, but he is mentally absent. He is enclosed within a private universe of self-reflection. He is not infected by the horse, as "the men" are, because he is not truly among the "the men," which, in the original, literally means "the people" (*liudiam*). Andrew is not entirely among the people; he is not fully part of the collective. He is at a remove from the immediate experience of the collective, because he is at a remove from the immediacy of the moment itself. Even here, in this intensely real moment, Andrew still seems to experience life from a slight distance. He still seems to be looking at his world from afar, just as he gazed from afar upon the battlefield at Schoen Grabern. Andrew's distance from his surroundings is reinforced in the closing scene of the chapter. The wounded soldiers crowd together as they await their turn to be admitted into the nursing tent. Prince Andrew is among them. The soldiers "groaned, sighed, wept, screamed, swore, or asked for vodka." (11, 253; 905) They listen to the talk of an officer. Prince Andrew also listens to the officer, but unlike the others, he is emotionally absent. Prince Andrew does not groan or sigh or weep or scream. Instead, he philosophizes quietly to himself: "But isn't it all the same now....Why was I so reluctant to part with life?....There was something in this life I did not and do not understand." (11, 253; 906)

In the next chapter, Prince Andrew, moved by the suffering of Anatole Kuragin in the operating tent, will discover that something for which he believes he has been searching: "Prince Andrew could no longer restrain himself and wept tender loving tears for his fellow men, for himself, and for his own and their errors." (11,

256; 908) In the very next sentence Andrew will transform this emotional experience into a philosophical abstraction:

> Compassion, love of our brothers, for those who love us and for those who hate us, love of our enemies; yes, that love which God preached on earth and which Princess Mary taught me and I did not understand--that is what made me sorry to part with life, that is what remained for me had I lived. But now it is too late. I know it. (11, 256; 908)

Prince Andrew is correct. It *is* too late. But not for the reason that he suspects. Prince Andrew has not belatedly discovered *it*. Rather, he has not understood that *it* cannot be described by means of such intellectual abstraction. *It* lies everywhere, all around him, in every blade of grass, in the sounds of human suffering, and also inside of him: in that realm of human experience in which the heart and the head, feeling and intellect, exist in a state of continual battle with one another. *It* lies in the process of life itself, in the never-ending struggle of the human intellect to make rational sense out of the irrational realia of the world. Prince Andrew himself becomes part of *it*. He becomes a character in that universal human story told again and again throughout the novel: the story of man's never-ending search for a unifying order in a chaotic world.

The Searching Subject in *War and Peace* II: Pierre Bezukhov

Like Prince Andrew and Nicholas Rostov, analyzed in the previous chapter, Pierre Bezukhov is an important searching subject in *War and Peace*. Pierre is obsessed with the problem of the good. This is a trait he shares more with his literary predecessor, Olenin of *The Cossacks*, than with either of the other two main male heroes in *War and Peace*. Prince Andrew and Nicholas Rostov are concerned, each in his own way, with the question of how to achieve personal happiness in life. But neither Bolkonsky nor Rostov connects such happiness with the fulfillment of one's personal obligation to one's society and to humanity. Unlike these two male heroes, and even unlike Olenin, whose striving for the good manifests itself primarily in the context of his personal relationships, Pierre seeks answers to life's vexing existential questions that may be applied both to himself and also to the world at large. For Pierre, the good life is one that is lived for the sake of both moral self-perfection and for the perfection of his fellow man.[129]

Pierre, the narrator tells us in Book Eight of *War and Peace*, "had that unfortunate capacity many men, especially Russians, have of seeing and believing in the possibility of goodness and truth, but of seeing the evil and falsehood of life too clearly to be able to take a serious part in it." (10, 298; 594) As much as any other character in the novel, Pierre is aware of the haunting reality of a world devoid of any unifying structure. And at the same time, Pierre strives incessantly to defy precisely

[129] In this respect, Pierre may be linked, spiritually at least, to the tradition of the nineteenth-century Russian intelligentsia, who, according to Philip Pomper, "are distinguishable from both intellectual workers and pure intellectuals, from the former by their concern with ultimate questions, and from the latter by their active commitment to human self-fulfillment." See Philip Pomper, *The Russian Revolutionary Intelligentsia* (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1970), p.1.

that reality. At one point in the novel Pierre thinks to himself: “Nothing is trivial, and nothing is important, it’s all the same--only to save oneself from it as best one can. Only not to see *it*, that dreadful *it*.” (10, 299; 595) This is a moment of genuine insight. Pierre has understood here one of the central truths that runs throughout the novel: that life remains, at its core, an impenetrable mystery, in which the only certainty is human finitude itself. In such a world, Pierre concludes, all human activity serves the purpose of merely escaping from reality. However, such a conclusion is itself an escape. Pierre does not himself fully believe what he says here. He is incapable of living in a world in which “it’s all the same.” This is precisely the existential truth of life which impels Pierre continually to search for something higher in the novel. At the beginning of the novel Pierre is an admirer of Napoleon and a defender of revolutionary principles. He will then become an advocate of the principles of Freemasonry; a social reformer on his estate; the white knight who saves Natasha from her illicit elopement with Anatole; the savior of a girl caught in the Moscow fire; and finally, the savior of Russia, who is intended (he believes) to end Napoleon’s rule. When seen together, these events offer the reader a sense of that quality of character which makes Pierre special in the novel. Pierre’s uniqueness lies not so much in what he does. It lies rather in *how* he does what he does--in that high moral seriousness with which Pierre approaches almost everything he undertakes. Failure after failure, disillusionment after disillusionment, Pierre keeps coming back, challenging life, demanding of it a definitive answer to that accursed question that torments him: *Zachem*? What for? Even as his experience suggests otherwise, Pierre

remains firm in his belief that there is *a* truth to life, and that it is his responsibility to discover it and live in accordance with it.

The novel shows us that there is a unifying truth to life, and that it exists in a form different from the one in which Pierre expects to find it. Pierre hopes to find that truth in a single idea or theory, in a single experience or moment of revelation. In each new truth, which Pierre discovers along the path, he mistakenly attempts to discern *the* Truth of life. The novel shows us, however, that the truth Pierre seeks lies elsewhere: not in *an* idea, but in the totality of ideas, adopted, discarded, and then resurrected again by Pierre throughout the course of his experiences. Pierre's error lies therefore not in the fact that he aspires to discover an ultimate, unifying order to his world. This aspiration is one of the noble qualities of character which Pierre's creator depicts with deep admiration in the novel. Pierre's error lies, rather, in his tendency to look for that truth in *lieu* of, rather than *in the midst of*, the concrete, rich, and ever-shifting details of the world immediately before him.

"In everything near and comprehensible," the narrator tells us in Book Fifteen,

> Pierre had seen only what was limited, petty, commonplace, and senseless. He had equipped himself with a mental telescope and looked into remote space, where petty worldliness hiding itself in misty distance seemed to him great and infinite merely because it was not clearly seen.

But now, after great spiritual struggle, the narrator tells us, Pierre

> had learned to see the great, eternal, and infinite in everything, and therefore--to see it and enjoy its contemplation--he naturally threw away his telescope through which he had till now gazed over men's heads, and gladly regarded the ever-changing, eternally great, unfathomable, and infinite life around him. (12, 205-6; 1226-27)

By throwing away his mental telescope, Pierre is not implicitly giving up his faith in the possibility of a higher reality. Rather, he is coming to realize that such a higher reality--"the ever-changing, eternally great, unfathomable, and infinite life"--exists all "around him," and that it can therefore be experienced without the aid of starry-eyed dreaming or mental abstraction. It need not be striven for any longer; it need only be felt and acknowledged.

This idea--that life consists in endless flux and infinite variety--is one we have encountered before in Tolstoy's prose. In this passage, however, the idea is presented to us in a way that we have not seen thus far in our analyses of Tolstoy's fiction. First, the idea is not embodied in the poetics of the prose itself. Rather, it is given to us as a philosophical principle. And secondly, the idea is presented in such a way as to suggest that passive acceptance of, rather than active participation in, life's infinite complexity is the most appropriate response to the world. This, according to the narrator, is the "lesson" that Pierre has learned from his struggles. And we may assume that it is the lesson the reader is also intended to glean from the character's experience. Both aspects of the narrative commentary here are interrelated. For if the reader is implicitly asked to accept the narrator's analysis of the meaning of Pierre's experience, then the reader no longer feels compelled to participate in the hero's inner drama, since that drama, alas, is no more.

This is the rhetorical "trick" of the Tolstoyan narrator. He creates a sense of artistic resolution where, in actuality, there is none. One of the results of this technique is to redefine the relationship between the reader and the text. We move from an active relationship, in which the reader is invited to participate actively in the

hero's struggles, to a more passive relationship, in which the reader is asked simply to accept the fact that those struggles have been resolved.[130] The reader is invited, furthermore, to accept the terms on which that resolution has taken place. As we have seen from our earlier analyses of Tolstoy's prose, the Tolstoyan narrator often provides a subjective perspective on the events being narrated. That subjective perspective slightly distorts, and thereby enriches, our sense of reality in Tolstoy's novels. It is true of the narrative voice in this scene, as well. But in this scene, there is an additional element at work. Here the narrator presents an analytically argued truth about Pierre that exists in direct tension, even contradiction, with a deeper, *artistically* communicated truth about his character. Are we to believe that Pierre has actually changed to the extent suggested here by the narrator? Is it possible at all for Pierre Bezukhov--passionate, cerebral, and perpetually discontented with the status quo--ever to achieve that state of inner calm and peaceful reconciliation with reality, ascribed to him here by the narrator? If we pay attention to the story line itself, and ignore the narrative commentary on it, then we realize that we are *not* in the presence of a radically new Pierre at this point in the novel. To be sure, Pierre is wiser, more confident in himself, and more able than before to appreciate the quotidian aspects of life. But this is merely a new stage in Pierre's spiritual evolution. It does not represent a final resolution of Pierre's internal struggles. As in the case of Olenin before him

[130] Konstantin Mochulsky has defined such passivity on the part of the reader as one of the distinguishing characteristics of Tolstoy's "descriptive art," in contrast to Dostoevsky's "expressive art." Mochulsky writes:

> The first [descriptive art, of which Tolstoy is a practitioner] is passive and natural, the second [expressive art, of which Dostoevsky is a practitioner] is active and personal; we admire one, participate in the other. One glorifies necessity, the other affirms freedom; one is *static*, the other *dynamic*. [See Konstantin Mochulsky, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Work*, trans. Michael A. Minihan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p.434.]

and Levin after him, Pierre's entry into adulthood marks not the end, but the transformation, of his internal struggles. What were once the aimless philosophical searchings of an ungrounded, idealistic youth now become the mature strivings of the more realistic, yet not fully contented, family man.[131]

While the evidence of the story therefore suggests the continuation of Pierre's life-long search for meaning and happiness, the narrator wishes to create the impression that there has been some sort of resolution to that search. The narrator simplifies the complex reality of Pierre's continually evolving personality. The narrator gives the reader a sense of an internal crisis having been resolved, of a spiritual drama having achieved its *dénouement*. We are led to experience a feeling similar to the one experienced by the audience at the end of a Shakespearean tragedy. We have a feeling of catharsis, a feeling that, like Pierre himself, we too have gone through a kind of "moral bath,"[132] and have been purified. This feeling is experienced all the more palpably by the reader, given the larger narrative context in which it is evoked. Ever since Pierre is taken prisoner by the French at the end of Book Eleven, the reader watches anxiously as Pierre is first questioned by Davout, as he is placed in line to be executed, and then as he meets Platon Karataev, and later in Book Thirteen as he suffers through a month of captivity and then marches finally to freedom. The sheer speed of the narrative at this point in the novel creates a sense of urgency, a

[131] Of course, Olenin never grows into a family man in *The Cossacks*, as do Pierre and Levin in their respective novels. Olenin's struggles remain basically existential and abstract in nature. But Tolstoy, we recall, intended to write a sequel to *The Cossacks*, in which Olenin would return to the Caucasus and marry Maryanka. The impulse to transform Olenin into a mature family man therefore existed in Tolstoy's creative imagination.

[132] Natasha says to Princess Mary that Pierre "has somehow grown so clean, smooth and fresh--as if he had just come out of a Russian bath; do you understand? Out of a moral bath. Isn't it true?" (12, 223; 1242)

sense of the chaos of events that Pierre is himself experiencing. The reader follows those events with great anticipation, and with the sense that something important is being decided in Pierre's life. The question being decided is, literally, one of survival. When Pierre does finally survive his trials, we are relieved. We have a sense of tranquillity, of repose after the storm.

But the narrator wants more than relief and repose. Relief is a temporary hiatus from a permanent set of conditions. The narrator seeks resolution. The narrator wishes to suspend the flux of Pierre's inner world, if just for a moment, and to impart to that flux a sense of permanent philosophical order. The narrator steps out of his role as a story-teller and becomes a philosophical theorizer. He seeks to convince the reader not by means of artistic verisimilitude, but by means of rational argument. In this scene we are thus given a glimpse of the narrative technique used by Tolstoy in the theoretical portions of the novel. In this scene, as in the theoretical treatises, Tolstoy organizes the world for us according to a principle of systematic, as opposed to organic, order. The aspiration towards philosophical order is thus ever present in Tolstoy's artistic imagination. It simply manifests itself differently at different times.[133] Even in the fictional portions of the novel, as this scene shows, Tolstoy, speaking through the omniscient narrator, attempts to translate the complexity of human experience into recognizable formulas and patterns.

The narrator wishes to locate a single moment of revelation, a single principle of philosophical truth about Pierre's life. Of course, *what* the narrator says--that Pierre

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[133] Sergei Bocharov has aptly observed that, in the theoretical sections of the work, "Tolstoy has 'translated' his thought, as it were, from one language [the language of art] to another [the language of rational argument]." See Sergei Bocharov, *Roman L. N. Tolstogo* "*Voina i mir*," *izdanie chetvertoe* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1987), p.36.

can now see his world without the aid of philosophical abstraction--is in direct tension with *how* the narrator makes this statement: by means of just such an abstraction. To be sure, it is a particular kind of abstraction, one based on the metaphorical image of the telescope, but an abstraction nonetheless. The tension between the “what” and the “how” of the narrator’s voice here is unavoidable. It is inherent in the narrator’s very desire to define for us the lesson Pierre has learned. The narrator does just what he says Pierre can now do: He lifts himself out of the flux of the story and attempts to see the whole, rather than the partial, truth of the world, and of Pierre’s world, in particular. In so doing, the narrator himself becomes an unwitting actor in the very metaphysical drama about which he speaks: the drama of the finite self in search of a permanent philosophical order. The narrator here is not so different from Pierre himself, who, throughout the novel, often simplifies life’s complexity with absolute theories and philosophical abstractions. In both the character and the narrator, eixsts the impulse to organize and clarify the world. There is in them the desire to impose structure onto a worldly existence that threatens structurelessness. In the scene just discussed, we observed one manifestation of this desire on the part of the narrator: the tendency to impose a *totalizing* structure on the flux of the world. This is a uniquely Pierre-esque way of seeing. It is seldom embraced by the narrator. In fact, throughout most of the novel, this way of seeing will be juxtaposed *against* the form of cognition more common to the narrator: a vision of the complex totality of the world.

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An orphaned son, Pierre is uncertain about his role in the world. He always seems out of place wherever he goes. The "work's threshold figure,"[134] as Gary Saul Morson aptly calls him, Pierre never seems fully integrated into any social setting, whether in Anna Pavlovna's salon or on the battlefield of Borodino. But as is often the case with Pierre, here, too, the character's weakness is also his strength. Pierre confronts challenges and attains insights in the novel, not in spite of, but precisely because of, the constant spiritual searching his marginal status in the world entails. Pierre represents, in the words of Kathryn Feuer, the value of "withdrawal, a spiritual rather than a political attitude towards moral questions."[135] By creating such a character, Tolstoy was offering a counterpoint to those characters in the novel--and, by implication, to those figures in contemporary life--who resort to the pursuit of public power in the social and political spheres. Pierre, who avoids participating in the battle for public power, takes full part in one of the most difficult battles of all in the novel: the struggle of the human individual to find existential meaning in the world.

Pierre's withdrawal from the sphere of politics and society is therefore not meant to imply his withdrawal from life altogether in the novel. On the contrary, Pierre's withdrawal from the public realm implies an immersion in the private, spiritual realm of life, a realm in which (for Tolstoy) some of life's most crucial

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[134] Gary Saul Morson, *Hidden in Plain View: Narrative and Creative Potentials in 'War and Peace'* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), p.97.

[135] Feuer is referring here to the figure of Labazov, who was one of Pierre's predecessors in the earlier drafts of the novel. Feuer's assessment about Pierre must also be seen against the background of her larger conclusion about the work. For Feuer, *War and Peace* is, in fact, a deeply political work with a concrete ideological agenda. The value of "withdrawal," which Pierre represents, according to Feuer, thus becomes Tolstoy's particular mode of ideological engagement in the larger debates of his day. [See Kathryn B. Feuer, *Tolstoy and the Genesis of* War and Peace, ed. Robin Feuer Miller and Donna Tussing Orwin (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp.45-6.]

battles are waged. By depicting the spiritual struggles of Pierre, Tolstoy was thus offering his contemporaries an alternative prism through which to view man's relationship to the external world. In so doing, Tolstoy was also expressing, in part, his own aspiration to a truth of life that transcended political and intellectual debate altogether. This was a bold artistic strategy, given the fact that *War and Peace* was written in an era of passionate public debate about issues of contemporary concern, such as the peasant question, the fate of the fledgling democracy in Russia, and the emergence of a new class of radical intellectuals/reformers, the so-called *raznochintsy*.[136] The boldness of Tolstoy's artistic strategy in the novel lay not merely in the author's emphasis on man's inner world. It lay also in the author's implicit rejection of the democratic ethos that had entered political and social discourse in the early 1860's in Russia.[137] Such a position was, of course, a specifically *political* one, but it manifests itself aesthetically in the novel. For all of his democratic instincts, Tolstoy was not, finally, a pure democrat, either in his life or in his literature, and especially in his literature. For it was there, in the expansive solitude of artistic creation, that the young Russian Count could imagine a time in Russian history in which the exigencies of national warfare and the challenges of personal survival led

[136] It has been argued by the Formalist scholars, Boris Eikhenbaum and Viktor Shklovsky, and by the American scholar, Kathryn Feuer, that *War and Peace* represents Tolstoy's own contribution to the ideological battles raging in the 1860's. These scholars show the way in which the resulting novel bears the mark of Tolstoy's unique way of seeing the world through an aesthetic lens, even if the work no longer expresses in their original form the initial ideological intentions of the author. The author as ideologue, for whom the artistic creation was initially intended to illustrate a particular set of ideas, is thus eventually superseded by the presence of the author as creative subject, who orders the external world in the novel according to some deeper, and transformative, aesthetic instinct. See Boris Eikhenbaum, *Tolstoi in the Sixties*, trans. Duffield White (Ardis: Ann Arbor, 1982); Viktor Shklovskii, *Mater'ial i stil' v romane 'Voina i mir'*. Moscow: *Federatsiia*. Reprint: University of Michigan, 1967; Kathryn B. Feuer, *Tolstoy and the Genesis of* War and Peace.

[137] See, for instance, W. Bruce Lincoln, *The Great Reforms: Autocracy, Bureaucracy, and the Politics of Change in Imperial Russia* (Northern Illinois University Press, 1990).

to a clarity of human relations that had all but disappeared by the second half of the century.

The reader of the novel senses a certain nostalgia on the part of the author for the earlier period in Russian history, for the period of aristocratic balls, hunts, and clearly defined relations between masters and their peasants. One scholar has described this phenomenon as an example of Tolstoy's nostalgia for the social and political order of the pre-reform era.[138] I see it also as an expression of the universal human yearning for a mythical past, for an irretrievable time in the life of the human spirit in which the world appears to have been governed by clear and certain, if not necessarily benevolent, forces. *War and Peace* holds out the possibility that such a time existed, and that it may be recreated by the human intellect. The novel posits the possibility of a truth of life that transcends the jarring noise of modern political and social debate and existential confusion. In *War and Peace* Tolstoy challenges head-on the dialectical nature of contemporary debate. Pierre Bezukhov becomes Tolstoy's unwitting warrior in that challenge. Pierre represents a human spiritual possibility that was being superseded by the forces of materialism and ideological rigidity, characteristic of many of Tolstoy's radical contemporaries.

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[138] Kathryn Feuer argues that in *War and Peace* Tolstoy intended to argue explicitly against the democratic tendencies in Russian society. She locates the beginning of these tendencies as early as 1856, the year in which discussion of reforms began in earnest. Feuer writes:

> These were the sources of Tolstoy's dissent from "the Spirit of 1856": fear that the emancipation would reduce the role of the landed gentry in Russian society, transferring their power to the commercial classes and their moral leadership to the new intelligentsia; and dislike for the argument that Russia's defeat at Sevastopol had proved the necessity of the emancipation and other social reforms. (Kathryn Feuer, *The Genesis of* War and Peace, p.167.)

Of all the male characters in *War and Peace*, the one who most embodies those qualities of fullness of life and breadth of human spirit, of which the novel is an artistic expression, is Pierre Bezukhov. Pierre's largeness of spirit can be seen, in part, in the way in which his personality unites elements from the personalities of both of the other two main male protagonists in the novel, as one scholar has pointed out.[139] In Pierre, Nicholas Rostov's earth-boundedness and emotional sensitivity to the world are united with an intense intellectual life, characteristic of Prince Andrew. Like Prince Andrew, Pierre believes in the possibility of happiness. Unlike Prince Andrew, however, Pierre will find such happiness. Before Pierre achieves that happiness, he will travel a long and tortuous path. The path will be ridden with fruitless passions and failed agendas, but it will also be illuminated by the light of self-discovery and permeated by an aura of human possibility. Indeed, Pierre's life's path is the embodiment of human possibility *par excellence*. The spontaneity and good-natured naïveté, which prevent Pierre from achieving career success, are also the very qualities which permit him ultimately to attain an abiding happiness in the novel, a happiness which Prince Andrew can only glimpse during a few epiphanic moments. Before we return to our analysis of Pierre's strivings within the novel, we will watch Pierre as he first comes alive in Tolstoy's artistic imagination. This brief excursion will help us to understand better the special role that Pierre occupied in the author's mind in his conception of the novel, and then in the final work itself.

From his earliest work on the novel, Tolstoy conceived of Pierre as a member of the first generation of Russian revolutionary intelligentsia, the Decembrists of

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[139] See Orwin, p.129.

1825. Pierre was thus to become a character who would bridge the experience of 1825 with the earlier years of Napoleon's invasion of Russia, 1805 through 1812, which comprise the focal point of the novel. Tolstoy describes the way in which the novel expanded into a work whose focus and scope went far beyond the author's initial conception:

> In 1856 I started writing a tale with a certain direction, the hero of which was to be a Decembrist returning with his family to Russia. [The hero's name was to be Pytor Labazov and his wife Natalie, clearly the future Pierre and Natasha of the final version.] Without intending to do so, I moved from the present time to the year 1825, a period of error and unhappiness for my hero, and I abandoned what I had begun. But even in the year 1825 my hero was already a grown-up family man. In order to understand him, I had to move once again back to his youth, and his youth coincided with the period of 1812, so glorious for Russia. I abandoned for a second time what I had started and began to write about the year 1812. But for a third time I abandoned what I had started, not because it was necessary for me to describe the earliest days of my hero's youth but, on the contrary, because among the half-historical, half-social, half-invented great characters of the great era, the personality of my hero was being pushed into the background, and the foreground was being occupied, with an equal interest for me, by old and young people and by men and women of that time.[140]

The author's initial focus on the main protagonist, Pyotr Labazov (Pierre Bezukhov of the final version) would be replaced by an interest in the era in its entirety. In spite of Tolstoy's suggestion to the contrary, Pierre continued to occupy a privileged place in the author's mind throughout the writing of the novel. One of the only male characters who was present both in Tolstoy's very earliest conception of the work and who also survived its numerous revisions, Pierre and his struggles became for Tolstoy the embodiment of the "great era" that so captured the writer's imagination.

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[140] *PSS* 13, 54. Translation: Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, George Gibian, ed. (New York: Norton & Company, 1966), p.1364.

In Pierre are echoed the strivings of the Russian nation in the early nineteenth-century. Pierre's tortuous path from innocence to wisdom parallels a similar path taken by Russia herself during the years of her confrontation with Napoleon. Pierre's suffering and spiritual struggles transform him from a gawky and rambunctious youth, uncertain of his place in the world, into a quietly confident husband and father by the novel's end. At the end of the novel Pierre achieves an inner calm that stems from both an acceptance of his own limitations and also an awareness of his uniqueness and importance as a human individual in the world. So, too, Russia's historical struggles with Napoleon, which end finally in victory in 1812, give her a sense of national solidarity and cultural self-confidence. The path of the individual, like that of the nation, is long and painful, and full of error and failure along the way. In Tolstoy's artistic imagination, the experience of failure and that of triumph are inseparable from one another. They represent two essential elements of an organically unified path of human development. Just as Tolstoy cannot "write about our triumph in the struggle against Bonaparte's France without having described our failures and our shame,"[141] so the author cannot speak of the wisdom attained by Pierre at the novel's end without telling us about the many mistakes and illusions he experiences along the way.

In *War and Peace* triumph is not the absence of failure. It is rather the integration of the necessity of human failure into one's view of oneself and of the world. Triumph is the acceptance of oneself and the world as they are in actuality. It is the acceptance of the reality of human imperfection as a necessary part of life. Triumph includes, rather than excludes, the possibility of human failure in its broad

[141] Ibid. Tolstoy goes on to write: "If the cause of our victory was not accidental, but lay in the essence of the character of the Russian people and army, "then that character must be expressed still more clearly in the period of failures and defeats [1805-1811]."

sense of the world. It represents both an overcoming *and* an internalization of the reality of human weakness. Triumph consists therefore not in what one sees, but in how one sees. It consists in the capacity to know what one can and cannot know, when and when not to struggle, whether and whether not to intervene in the inevitable flow of events. This is one of the lessons that Pierre learns at the end of his struggles. But it is a lesson, the reader is convinced, that the hero will need to relearn over and again. Such an intuitive understanding and acceptance of things as they are is foreign to Pierre's nature. For him it is an insight that must be earned through continual toil and suffering.

This is not the case with all the characters in the novel. Kutuzov, for example, has gone through the crucible of experience. But in spite of the fact that he is much older than Pierre, he is also of different stock altogether. Kutuzov possesses an intuitive understanding of the world lacking in the more Westernized and cerebral characters, such as Pierre. Kutuzov's triumph over Napoleon occurs not because Kutuzov has more facts at his disposal than Napoleon. It occurs rather because the Russian commander sees facts *and* the deeper essences underlying them. Whereas Napoleon understands the tangible, external manifestations of the Russian world he seeks to conquer and control, Kutuzov senses the deeper, uncontrollable spirit of that world. So while Napoleon strategizes, Kutuzov sleeps. While Napoleon attempts to change the course of history, Kutuzov allows history to take its proper course. Kutuzov sees that which lies before him, that which can be measured and manipulated. But he also knows that which can only be felt and acknowledged. In this respect, his is one of the truly holistic consciousnesses in the book. He becomes

Tolstoy's surrogate consciousness in the novel. Like Tolstoy, Kutuzov sees the whole, rather than the partial, reality of the world in which he lives.

Tolstoy's deepest artistic impulse in *War and Peace* is to tell the *whole* story, the *whole* truth about the "great era" of Russia's confrontation with Napoleon. Telling that truth is for Tolstoy not a matter of having more facts at his disposal. It is rather a matter of integrating the limited number of existing facts in a unique way. For Tolstoy, understanding the whole reality of the "great era" requires an ability to sense and to depict the organic relationship between seemingly unrelated pairs of phenomena--between historical and individual experience, and between the glorious and shameful moments in Russian history and human behavior. Tolstoy's desire to understand historical truth leads him ever further into the national past. So, too, the author's wish to depict human truth--and particularly that of Pierre--leads him ever deeper into the cesspool of the character's youthful failures and shame. The important point here is not so much the actual direction in which Tolstoy's imagination takes him while writing the novel. What is important rather is the fact itself that Tolstoy's initial conception of the work continually expands in accordance with the perceived demands of artistic verisimilitude. In his pursuit of artistic truth, Tolstoy feels compelled always to dig further and deeper into the complex historical and human reality of the era about which he was writing. The author's vision is constantly widening and deepening. It unites in its broad purview an ever expanding totality of human and historical experience. This process of artistic composition and philosophical discovery in Tolstoy mirrors, interestingly, the process by which Pierre himself comes to understand the world. Like Tolstoy, Pierre is continually expanding

his conception of truth throughout the novel, without ever fully abandoning his belief that such a truth exists.

In his draft of the introduction to the novel, Tolstoy speaks of the "essence of the character of the Russian people and army" [*sushchnost' kharaktera russkogo naroda i voiska*], which manifested itself in the eight-year struggle with Napoleon.[142] Wherein lies that essence? In a well-known contemporary response to *War and Peace*, discussed earlier, Nikolai Strakhov locates this essence in what for him are the characteristically Russian qualities of "simplicity, goodness, and truth."[143] This tells us perhaps more about Strakhov than about Tolstoy. For Tolstoy never attempts to define, as does Strakhov, the "essence" of which he speaks, outside of the artistic medium. Tolstoy does not attempt to translate that essence into a non-artistic language by giving it a label or a definition. The essence to which Tolstoy points us, and which is illustrated in the artistry of *War and Peace*, is embodied not so much in any concrete aspect, as in the overall aura--in what Leontiev would call the "*veyanie*" (the spirit, the tendency)--of the "great era," about which Tolstoy was writing.[144] For Tolstoy that essence shows itself neither in the final victory of 1812, nor in the preceding years of "our failure and our shame." It shows itself rather in *both* of these realities, taken together, as inseparable facets of a larger, organically unified national experience. His search for a way of expressing that essence leads the writer

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[142] Ibid.
[143] Nikolai Strakhov, *Kriticheskie stat'i ob I. S. Turgeneve i L. N. Tolstom (1862-1885)* (Kiev, 1901), vol.1, p.282. I discuss Strakhov's article in greater depth in my earlier chapter, "The Real and the Ideal: Nikolai Strakhov's Engagement with *War and Peace*."
[144] Konstantin Leontiev, *Analiz, stil' i veyanie*. *O romanakh gr. L.N. Tolstogo* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1965).

continually to expand his initial conception of the work, and his conception of the imaginary Decembrist hero, Pyotr Labazov, as well.

The novel and the hero thus follow common paths of evolution in Tolstoy's mind. They are inseparably linked facets of a single creative organism. That organism, in turn, is spawned by a single human imagination, which tends to see the world whole, which discovers connections among even the most seemingly disparate phenomena. When illuminated by the light of that imagination, Pierre's private drama is seen to be the human embodiment of the stresses and strains of the epoch as a whole. They are the stresses of coming of age, of spiritual maturation. This process of growing up involves a loss of self in the case of Pierre. But it also brings with it the possibility of a richer, fuller sense of self. The mature self is more aware of itself. It now recognizes the imperfections and the limitations in its own being that were once unseen. In this act of mature perception lies a certain richness of vision and a fullness of being that is unavailable to the blissfully unaware adolescent. In Pierre's personal experience is echoed the experience of a generation. The novel ends with a description of the domestic life of the two married couples, Pierre and Natasha, and Nicholas and Mary. The reality of married life mirrors the experience of the Russian nation in its confrontation with Napoleon. As on the battlefield, so in married life social proprieties and human differences exist. But they are transcended finally by a deeper, common purpose. There is an ultimate union of wills, which are brought together in the service of a common, higher cause.

Throughout most of the novel, the interrelationship between Pierre's personal drama and that of the Russian nation as a whole remains metaphorical. But sometimes

these two story-lines directly intersect one another, as in the case of Pierre's witnessing of the Battle of Borodino in Book Ten. In that scene Pierre is both the surveyor and the surveyed. He is both a free actor in a private drama of his own devising and also a participant in the larger historical and human drama depicted by the novel as a whole. As he looks out over the battlefield, Pierre does not realize that both his friend, Prince Andrew, and his future brother-in-law, Nicholas Rostov, experience parallel moments in the novel: Prince Andrew, as he surveys the battlefield of Schoen Grabern in Book Two, and Nicholas, as he attempts to make sense of the meeting of Alexander and Napoleon at the end of Book Five. Nor does Pierre realize that he is present at the pivotal battle in Russia's war against Napoleon. Pierre's presence at that event has an air of grandeur and solemnity, of which only his creator--and the reader--is cognizant.

Pierre's being taken prisoner in Book Eleven recalls this motif once again, although in reverse. In that scene Pierre will immerse himself fully in his surroundings. He makes the impulsive yet noble decision to assist a young Armenian woman being marauded by a French soldier. The ironic twist is that this rare assertion of autonomy on Pierre's part leads ultimately to his captivity. Once again Pierre will become the actor in somebody else's drama. The two poles of free will and determinism, which are present in the philosophical landscape of the novel, are constantly being played out in Pierre's private experience, as well. We sense in Pierre both personal autonomy and also a helpless dependency on forces over which he has no control. Pierre becomes a concrete human manifestation of one of the central philosophical tensions that runs throughout the work. In Pierre, as in the work itself,

that tension resolves itself, but only temporarily. Pierre's is an eternal search, just as *War and Peace* is in a constant state of evolution in Tolstoy's imagination. The evolution of *War and Peace* is organically linked with the evolution of Pierre Bezukhov himself. The character and the work are inseparable phenomena in Tolstoy's mind.

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When processed by Tolstoy's artistic imagination, Pierre Bezukhov becomes a larger-than-life figure. He becomes the repository for, indeed the human embodiment of, one of the large philosophical problems, with which the novel deals: the problem of man's search for existential truth. The Soviet critic, A. A. Saburov, has aptly called Pierre the novel's "central image" and the "main hero."[145] Indeed, Pierre *does* loom large among the novel's numerous heroes. There is in him a richness, a depth, and a mythical largeness that few of the other characters in the work possess. Pierre's search for order in the world is also the implied author's search for order. Both the implied author and his character are simultaneously engaged in acts of creative sense-making and interpretation. The implied author's very act of observation and internalization of Pierre closely mirrors the way in which Pierre himself mentally creates his world. While these two searches may take place simultaneously in the text, they are not of equal value. The implied author can comment on Pierre, as we have seen, but Pierre can never comment on the implied author. This rhetorical reality points, in turn, to a deeper metaphysical reality. We are made aware of Pierre's finitude, of the fact that there is always a consciousness greater than his in the novel.

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[145] A.A. Saburov*, 'Voina i mir' L. N. Tolstogo: Problematika poetiki* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1959), p.176, 181.

At the same time we recognize how Pierre continually strives to transcend this reality by creating a subjective world of his own, a world of which he alone is the master.

In the final portion of the novel, for instance, during the French evacuation and after he returns to Moscow, Pierre frequently recalls his encounter with Platon Karataev while in captivity. Every time Pierre recalls Karataev, he attaches a slightly different significance to the peasant, according to the particular situation or context in which Pierre finds himself. Pierre thus shapes and reshapes his experience of Karataev in accordance with his own evolving emotional and psychological world. The Platon we witness in the final portion of the novel through the lens of Pierre's memory is slightly, but tellingly, different from the Platon we encounter with Pierre in Book Twelve. In Book Twelve Pierre is exhausted after having witnessed the execution. His mind simply takes in the sensations it receives without interpretation or judgment. Pierre recognizes only concrete, observable facts about Platon: what he smells, looks, and sounds like, and what he is doing. Later in the novel, when Pierre returns to relatively more comfortable living conditions, his mind begins to process all that it has experienced. In Book Fifteen, for instance, Pierre links his newly found truth of life with the spirit of Karataev: "...He had learned that in Karataev God was greater, more infinite and unfathomable than in the Architect of the Universe recognized by the Freemasons." (12, 205; 1226) Karataev becomes for Pierre a spiritual father-figure. Pierre needs some organizing principle to replace his lost faith the world. Karataev fulfills that role for him. The peasant becomes the embodiment of the virtues of human goodness and simplicity, which Pierre accepts as his new sacred principle.

A similarity exists between this process as it takes place in Pierre and the process by which the historical epoch as a whole, presented to us in *War and Peace*, gets transformed by Tolstoy's evolving artistic imagination during the course of writing the novel. Both the author and his character transform objective facts into subjective visions of their world in such a way as to lend a sense of higher meaning to those facts. In both cases, this created higher meaning is an abstraction and a distillation of the world. A particular unifying construct is offered. Pierre's "God," and what I have been referring to as Tolstoy's "higher unifying order," are particular constructs created by particular human consciousnesses. Pierre's sense of what constitutes a unifying truth of life changes in the novel. The implied author's does, as well. To understand how the interaction between objective and subjective reality of the searching subject is poetically presented in the work is to appreciate a matter of intrinsic artistic interest. It is also to understand the way in which the novel's metaphysics is not merely illustrated by, but also embodied in, its poetics.

In Book Five Pierre and Prince Andrew travel together to Bald Hills. Prince Andrew is in a good mood. He proudly shows Pierre his agricultural accomplishments. The next sentence reads: "*P'ier mrachno molchal, otvechaia odnoslozhno, i kazalsia pogruzhenym v svoi mysli*." ["Pierre remained gloomily silent, answering in monosyllables and apparently immersed in his own thoughts."] (10, 115; 420) This is, of course, Prince Andrew's observation about his friend. The omniscient narrator thus reveals several realities at once. He shows us what Prince Andrew is doing; what he is observing; and that something is happening in Pierre's internal world. In the next sentence the narrator gives us entry into Pierre's thoughts: *P'ier*

dumal o tom, chto kniaz' Andrei neschastliv, chto on zabluzhdaietsia, chto on ne znaet istinnogo sveta i chto P'ier dolzhen priiti na pomoshch' emu, prosvetit' i podniat' ego. ["Pierre was thinking that Prince Andrew was unhappy, had gone astray, did not see the true light, and that he, Pierre, ought to aid, enlighten, and raise him."] (10, 115; 420)

What Pierre thinks--that his friend is unhappy, gone astray, and in need of his, Pierre's, enlightenment--tells us more about the reality Pierre creates for himself than about the objective reality that describes Prince Andrew's current state of mind. In fact, there is in the opening of the chapter evidence that Prince Andrew is actually "in a good temper," and more desirous of friendly conversation with his friend than philosophical debate or spiritual enlightenment. Pierre, immersed in his own musings, fails to see this. He sees only a partial reality, his private reality, and one that he has created to fulfill his personal needs. Pierre wants to believe that Prince Andrew is unhappy and lost so that he, Pierre, may come to his friend's aid and thereby justify in his own mind the sanctity of his newly discovered Masonic truths. The way in which Pierre imagines what is happening in Prince Andrew's inner world thus tells us less about what is actually occurring there than about the struggle taking place in Pierre's own inner world, about Pierre's own aspiration to philosophical order and psychological certainty.

As we move from the sentence beginning with the phrase, "*P'ier mrachno molchal...*", to the sentence we have just discussed, then, we witness a shift, not from the presence to the absence of an actively perceiving implied author, but rather from one form of active authorial presence to another. We move from an implied author

who openly interprets the world to one who is much more subtly engaged in an act of interpretation, who hides his presence beneath a mask of impersonality and from that position speaks with a fine-tuned irony about the deeper reality underlying the exterior of things. The fact that an active authorial presence can be felt even in the case of the second sentence, in which the text appears on the surface to be the product of an objective, impersonal voice, is a revealing artistic phenomenon. It shows the way in which Tolstoy artistically creates in this sentence a sense of the world in which a humanly created, subjective reality coexists simultaneously with an immutable, objective one.

The artistry of this sentence thus mirrors, and thereby reinforces, one of the artistic tendencies of the passage as a whole. When we read this sentence in conjunction with the ones preceding it, we become aware of the coexistence of two distinct planes of reality, an objective and a subjective one. These two planes continuously interact with, but never blur into, one another. We are able to distinguish between the objective facts posited by the text and the way in which these facts are refracted, slightly differently at various points, through the lens of the narrator. That it is evening, that Prince Andrew and Pierre are traveling in a carriage and speaking with one another, and that this discussion is inspired by the deeper philosophical searchings of both young characters, are examples of objective truths that we, the readers, accept when we read this passage. We accept them, because the fictional world in which they are presented to us closely mirrors the physical and psychological actualities of the world we know to exist outside of fiction. And yet even as we accept these and other objective facts in this passage, we recognize that our sense of reality is

ultimately richer than that of the characters. Thanks to the multiple perspectives offered us by the narrator, we, the readers, are allowed to see further and deeper than the characters into the larger reality of the moment.[146]

When subsumed into the large and ironic narrative vision, the seemingly insignificant fact of Pierre's reflection becomes expressive of a deeper philosophical and psychological truth about Pierre: the character's tendency to impose his private reality and personal complexes on his friend. When internalized by the narrator, an ostensibly insignificant fact in the text thus becomes deeply significant. It begins to spawn a range of meanings and associations that extend beyond the specifics of the sentence itself, and even of the passage, in which it is contained. Among the associative connections suggested to the reader, for instance, is the connection between Pierre's blurred vision of Prince Andrew and the larger pattern of naïveté in Pierre's perception of the world. Just as Pierre will equate a private truth with an absolute Truth that applies to his friend as well as to himself, so, throughout the novel, Pierre will tend to conflate these two realms. Each time Pierre has a new philosophical insight in the novel, he transforms that insight into a grand new theory about how he must live his life. His conversion to Freemasonry; his belief that he is destined to stop Napoleon's rule; and his decision to live in accordance with the example set by Platon Karataev are prominent examples of this tendency in Pierre. In

[146] Andrew Wachtel has discussed the intertextual dialogue that exists in *War and Peace* between the "fictional narrator," who presides over the fictional portions of the novel, and the "historical narrator," who narrates the supposedly factual, historical aspects of the work. Although I agree that such a dialogue exists in the novel, it is not, as Wachtel suggests, a dialogue of equals. The fictional narrator cannot be said to exist on the same plane as the historical narrator. The fictional narrator is, in fact, a much deeper and richer presence in the work. He becomes the vehicle by which the reader is given entry into a complex, multi-leveled sense of reality. The historical narrator, on the other hand, is more like an essayist with a specific ideological agenda. See Andrew Wachtel, *An Obsession with History: Russian Writers Confront the Past* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

such moments, Pierre's life acquires meaning for him insofar as it becomes the expression of a philosophical principle or moral ideal, and not as something intrinsically meaningful in and of itself. As a result, Pierre implicitly attributes to himself both more and less worldly power than he actually possesses. In his idealistic pursuit of moral and social justice on behalf of humanity, Pierre sometimes shirks those more modest responsibilities that are rightfully his, and whose fulfillment would contribute directly to the lives of the human beings around him. Of all the major Russian characters in the novel, Pierre is one of the most passionate in his search for a grand, unifying order to life. At the same time, he is one of the least capable of imparting even a modest, external order to his own everyday life, and to the lives of those who depend on him. Nobly focused as he is on the stars, Pierre often overlooks the earth beneath his feet.

In Chapter Nine of Book Five, two chapters before the one we are now analyzing, this aspect of Pierre's character is highlighted for the reader. In that chapter Pierre is in a philanthropic mood after his visit with his Masonic "brother-instructor" in Petersburg. He travels through his estate to see how the previously ordered construction of schools, hospitals, and shelters for his peasants is proceeding. Convinced by expressions of gratitude from his peasants, Pierre muses happily to himself: "How easy, and how little effort is required in order to do so much good." (10, 106; 412) These thoughts appear just after the narrator reveals to the reader the various manifestations of financial and political corruption that Pierre's philanthropic efforts have unleashed on his estate. Pierre, the narrator tells us, sees none of this. He therefore completes his travels through his estate, blissful with thoughts about all the

good he has effected in the world. In his zeal to better the lot of his peasants, Pierre underestimates the strong forces of inertia that work against his desire for social change. The chief steward, the priest, and the more entrepreneurial peasants are all satisfied with the existing state of affairs, since they receive special privileges under the current arrangement. They therefore take advantage of Pierre's charitable efforts in order to maintain the hierarchical relationship that exists between them and the other peasants. The chief steward arranges receptions for Pierre that give the impression that Pierre's desired reforms are being faithfully carried out.

Pierre misunderstands the hidden, selfish desires that motivate the behavior of those with whom he deals. He naively assumes that the others, like he, are filled with noble sentiments and the desire to do good in the world. They are not. Interestingly, though, the narrator does not condemn them for this moral shortcoming. The narrator simply points us to the reality of the situation. We empathize with Pierre. But we also empathize with the chief steward of Pierre's estate, although for a different reason. Pierre's idealism represents an admirable optimism in a difficult world. The steward's shrewd resourcefulness represents the equally admirable quality of being able to get what one wants and to survive in that world. To the extent that there is narrative irony at all in this passage, it is aimed primarily at Pierre. Unlike the steward and his cohorts, Pierre is shown to be blind to what is really happening on his estate. The ironic portrayal of Pierre here reveals an element of narrative playfulness towards his character. It also contains a subtle hint of rebuke. For the result of Pierre's blindness to reality, the text shows us, is not merely that Pierre fails to enact the desired social reforms on his estate. The result is also that Pierre ensures the continuation of the very

social injustice which he ostensibly wishes to eradicate. Pierre does this, not in spite of his noble aspirations, but precisely *because* of them, precisely *because* of his desire to realize an ideal of social justice in the real world.

At what point exactly does Pierre's well-meaning plan for social justice on his estate go awry? Does this occur when Pierre naively hands over the task of implementing his social program to his chief steward, who manipulates the program for his own benefit, and to the detriment of the serfs? This is certainly represented in the text as an important moment in the dissolution of Pierre's intended reform program. This moment highlights for the reader Pierre's lack of worldly pragmatism, one of the main reasons that his program fails. But to focus on this detail in the text is to focus on a moment of implementation. And Tolstoy, who always seeks to penetrate the underlying essence of things, looks beyond the question of *how* Pierre's idea is executed on his estate. Tolstoy is also concerned with *what* the idea is and *who* has created it. Is there something intrinsic to the idea itself of social and moral perfection, Tolstoy implicitly posits in this passage, that contains the seeds of its own destruction? And what are the underlying motivations of the human individual, Pierre, who creates and passionately attaches himself to this ideal of perfection? As a literary thinker with philosophical inclinations, Tolstoy is concerned with the nature and power of ideas. As an artist, he is also concerned with ideas as they take root within specific human individuals and in concrete human situations.

Tolstoy shows us that, beneath Pierre's humanitarian actions in this passage and elsewhere in the novel, however well-meaning they may be, lies a hidden, selfish motivation. While those who take advantage of Pierre's philanthropic efforts in this

scene are motivated by a desire for financial gain or personal power, Pierre is motivated by a self-interest of an internal, psychological sort. Pierre wishes to see in the external world a reflection of an internally created philosophical order. He attaches himself to an *idea* of order, to an *idea* of the Good, and he does all he can to ensure that his perceptions of the outside world correspond to this internally created idea. It is sufficient for Pierre to believe in his mind that he has improved the lives of his peasants, even if the evidence points to the contrary. In fact, there is a suggestion in this passage that Pierre himself recognizes that his intended program of social change might not make the peasants happier than they already are: "Pierre in his secret soul agreed with the steward that it would be difficult to imagine a happier people [his peasants], and that God only knew what would happen to them when they were free." (10, 107; 412) Why, then, does Pierre still wish to carry out his social program? Because "he insisted, though reluctantly, on what he thought just [*chto on schital spravedlivym*]." (10, 107; 412) That is, Pierre is a moral absolutist. Furthermore, he is a selfish absolutist. He trusts perhaps too much in the power of the idea, of his idea. That idea reigns supreme for Pierre, even when the evidence of the world suggests that it might not lead to the highest good for the greatest number of people.

Pierre, it seems, is not so interested in achieving such a good. His is the philosophizing of a guilt-ridden aristocrat who wishes to ease the anxieties and complexes that rage in his own inner world. For Pierre, it is sufficient merely to attach himself to the *idea* of social justice. Whether actual social justice has been effected by him on his estate, or whether it is possible to attain such justice at all in the world, are

questions with which Pierre does not concern himself here. Pierre is interested in the idea itself, as it exists in his mind, pure and unblemished. That perfect idea becomes *his* personal offspring, *his* private possession. Daniel Rancour-Laferriere has called Pierre a "special type of narcissistic personality." Pierre's narcissism, he argues, manifests itself in Pierre's constant "thinking about himself, that is, about his own mental processes."[147] I concur with Rancour-Laferriere, but I would go even further than he does. Pierre's narcissism, I contend, manifests itself not only in the character's internally focused thought processes. It shows itself also in Pierre's desire to see in the outside world a reflection of that ideal of human perfection that he strives for in himself. In effect, Pierre wants the external world to become a mirror of his internal world, as it exists in his mind, and not in actuality.

Herein lies the deepest expression of Pierre's narcissism. It is a narcissism born not of self-understanding and self-love, but of self-denial and even self-hatred. This narcissism stems from Pierre's inability to accept himself for the imperfect human being that he is, and from his concomitant tendency to impose his sublimated private fantasy of self-perfection on the world at large. The impulse within Pierre towards philosophical idealism is bound up with the impulse towards action in the world. For Pierre, as for Lermontov's Pechorin, "ideas are organic entities: their very birth imparts to them form, and this form is action."[148] In Pierre the concepts of internal order and external order are inseparable. They both stem, Tolstoy shows us, from the same source: from a self which is eternally dissatisfied with itself; from a

[147] Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, *Tolstoy's Pierre Bezukhov: A Psychoanalytic Study* (Bristol Classical Press, 1993), p.5.
[148] M.Iu. Lermontov, *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyriekh tomakh* (*izdanie vtoroe*, *ispravlennoe i dopolniennoe*), vol.4 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1981), p.265

self which continually seeks the perfection of humanity at large so that it may also discover perfection within itself.

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In his *Soviet Civilization: A Cultural History*, Andrei Sinyavsky discusses the "power of the idea" as one of the motivating forces of the Russian Revolution.[149] Sinyavsky uses the Soviet experience as a case study in the way in which utopian ideals of universal goodness and social justice, when applied to reality, end up yielding results which are exactly the opposite from the intended ones. The aspiration to earthly perfection leads, according to Sinyavsky, to hell on earth. The desire to create perfect human equality, when implemented in the actual world, leads to the most extreme forms of inequality. Sinyavsky links this paradoxical phenomenon to the fact that such utopian idealism is often accompanied by ideological absolutism, and that such ideological absolutism is, by its nature, inimical to the values of compromise and tolerance of opposing view points. Although Tolstoy never witnessed the Soviet experience, he did understand, like Sinyavsky after him, the powerful role abstract ideas play in the lives of human beings. In particular, Tolstoy understood the way in which such ideas often serve the psychological needs of those who create them. Tolstoy thus goes even further than Sinyavsky in his critique of abstract idealism. Sinyavsky is interested primarily in the potential danger inherent in the application of abstract ideas to concrete human reality. Tolstoy is concerned with the delusional quality of the ideas themselves, and he is interested in the subtle motivations of the men and women who create them.

[149] Andrei Sinyavsky, *Soviet Civilization: A Cultural History*, trans. Joanne Turnbull (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1990), pp.28-34.

While Sinyavsky focuses on the real-world results of human idealism gone awry, Tolstoy seeks to understand human idealism in the making. Tolstoy wants to understand the psychological *process* by which human beings create ideals for themselves. Tolstoy takes us inside Pierre's inner world and subtly shows us how--and why--ideals are manufactured there. Tolstoy shows us the way in which idealism becomes for Pierre a kind of protective shield against the terrifying chaos of reality. Many of the male characters in the novel create such shields for themselves. But Pierre differs from the others in an essential way. In him the avoidance of reality becomes a guiding principle, a central feature of his character. Pierre's idealism is the product of a creative, soaring intellect, which continually attempts to transform the world into something more perfect than it is in actuality. In contrast to Pierre, the chief steward is worldly and pragmatic. His discerning eye sees reality for what it is. One of the tragic ironies of the scene lies in just this incompatibility of idealism and realism in the same individual. Pierre, who is noble-minded and idealistic, lacks the pragmatism necessary to effect actual change in the world. The chief steward, who is pragmatic enough to carry out Pierre's program of social justice, lacks Pierre's idealism. The chief steward "saw perfectly through the naive and intelligent count and played with him as with a toy." (10, 106; 412) The one person in the novel who unites Pierre's idealistic tendencies with the steward's pragmatism is Prince Andrew. He successfully carries out on his estate the same sort of reforms that Pierre had intended to effect on his own estate. But he does so without the altruistic intentions that motivate Pierre.

What is being revealed to us in this passage goes to the heart of the problem, which we have been exploring throughout the dissertation: the contradiction between a mentally created ideal, as it exists in the head of a human being, and the way in which the human individual attempts to give expression to that ideal. We are speaking about the contradiction, that is, between the content of the passionate, soaring inner life of man, and the form in which that inner life is given expression in the world. In the case of Pierre, this contradiction manifests itself as a contradiction between the character's selfless pursuit of social and moral perfection in the world, and the hidden narcissism which underlies Pierre's idealistic aims. What Pierre believes to be universal social and moral ideals, are, in fact, private ideals that Pierre has created largely for his own psychological and emotional needs.

The aristocratic social reformer, like the believer in a universal truth of life, thus calls attention to his unique presence and privileged status in the world. We do not forget, for instance, that Pierre takes advantage of the inequality between him and his peasants to create an ostensibly more equal society on his estate. Nor do we forget that the universal truth of life, in which Pierre passionately believes, is *Pierre's* private truth, formulated in *his* mind, for the purpose of satisfying *his* needs. The idealistic landowner cannot blot out the reality of his social superiority to his peasants, just as the philosophical absolutist cannot pretend to be seeking the ultimate good for all of humanity. Both expressions of idealism betray the reality that underlies and gives rise to it. As Pierre dreams of the way things ought to be, he reminds us ever more sharply of the way things actually are. He reminds us just how far away we are from genuine social equality, and just how particular are those human truths that he,

and we, would like to believe transcend time and place. He reminds us, that is, that the idea of order is a mentally created ideal, spawned in the mind of the human individual who is terrified before the chaos of reality. The experience of Pierre exemplifies the truth of Voltaire's sober-minded dictum that "If God did not exist, then it would be necessary to invent him."

Pierre invents and reinvents God throughout the novel. "Don't I feel in my soul that I am part of a vast harmonious whole?" Pierre rhetorically asks during his conversation with Prince Andrew on the ferry. "Don't I feel that I form one link, one step, between the lower and higher beings, in this vast harmonious multitude of beings in whom the Deity--the supreme power if you prefer the term--is manifest?" (10, 116; 421) There is a tension here between the form and the content of Pierre's words. By means of a series of rhetorical questions, Pierre posits the presence of a universal truth of life, of a "vast harmonious whole" of human experience. And yet even as he rhetorically posits the presence of a transcendent whole, Pierre is apparently deeply cognizant of his individual presence within that whole. That is why Pierre does not speak about this transcendent whole impersonally, as an objective fact. Instead, he speaks about it through the lens of the self, the searching self, who does not yet seem fully convinced of the truthfulness of his own conclusion. Pierre's rhetorical questions are therefore not quite rhetorical. They beg a response, from his interlocutor, and from Pierre himself. "Don't **I** feel in **my** soul..."; "Don't **I** feel that **I** form one link..." [emphasis mine] By means of these questions, Pierre reinforces the impression of a dialogic relationship that exists both between him and his interlocutor, Prince Andrew, and also between the conflicting sides of his own personality.

Pierre continues to reason aloud, attempting to persuade Prince Andrew--and apparently himself, too--that a unifying truth of life must exist:

> If I see, clearly see, that ladder leading from plant to man, why should I suppose it breaks off at me and does not go farther and farther? I feel that I cannot vanish, since nothing vanishes in this world, but that I shall always exist and always have existed. I feel that beyond me and above me there are spirits, and that in this world there is truth. (10, 116-117; 421)

The first problem with Pierre's line of reasoning is that he projects his awareness of the known onto the unknown: If he can see "that ladder leading from plant to man," Pierre reasons, then why should he suppose it breaks off at him? This is, of course, an assumption on Pierre's part--a conspicuous fallacy in his reasoning. The second fallacy in Pierre's reasoning lies in the fact that his convictions are based largely on his private perceptions and personal feelings, rather than on an objective, impersonal perception of what is: "I feel that I cannot vanish..."; "I feel that beyond me and above me there are spirits...."

Pierre unwittingly reveals the internal contradiction of his own argument before Prince Andrew does so by other means. "Yes, that is Herder's theory," Prince Andrew responds to Pierre. (10, 117; 421) Prince Andrew shows that Pierre's ideas belong to a particular intellectual tradition. They are not to be taken as gospel. They are historically contingent and might well be opposed by another line of reasoning.[150] Before Prince Andrew utters these words, however, the reader is already aware of the contingent nature of Pierre's argument. Prince Andrew's comment does not therefore make us aware of something we did not already know. His comment contributes to the text rather in a different way. Coming as they do directly after Pierre's passionate

[150] Gary Saul Morson has given a name to the rhetorical technique used by Prince Andrew to reveal the contingency of Pierre's ideas. Morson calls this technique the "irony of origins." (See Morson, *Hidden in Plain View*, p.239)

monologue about the metaphysical unity of the universe, Prince Andrew's words are striking for their apparent objectivity and for the impersonal, dispassionate tone of voice in which they are delivered. Prince Andrew simply and impersonally points out an objective fact, and with that observation challenges the whole structure of Pierre's impassioned argument. Is the reader meant to disregard everything Pierre has said? Not at all. To do this would be simply to replace one limited truth--Pierre's asbolutism--with another--Prince Andrew's skepticism. The reader is meant, rather, to recognize the presence of a larger truth altogether in this passage. That larger truth lies neither in Pierre's nor in Prince Andrew's world view. Instead, it lies in the permanent and irresolvable dialogue that exists between these two world views, between their two distinct approaches to the "facts" of the world.

Prince Andrew acknowledges only those facts and experiences that he himself can rationally perceive. He does not share Pierre's faith in a reign of goodness and truth on earth, because he cannot himself see it. What convinces Andrew is the reality of suffering that he has personally witnessed. "What convinces [me]," he says to Pierre,

> is when one sees a being dear to one, bound up with one's own life, before whom one was to blame and had hoped to make it right,...and suddenly that being is seized with pain, suffers, and ceases to exist....Why? It cannot be that there is no answer. And I believe there is....That's what convinces, that is what has convinced me." (10, 117; 422)

Prince Andrew wants to believe that there is an answer to the seemingly inexplicable suffering of the world. We are not certain wherein this answer lies for him. We know only where it does not lie for him: in the principle of religious faith. Prince Andrew has looked into the abyss of existence, but he cannot mentally cover his awareness of

that abyss, as does Pierre, with metaphysical abstractions. In fact, Prince Andrew claims that he cannot hide his awareness of that abyss with intellectual abstraction of any kind:

> All I say is that it is not argument that convinces me of the necessity of a future life, but this: when you go hand in hand with someone and all at once that person vanishes *there, into nowhere*, and you yourself are left facing that abyss, and look in. And I have looked in.... (10, 117; 422)

Prince Andrew wants to believe in the presence of a higher order to the universe, but this desire exists in constant conflict in him with his sober-minded perception of things as they actually are. Prince Andrew cannot fantasize in the same way that Pierre can. He cannot ignore the reality of the abyss into which he has peered. Prince Andrew sees the world for what it is. He sees the world too much for what it is, in fact. This is what leads him to frequent despair and inaction in the novel.

In his debates with Pierre at Bogucharovo and Bald Hills, Prince Andrew is a naysayer. He continually exposes the logical fallacies of his friend's arguments, while never attempting to argue a coherent position of his own. And yet, in his role as a naysayer, Prince Andrew does present, unwittingly, a coherent position. In spite of his claim to the contrary, Prince Andrew views his world through a distinct intellectual construct. At various moments in his dialogue with Pierre, Prince Andrew argues a philosophy of radical individualism. He argues that, in a world devoid of any metaphysical order or meaning, the pursuit of self-interest is as good a justification for one's life as any other. Prince Andrew, of course, is not fully committed to his own argument. He offers this philosophical position more for the purpose of confounding his friend than presenting a passionately held conviction. But in so

doing, Prince Andrew shows himself to be psychologically more similar to than different from Pierre. Pierre is a metaphysical idealist; Prince Andrew a rational skeptic. But both are united by a common pursuit of order in a chaotic world. For Prince Andrew it is insufficient simply to live out his life of quiet disengagement on his estate. Like Pierre, Prince Andrew is incapable of living a life that cannot be justified by some higher good. He feels compelled to explain and defend the sort of life he has chosen to live. He must find a philosophical rationale for his particular form of existence. Beneath Prince Andrew's nihilism in this scene lies, therefore, an impulse towards existential order. He becomes a nihilist *on principle*.

One of the ways the text creates a sense of the ultimate unity between the world views of the two characters in this scene is by means of the narrative perspective. This perspective poetically reveals the presence of a higher metaphysical order that transcends the conflicting ideologies of the two characters. That higher order, communicated to us through the narrative consciousness, does not lie outside of, but precisely *in the midst of*, the conflicting perspectives of the two characters. It subsumes their perspectives into a unifying vision of life, in which conflict and contradiction become permanent elements in a larger Tolstoyan truth of human experience. Indeed, we recognize in the conflict between the world views of these two characters a mirror of the internal conflict that exists in the novel as a whole. It is a conflict between two approaches to the "facts" of the world: between, on the one hand, what is (Prince Andrew's preferred object of observation) and what is imagined, created, or projected by the human mind, on the other (Pierre's preferred

object of perception.) In the novel we are given a sense of things as they actually are. At the same time, we are made aware of the presence of a humanly created reality, communicated by that subtle, authorial "I", which touches the objective world ever so lightly and gracefully, and imparts to it a hint of otherworldliness, an aura of a higher, metaphysical order. In the same way that there is an ultimate unity between the differing ideological positions of Prince Andrew and Pierre Bezukhov in these scenes, there is also an ultimate harmony between these two aspects of the narrative voice.

But even in that unity, and in that harmony, we find a slight dissonance, a subtle hint of disorder and imbalance. The author *does* finally choose, however subtly, between the ideologies of his two characters. And the narrative *does* place its accent on one vision of the world over the other. When silence ensues in the debates between Pierre and Prince Andrew, the gentle, poetic flow of nature can be heard. The cacophony of debate is replaced by a quietude that momentarily fills the characters' surroundings and the world of the text, as well. In this mysterious silence the reader senses a certain harmony among the elements. But even in this harmony nature seems to have her favorites. Of the two ideological positions Pierre's is revealed to be the more right, the more true. Not because it has been argued more persuasively than Prince Andrew's position, but because it is the only one that is in sync with the forces of nature herself:

> Prince Andrew stood leaning on the railing of the raft listening to Pierre, and he gazed with his eyes fixed on the red reflection of the sun gleaming on the blue waters. There was perfect stillness. Pierre became silent. The raft had long since stopped and only the waves of the current beat softly against it below. Prince Andrew felt as if the sound of the waves kept up a refrain to Pierre's words, whispering: "It is true, believe it." (10, 117; 422)

The whispering emanating from the waves is, of course, a projection of Prince Andrew's imagination. But this does not diminish its significance or power in the text. In fact, that Prince Andrew, disillusioned with life at this point in the novel, should hear such whispering is a testimony to the power of the message contained in Pierre's words. Indeed, the text wants us to recognize, there is an undeniable truth contained in what Pierre says. That truth lies in the capacity of his words to illuminate something which the reader, and Prince Andrew, have felt to be true all along: that beneath the chaos of everyday existence there *is* a certain natural order to things, there *is* a higher, unifying truth to life. This truth comes to Prince Andrew here suddenly and mysteriously. What convinces Prince Andrew in this scene is not so much what Pierre says--his argument is full of logical fallacies, as we have seen--but what Pierre *is*: the human embodiment of the perpetual human striving for order. Pierre's presence in this scene, and throughout the novel, carries with it the force of nature--of both external nature and his own internal nature, passionate, sincere, and eternally striving towards truth.

Prince Andrew will be the one to destroy the moment of epiphany. He suddenly interjects into the silence: "Yes, if it only were so! However, it is time to get on." (10, 118; 422) The impulse to undermine an experience of inner peace is always present in Prince Andrew. In this he is not so different from Pierre himself, who seldom has a sublime moment of epiphany in the novel without immediately attempting to rationalize or interpret it. But here we witness an important difference between the way in which the two characters exhibit this common tendency. Prince Andrew cannot hold onto the immediacy of a moment, because he instinctively rejects

it as somehow illusory, or inadequate to his understanding of the way things are. Pierre cannot hold onto the immediacy of a moment because he tends to create out of it a grand theory or truth about life. In this respect, Pierre's, and not Prince Andrew's, perception comes closer to that of the narrator, and by implication, his creator, even as he is the frequent object of narrative irony in the novel. The narrator, like Pierre, abstracts the concrete moment, as well as the individual human experience, and transforms that moment, and that experience, into microcosms in a larger philosophical order. Pierre engages in this process because the chaos of reality is too much for him to bear. The narrator engages in it because he senses in that very chaos a richness that can be embraced and celebrated on its own terms. For Pierre the larger philosophical order is to be found in a single abstract idea; for the narrator in the very process by which the world organically evolves in the mind's eye.

Pierre wants to stop the flux of life. Only then can he find his unifying idea. The narrator embraces that flow in all of its paradoxical complexity. Therein lies *his* unifying idea. He shows the world to us, not as he wishes it to be, but as it is in actuality. And he shows us men and women, not as he wishes them to be, but as they, in fact, are: stupid, shrewd, corrupt, moral, irredeemable, teeming with potential. For Pierre such human potential manifests itself in man's ability to realize an ideal of moral and social goodness on earth, as he himself attempts to do throughout the novel. For the narrator, however, human potentiality is reflected in something less grandiose than this. It is manifested in the basic and real humanity of the characters. It is expressed in that simple and sunny *joie de vivre*, with which men and women in Tolstoy's world go about their daily business of living. There is no moral rebuke on

the part of the narrator even for those who take advantage of Pierre's idealism in the novel. Such deceitful behavior, like the mass killing that takes place in warfare, is not condemned, but simply accepted by the Tolstoyan narrator as a necessary part of the way things are.

To be sure, retribution eventually visits characters in the novel, such as Helene, who defy the tenets of Christian morality. But it does not come to all such characters. Pierre's chief steward is among the exceptions. Pierre's chief steward understands the ways of the world and has turned that knowledge to his advantage. The steward may be "a very stupid and cunning man," but he is also a survivor in a world which does not always reward, and in which it is perhaps even impossible to attain, the sort of moral perfection towards which Pierre Bezukhov incessantly strives. To be self-seeking is not sufficient to be the object of condemnation by the Tolstoyan narrator, and particularly by the narrator of *War and Peace*. The narrator of *Anna Karenina* is perhaps less forgiving. That novel will be written under the influence of a pending spiritual crisis in Tolstoy's life. The crisis will carry with it the burden of moral absolutism, which would become one of the hallmarks of the late Tolstoy's world-view. But *War and Peace* does not yet carry that burden. It is a lighter work written by a lighter man. It sings the music of acceptance. It resounds with a sense of *joie de vivre*. In such a world mental anguish comes not to those characters who act out of self-interest. It comes rather to those individuals, such as Pierre Bezukhov, who are unwilling, or unable, to reconcile themselves with the immutable and often unfair, but for Tolstoy basically decent, ways of the world.

Hadji-Murat as Retrospective and Re-creation

Our discussion of the searching subject in Tolstoy concludes with an analysis of *Hadji-Murat*, a novel which, at first glance, appears to have little in common with the philosophically-oriented novels of Tolstoy's youth and early adulthood. The problem of man's search for truth is not as clearly foregrounded in this work as it is in *The Cossacks* and *War and Peace*. Of all of the characters in *Hadji-Murat*, only one, Butler, bears a close resemblance to the truth-seekers of the earlier novels. Like his distant relative, Olenin, Butler has come to the Caucasus in search of a new life, free of both financial debt and the psychological constraints of high society. And like Olenin, Butler will discover that the Caucasus does not hold the solution to his internal problems.

Tolstoy's concern with truth is as paramount in *Hadji-Murat* as in *The Cossacks*. Only now the relationship between that concern and the problems faced by the main hero is different. In *The Cossacks* the author's striving for an artistically truthful portrait of the world occurs simultaneously with the hero's striving for a philosophically truthful way of living. In *Hadji-Murat* the author's striving for artistic truth does not parallel the struggles of the hero. Instead, that striving manifests itself in the author's capacity truthfully to illuminate the *tragic necessity* of the hero's fate. There is no echo here between the philosophical striving of the hero and that of the narrator. The narrator and the hero exist on different philosophical planes in this novel. Hadji-Murat is not a searching subject in the same way that Olenin is. The narrator--and consequently the reader--of *Hadji-Murat* is not so interested in the

hero's internal development as he is in his external actions, and in the way in which those actions lead Hadji-Murat inevitably to his fatal end. That end is foreshadowed in the image of the mowed-down thistle in the novel's introduction. We know that, like the struggling thistle, which the narrator likens to Hadji-Murat, the hero will fight for his life until the end. But whereas the thistle does not submit to the destructive forces from the outside, Hadji-Murat does finally go down. If, in the introduction, the narrator posits the possibility that, like nature, Hadji-Murat remains a permanent presence in the world ("Man has conquered everything and destroyed millions of plants, yet this one won't submit"), then in the body of the novel he reveals the stark truth about the hero's mortality.

In both cases, the narrator always stands above the hero and keeps our attention focused on his fatal trajectory. The aura of philosophical possibility, communicated artistically in *The Cossacks*, is now superseded by an atmosphere of philosophical necessity. The sense of human becoming, which was central in Tolstoy's first novel, is now replaced by an overall sense of human entrapment. The description of Hadji-Murat's last stand in the final chapter of the novel is emblematic of this revised Tolstoyan world view. One of the ways the text artistically creates a sense of the necessity of Hadji-Murat's death is by showing us the hero's severed head in chapter twenty-four before we are shown his final flight and death in chapter twenty-five. The effect of this narrative technique is to make us aware of Hadji-Murat's death even before it happens. As a result, the narrator diverts the reader's attention away from the question of whether Hadji-Murat will meet his end, and focuses it rather on the question of how he will meet that end. Hadji-Murat meets his

end with a noble heroism, a stoic grandeur, and a violent physicality that are an appropriate conclusion to his life of daring and battle. Far from a surprise or an aberration, Hadji-Murat's heroic death becomes *the* event towards which the plot has been leading.

And yet the novel does not conclude with this event. It concludes with a reminder of an event in the *narrator's* private story. "It was of this death," the narrator tells us in the work's final sentence, "that I was reminded by the crushed thistle in the midst of the ploughed field." (35, 117; 668) With this commentary Hadji-Murat's death, which is the culminating event in the hero's life and in the plot trajectory, loses its sense of finality. It is stripped of its power to *close* the work. Closure comes from another source: from that consciousness for whom the hero's death is a symbol of some larger idea. This is a characteristic move on the part of the Tolstoyan narrator. The impulse towards sense-making and generalization, present in varying throughout Tolstoy's *oeuvre*, is present in *Hadji-Murat*, as well. Even in *Hadji-Murat*, which John Bayley considers Tolstoy's most objective work, the Tolstoyan narrator has the impulse to lead the reader towards certain conclusions.[151] By means of the final line of the novel the narrator forces an association in the reader's mind between the hero's death and the introduction to the novel. The narrator reminds us that Hadji-Murat's death means something beyond itself, but the exact significance of the event is left unspoken. We, the readers, are challenged to find that meaning for ourselves. We are invited to participate actively along with the implied author in the process of sense-making. The ending of *Hadji-Murat* thus leaves us with

[151] John Bayley, *Tolstoy and the Novel* (London, 1966; New York, 1968), p.276.

the impression of being in both a closed and an open artistic universe. The world of the novel is unified by the frame of the narrator's voice. This frame creates the feeling of closure, of a unifying vision to the world. Ironically, that unifying vision is the product of one man's subjective perspective. And it is a perspective, moreover, that we, the readers, are challenged to penetrate and understand for ourselves. Even in one of Tolstoy's most philosophically pessimistic works, then, the possibility for creative self-assertion still exists. The Tolstoyan "I," shown to us in the guise of the omniscient narrator, remains a powerful presence in this work. A self-conscious presence in the work, that "I" invites the reader to engage with it in creative, interpretive dialogue.

In *Hadji-Murat*, just as in the other novels we have analyzed, the narrator and the author are not, finally, the same person. But in Tolstoy's final novel this narratological distinction is challenged by the fact that the novel opens and closes with the voice of a narrator who openly flaunts his own subjectivity (he speaks to us in the first person), and whose own biography closely mirrors that of Tolstoy himself. More than in any other novel we have discussed, the narrator of *Hadji-Murat* becomes a living presence, an actual character, and a surrogate for the author himself. The narrator in *Hadji-Murat* is not merely a vehicle through which to relate the story. He *is* the story-teller, and he calls specific attention to his own unique role in the telling of the tale. In the final line of the introduction the narrator tells us that the story we are about to hear, although based partly on personal experience, and partly on the experience of others, is, finally, *his* story, *his* creation: "*I mne vspomnilas' odna davnishniaia kavkazskaia istoriia, chast' kotoroi ia videl, chast' slyshal ot*

ochevidtsev, a chast' voobrazil sebe...Istoriia eta, tak, kak ona slozhilas' v ***moem vospominanii i voobrazhenii****, vot kakaia.*" ["And I remembered a Caucasian episode of years ago, which I had partly seen myself, partly heard of from eye-witnesses, and in part imagined....The episode, as it has taken shape in **my memory and imagination**, is as follows:"] [emphasis mine] (35, 6; 550)[152] That consciousness will reassert itself again in the final sentence of the novel, after the description of Hadji-Murat's death. The narrator's consciousness thus becomes the epistemological frame for the entire story. When we finish the novel we are not meant to have any illusion that what we have just witnessed is a "slice of life." We are reminded once again that it was the product of one man's creative imagination.

The idea for *Hadji-Murat* first came to Tolstoy in July of 1896:

> Yesterday I walked through a black-earth, fallow field which had been ploughed up again. As far as the eye could see there was nothing but black earth--not one green blade of grass. And there on the edge of the dusty grey road was a Tatar thistle (burdock) with three shoots: one was broken, and a dirty white flower hung from it; the second was also broken and spattered with mud, black and with a cracked and dirty stem; the third shoot stuck out to the side, also black, but still alive and red in the middle. It reminded me of Hadji-Murat. I'd like to write about it. It fights for life till the end and, alone in the middle of the whole field, somehow manages to win the fight. (53; 99-100)[153]

A private and seemingly insignificant personal experience becomes the initial stimulus for the novel, *Hadji-Murat*. The experience becomes, in fact, one of the

[152] There is a tension between *what* the narrator says--that the episode we are about to read is ultimately his own creation--and *how* he makes this claim: by means of the passive grammatical construction, "*...Istoriia eta, tak, kak ona slozhilas' v moem vospominanii i voobrazhenii*." This passive construction recalls the impersonal construction of the previous sentence: "*I mne vspomnilas' odna davnishniaia kavkazskaia istoriia*." In both sentences the grammatical subject is "*istoriia*", "episode". In both of these sentences the narrator presents himself both as the active mental subject of the "*istoriia*"--he is clearly the one who remembers the episode and shapes it into a story for us--and also as the passive recipient of the "*istoriia*". The grammatical construction makes it seem that the narrator does not actively remember the "*istoriia*," but that it occurs *to* him; that he does not imagine the "*istoriia*," but that it takes shape of its own accord in his imagination.

[153] Translation taken from R.F. Christian, ed., *Tolstoy's Diaries Volume Two: 1895-1910* (London: The Athlon Press, 1985), p.429.

central artistic and philosophical motifs of the final work itself. The image of the Tatar thistle will be more fully developed in the novel's introduction, both philosophically and artistically. There the thistle's struggle for survival will become a motif for the conflict between the vital force of nature and the destructive force of human civilization, in general. In his 1896 journal entry Tolstoy hints at this theme with the suggestion that the thistle has been crushed and bespattered with mud from the vehicles which, we may presume, drive by on the "dusty grey road." In the novel's introduction the image of the black, ploughed field will reappear in an expanded form:

> The way home led across black-earth fields that had just been ploughed up. I ascended the dusty path. The ploughed field belonged to a landed proprietor and was so large that on both sides and before me to the top of the hill nothing was visible but evenly furrowed and moist earth. The land was well tilled and nowhere was there a blade of grass or any kind of plant to be seen, it was all black. 'Ah, what a destructive creature is man....How many different plant-lives he destroys to support his own existence!' thought I, involuntarily looking around for some living thing in this lifeless black field. (35, 6; 550)[154]

The message contained in these words, implicit in the journal entry, has now been made explicit. Unlike the author of the journal entry, the author of these lines adds his personal commentary on the meaning of what he sees. The meaning of the thistle encountered on the edge of the black field many years earlier has now crystallized in the author's imagination. The contrast between the vital force of nature and the destructive force of human civilization is now paramount, and the narrator calls our attention to it: "Ah, what a destructive creature is man....How many different plant lives he destroys to support his own existence!" Interestingly, though, the narrator who speaks these words is the same one who, only three paragraphs earlier,

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[154] My translations from the text of *Hadji-Murat* are based on the Maude version, given in *Great Short Works of Leo Tolstoy*, trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1967), pp. 549-668.

participates in the very destruction of nature, which he now condemns. The narrator describes how he forcefully extracts a Tatar thistle from the earth in order to place it in his nosegay:

> I gathered myself a large nosegay and was going home when I noticed in a ditch, in full bloom, a beautiful thistle plant of the crimson variety, which in our neighborhood they call 'Tatar' and carefully avoid when mowing--or, if they do happen to cut it down, throw out from among the grass for fear of pricking their hands. Thinking to pick this thistle and put it in the center of my nosegay, I climbed down into the ditch, and after driving away a velvety bumble-bee that had penetrated deep into one of the flowers and had there fallen sweetly asleep, I set to work to pluck the flower. But this proved a very difficult task. Not only did the stalk prick on every side--even through the handkerchief I wrapped around my hand--but it was so tough that I had to struggle with it for nearly five minutes, breaking the fibers one by one; and when I had at last plucked it, the stalk was all frayed and the flower itself no longer seemed so fresh and beautiful. Moreover, owing to its coarseness and stiffness, it did not seem in place among the delicate blossoms of my nosegay. I threw it away feeling sorry to have vainly destroyed a flower that looked beautiful in its proper place. "But what energy and tenacity! With what determination it defended itself, and how dearly it sold its life!" thought I , remembering the effort it had cost me to pluck the flower. (35, 5-6; 549-50)

Here, as in the passage quoted above, the narrator interjects his own commentary on the events being described. And here again, as in the other passage, the narrator is on the side of nature, embodied in the struggling thistle: "But what energy and tenacity! With what determination it defended itself, and how dearly it sold its life!" The reader recognizes a tension between what the narrator says and what he does: between his explicit admiration of the natural world, on the one hand, and his implicit participation in the destruction of that world, on the other. The implied author makes no attempt to reconcile this tension. In fact, this tension is central to the artistic dynamic of the novel's introduction. The reader has the sense that he is in the presence of two different narrative personalities at once: one who, like the late

Tolstoy himself, is an open pacifist and opposed to human violence, and another who, like the young Tolstoy, participates actively in the violence of the world. There is in the Tolstoyan narrator here both a playful innocence and a moral seriousness, both a *joie de vivre* in the midst of the richness and sensuousness of the natural world, and a feeling of guilt about his own destructive interaction with that world. The artistic depth of the introduction lies, in part, in its capacity to combine these two different visions of reality at once: the vision of the artist, who imbibes the fullness of the world around him [“At that season of the year there is a delightful variety of flowers....” (35, 5; 549)], and the vision of the moralist, who chastises himself for enjoying nature so much that he attempts to create his very own “delightful variety of flowers” in the form of a nosegay.

Latent in the introduction to the novel, then, is both a celebration of the human creative impulse and also a commentary on the destructive potential contained within that impulse. The creative impulse is what permits the narrator to give exciting, compelling descriptions of the natural world, but it is also what drives him to want to gather up that world for himself and to rearrange it according to his own selfish desires and designs. The characteristic Tolstoyan tension between the artist and the moralist exists in the introduction to *Hadji-Murat*. But it is also temporarily resolved. The artist and the moralist are now united in a single narrative personality that can both imbibe the fullness of life and reflect at the same time on the implications of his own actions. A full range of human creative and ethical potential is contained in the narrative personality. This range is also embodied, in part, in the distinction between two different facets of one and the same creative impulse: between the narrator’s

desire, on the one hand, verbally to reproduce for us the organic totality of the natural world ["There is a delightful variety of flowers..."], and his desire, on the other hand, physically to organize that world according to some externally imposed concept: his personal concept of what would make an attractive bouquet of flowers.

The reader is meant to contrast the narrator's description of the "delightful variety of flowers" in nature, which has formed organically and without the intrusion of any outside force, with his description of the collection of flowers contained in his private nosegay, which is the product of a conscious, forced human design. The Soviet critic, V.A. Tunimanov, has called the field of flowers "an allegory of life, colorful and endlessly varied."[155] Perhaps we can take Tunimanov's formulation one step further and see the field of flowers as a symbol of *organic*, as opposed to artificial or systematic, creation, in general. What is being enacted in this contrast between the "delightful variety of flowers" and the narrator's nosegay is perhaps a half-conscious expansion of one of the core ideas developed by Tolstoy in his famous treatise, "What is Art?", published in 1897 and written simultaneously with his work on *Hadji-Murat*. In that essay Tolstoy makes the distinction between unself-conscious, organically emerging art, which he calls "true" art, and art created with a conscious aim or design, which he calls artificial, or "false," art.[156] In the case of the

[155] V.A. Tunimanov, "Istoriia-iskusstvo v povesti L.N. Tolstogo 'Hadji-Murat'," *Russkaia Literatura*: *Istoriko-literaturnyi zhurnal*, vol.1 (1984), p.24.

[156] According to Tolstoy's formulation, the artist's ultimate goal must be always to merge with the world around him. This merging, stemming as it does from a genuine, un-selfconscious relationship with his surroundings, will in turn yield true art. Through this kind of art the artist becomes connected to his audience and further links all members of his audience with one another. Here Tolstoy describes a generic "true" artistic performance:

> Sometimes people who are together are, if not hostile to one another, at least estranged in mood and feeling, till perchance, a story, a performance, a picture, or even a building, but oftenest of all, music, unites them all as by an electric flash, and, in place of their former isolation or even enmity, they are all conscious of union and mutual love. Each is glad that

field of flowers, the work of art is completely spontaneous and unmediated. Growing as it does organically in nature, it is, in fact, "authorless" and therefore most closely approximates the ideal of "true art" described by Tolstoy in his treatise. The nosegay, on the other hand, is created according to a pre-conceived design, and the artist who creates it, the narrator, is not only at a remove from his world, but he is also engaged in the destruction of that very world.

The relationship between the ideas contained in the essay and the imagery in the introduction to the novel is of a particular sort. The imagery cannot quite be said to be an *illustration* of the ideas contained in the essay, since there is much in the essay that is inconsistent with the general content and spirit of the novel. For instance, the strong advocacy of Biblical ethics in "What is Art?" is strikingly at odds with the celebratory image of natural man and noble savagery expressed in the novel.[157] Nor, on the other hand, can the novel quite be considered a reversal, or an overcoming, of the ideas contained in the essay, since there *is* an unmistakable connection between the two. Rather, the connection between the ideas in the essay and the imagery in the introduction to the novel is based on a principle of organic association. A juxtaposition between two modes of creative expression--one holistic and authentic,

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> another feels what he feels; glad of the communion established, not only between him and all present, but also with all now living who will yet share the same impression; and more than that, he feels the mysterious gladness of a communion which, reaching beyond the grave, unites us with all men of the past who have been moved by the same feelings, and with all the men of the future who will be touched by them. (PSS, vol 30, pp.158-9)

[157] Edmund Heier has resolved this apparent contradiction by arguing that *Hadji-Murat* illustrates the moral message contained in "What is Art?" precisely *because of* its depiction of human evil: "If art, in Tolstoy's concept, was to serve moral and spiritual regeneration, then this is illustrated in *Hadji-Murat*, for here the underlying moral idea is precisely to arouse horror and indignation at man's behavior. (Edmund Heier, "*Hadji Murat* in Light of Tolstoy's Moral and Aesthetic Theories," *Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, vol.21, no.2 (February, 1979), p335. Donna Orwin has argued that in *Hadji-Murat* rational consciousness replaces nature as the final arbiter of morality. (Donna Orwin, "Nature and the Narrator in *Chadzi-Murat*," *Russian Literature*, 28, no.1 (July 1990), pp.125-144.

the other dismembered and ungenuine--is developed abstractly in “What is Art?,” and it is developed aesthetically in the novel. The overriding conceptual framework remains the same. One and the same conceptual impulse is thus given expression by Tolstoy through two distinct literary media.

The distinction between the two facets of the narrator’s creative personality in the introduction to the novel is reinforced for the reader in *how* each facet is rendered in the text. The narrator’s description of the field of flowers in the second paragraph is entirely impersonal. The narrator becomes merely the vehicle through which the beauty of nature is communicated to the reader. This sense of an unmediated relaying of the scenery is communicated in the way in which the narrator simply lists the variety of flowers he encounters. The narrator speaks like a botanical scientist, who describes, simply and objectively, what lies before him: “*Est’ prelestnyi podbor tsvetov etogo vremeni goda: krasnye, belye, rozovye, dushistye, pushistye kashki; naglye margaritki; molochnye-belyie, s iarko-zheltoi seredinoi ‘liubish’-ne liubish’ s svoei preloi priatnoi voniiu*...” [“There is a delightful variety of flowers--red, white, and pink scented tufty clover; milk-white ox-eye daisies with their bright yellow centers and pleasant spicy smell....”] (35, 5; 549) At the end of this paragraph-long description of the variety of flowers a new paragraph begins with the word “ia” (“I”): “*Ia nabral bol’shoi buket raznykh tsvetov i shel domoi*....” [“I gathered myself a large nosegay and was going home....”] (35, 5; 549) The impersonal, objective narrative of the previous paragraph thus replaced by a highly personalized description of the narrator’s creation of his personal nosegay. The contrast between the impersonal grammatical construction of the previous paragraph and the first-person narrative

voice of this paragraph is striking. It serves to remind the reader that we are now witnessing another aspect of the narrator's personality from the one we previously encountered. The narrator is no longer an objective eye; he is now a distinct subjectivity who participates actively in his surroundings. In the same way that we cannot quite separate the moralist from the artist in the narrator, so we cannot separate in him the impersonal relayer of objective facts from the active creator of private, subjective realities. These two aspects are united in one and the same narrative personality in the introduction to *Hadji-Murat*, just as they are united, as we have seen, in the implied author of *The Cossacks* and *War and Peace*.

When Tolstoy observed the thistle in the black field in 1896, it remained a mere curiosity. When the narrator of *Hadji-Murat* describes the same detail, it begins to take on a significance it never had before. In our analysis of Tolstoy's earlier novels we have discussed the way in which the recurrence of certain details or motifs within a work creates a sense of a world in a state of organic evolution. In his novels Tolstoy shows us the way in which images and ideas continually expand and renew themselves. Here we are in the presence of a slightly different phenomenon: the way in which an *extra-literary* detail gets transformed into an artistic detail, and thereby begins to take on new and expanded meanings. Here we have an example of the way in which an image, taken from life, continues to occupy Tolstoy's artistic imagination for eight years, and then grows finally into one of the central organizing motifs of his last work. The narrator of the final version of *Hadji-Murat* will impart rich aesthetic and philosophical meaning to a set of details, which in 1896 represent merely an inchoate creative possibility to Tolstoy, the traveler/observer.

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The process by which Tolstoy transforms a biographical fact into a literary fact is perhaps not so different from the way in which many other writers use their own biographical experiences for artistic purposes. There is, however, at least one aspect of Tolstoy's reworking of the biographical detail from his diary entry that makes it of particular interest. The process of mental internalization and transformation of the world is precisely the same process which takes place in many of Tolstoy's fictional characters, and to which the author has pointed us over and again throughout his novels. In our discussion of *The Cossacks* and *War and Peace* we observed the parallel between the existential task of the characters and that of the implied author. In *Hadji-Murat*, perhaps more than in any other work we have analyzed, the actual author embodies the characteristics of the searching subject. Tolstoy becomes a character in the very existential drama which he has himself pursued throughout his artistic career. This explains, in part, the relative lack of irony in *Hadji-Murat* as compared to *The Cossacks* and *War and Peace*. More self-critical than self-mocking, *Hadji-Murat* becomes Tolstoy's personal swan song. Now it is Tolstoy who will internalize the details of his private experience and mentally transform them, through art, much in the same way that Olenin, Prince Andrew, Nicholas, and Pierre internalized the details of their own worlds in the earlier novels.

And the author will do this in a way that goes beyond his artistic internalization of the single biographical detail about his encounter with the thistle in the field. The entire novel, *Hadji-Murat*, becomes, in fact, a reworking and a transformation of some of the literary imagery and techniques, as well as some of the

important themes and ideas that occupied Tolstoy since his early twenties. For instance, the so-called "peepshow"[158] technique used by Tolstoy to reveal the different sides of his hero's personality is an adaptation of the narrative technique employed by Tolstoy in *War and Peace* to depict simultaneously several different human perspectives on one and the same event. We saw this, for instance, in the scene in which Prince Andrew and Pierre debate existential questions at Bogucharovo. In *Hadji-Murat* the narrator's focus is not so much on the multiple perspectives of one and the same event as on the complex totality of a single hero in his manifold interactions with the world. "How good it would be," Tolstoy wrote in the same entry in which he spoke about the "peepshow" technique, "to write a work of art in which one could clearly express the shifting nature of man; the fact that one and the same man is now a villain, now an angel, now a wise man, now an idiot, now a strong man, now the most impotent of creatures."[159] In spite of his tendency in his later years to create one-dimensional characters who would serve as illustrations of his rigid moral ideals, Tolstoy, it seems, could never suppress his appreciation of the colorful and contradictory nature of human beings. In the figure of Hadji-Murat the human personality itself becomes a kind of work of art, embodying the earlier organic artist's sense of multiplicity and paradox in the world.

Appearing as he does in all but a few of the novel's chapters, Hadji-Murat becomes more than the main hero of the work. He becomes also a central human presence, an organizing artistic principle. His variegated personality, held together by

[158] On 21 March 1898 Tolstoy wrote: "There is an English toy called a 'peepshow'--first one thing and then another is shown underneath a glass. That's the way to show Hadji-Murat: as a husband, a fanatic, etc...." (PSS, vol.53, p.188.)
[159] (PSS, vol. 53, p.187.)

a solid core, is an embodiment of that synthetic Tolstoyan instinct which senses both unity and diversity in the world. Hadji-Murat is at once complex and simple, at once paradoxical and consistent. Underlying the many contradictions and inconsistencies of Hadji-Murat's character is a core principle, a certain unity of being that remains constant throughout. The hero possesses a sheer force of will, a self-confidence and a self-reliance that recalls Uncle Eroshka and Platon Karataev of the earlier novels, combined with a fierce individualism that is unique in Tolstoy's *oeuvre*.[160] He is physically powerful, mentally cunning, brave, and ruthless in pursuit of his personal aims.

There is, in fact, only one moment in the novel in which we witness Hadji-Murat in a state of inner confusion. This happens at the end of chapter twenty-two, when the hero mentally confronts the tragic complexity of his situation. Hadji-Murat realizes that if he returns to Shamil, as Shamil has requested him to do, then he runs the risk of being deceived. If he does not return, then he risks losing his family, who is being held by the *imam*. Hadji-Murat likens himself to the falcon who, in a Tavlinian fable, returns to his own kind after having lived among men, and is then

[160] Edward Wasiolek overstates the case when he argues that the ultimate source of value in Tolstoy's world view is the human individual. Here Wasiolek is referring to the late Tolstoy's world view, in particular:

> Whether it is religion, economics, art, or politics, Tolstoy's answer is always the same: the individual by himself is capable of recognizing the truth: his reason--when untouched by false education and the manifold corruptions of church, government, society, history, and fellow man--is a vehicle that conducts the truth to him. All truth comes from the inviolate individual; all error comes from those who would violate the sanctity of the individual, whether of others or themselves.

Tolstoy does celebrate the human individual in his art, as we have seen. But he also values the experience of community, as well. Furthermore, individualism is not always a virtue in Tolstoy. In *Hadji-Murat*, for instance, the individualism of the hero is an attractive quality, but it is also partly responsible for his downfall. [See Edward Wasiolek*, Tolstoy's Major Fiction* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.167.]

pecked to death. The hero fears that his betrayal of the cause of his people will not be forgiven. There is yet another element to the complexity of Hadji-Murat's situation, to which only the narrator, and we, the readers, are privy: the role played in the hero's decision by his own sense of pride and honor: "Even if he [Shamil] did not deceive me," Hadji-Murat thinks to himself, "it would still be impossible to submit to that red liar." (35, 103; 652). With this detail the tragic complexity of Hadji-Murat's decision is heightened. The sense of personal honor, which prevents Hadji-Murat from submitting to Shamil, is the same quality of character that will ultimately prevent him from submitting to anybody at all in the final chapters of the novel. Hadji-Murat's isolation in the world is brought on, in part, by the very individualism which also makes him an attractive character in the novel.

Another aspect of *Hadji-Murat* that links the novel with Tolstoy's earlier works is the setting of the Caucasus. It seems that even in his old age the writer could not escape the allure of the Caucasus, where Tolstoy spent his youthful days as a volunteer, and which was the setting for his first major novel, *The Cossacks*, as well as the short stories, "The Raid" ["*Nabeg*"] (1852) and "The Woodfelling" ["*Rubka Lesa*"] (1855). There is much that is different and new in Tolstoy's final work. There is in it, for instance, a preoccupation with the problem of human evil, which was only latent in the earlier Caucasian tales. We also find in it a strong authorial condemnation of the entire autocratic structure, expressed in the narrator's ironic treatment of Emperor Nicholas in Chapter Fifteen.[161] This is a theme which *Hadji-Murat* shares

[161] In a discussion with S. N. Shul'gin in June 1903, Tolstoy admits that in the novel he was "concerned not only with Hadji-Murat and his tragic fate, but also with the extremely interesting parallelism between the two main adversaries of the period--Shamil and Nicholas--who represent together the two poles, as it were, of powerful absolutism--the Asiatic and the European." (PSS vol. 35, p. 622)

more with the late Tolstoy's social and political writings than with his earlier fiction. But there are also certain elements in the novel which Tolstoy has borrowed, if perhaps unconsciously, from his earlier fiction, and from his Caucasian tales, in particular. These elements have now been expanded and deepened. Some passages in *Hadji-Murat* arouse in us, for instance, feelings of *dejà-vu* when compared with scenes from the earlier works. For instance, the description of the Chechen *aoul* at the beginning of *Hadji-Murat*, in which we hear the quiet hum of nature and the melancholic drone of villagers going about their evening tasks, strikes us as a faint echo of the description of the Cossack village towards the beginning of *The Cossacks*. Here is the scene from the first chapter of *Hadji-Murat*:

> On a cold November evening Hadji-Murat rode into Makhmet, a hostile Chechen *aoul* that lay some fifteen miles from the Russian territory and was filled with the scented smoke of burning *kizyak*. The strained chant of the muezin had just ceased, and through the clear mountain air, impregnated with *kizyak* smoke, above the lowing of the cattle and the bleating of the sheep that were dispersing among the *saklyas* (which were crowded together like the cells of honeycomb), could be clearly heard the guttural voices of disputing men, and sounds of women's and children's voices rising from near the fountain below. (35, 7; 551).

Let us recall the description of the Cossack village at the beginning of *The Cossacks*:

> It was one of those wonderful evenings that occur only in the Caucasus. The sun had sunk behind the mountains but it was still light....Talking merrily, the women who have been tying up the vines hurry away from the gardens before sunset. The vineyards, like all the surrounding district, are deserted, but the villages become very animated at that time of the evening. From all sides, walking, riding, or driving in their creaking carts, people move towards the village. Girls with their smocks tucked up and twigs in their hands run chatting merrily to the village gates to meet the cattle that are crowding together in a cloud of dust and mosquitoes which they bring with them from the steppe. (8, 18-19; 101-2)[162]

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[162] The translation from the text of *Kazaki* is taken from the Maude version, given in *Great Short Works of Leo Tolstoy*, trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1967).

In both Tolstoy's first and last novel, the Caucasian village community, whether Cossack or Chechen, becomes a place with a clearly defined social order and a strong sense of communal loyalty. Outsiders remain outsiders, as Olenin painfully learns. And insiders, *kunaks*, are protected at the risk of one's life, as we witness in the case of Hadji-Murat's coming to Makhmet. Whereas in *The Cossacks* we see the Chechens from the vantage of point of the Cossack village on "this" side of the Terek, in *Hadji-Murat* we witness the Chechen village from within. This change in perspective represents not only a shift, but also a deepening, of the artistic logic of internalization pursued by Tolstoy in his first novel. In the same way that the author of *The Cossacks* penetrated the internal, psychological aspects of the literary Caucasus in a way that almost no Russian writer before him had done, so the author of *Hadji-Murat* will tell the story of those who live on the other side of the river in a way it had not yet been told in Russian literature. Now he internalizes the drama of the conquered, rather than that of the conquerors.

In both *The Cossacks* and *Hadji-Murat* Tolstoy establishes a contrast between the spontaneous and brotherly relations among members of the native Caucasian communities, and the emptier relationships that exist among members of high society. In *The Cossacks* this contrast is highlighted by a juxtaposition of the high society life of Olenin and his acquaintances in Moscow in the novel's opening chapter with descriptions of the Cossacks community throughout the rest of the novel. In *Hadji-Murat* we are given frequent descriptions of high society life, but now that society is not in a different geographical sphere from the Caucasus. It has established itself, in fact, in the form of a luxurious little fort, the home of Prince Vorontsov, in the midst

of the Caucasian countryside. If in the *The Cossacks* the Caucasus was a place of refuge from the corrupting influence of civilized culture, then in *Hadji-Murat* the Caucasus has become infiltrated by that very culture. The reason for this shift in authorial perspective is not so much historical (the era described in *Hadji-Murat* is the same era dealt with in *The Cossacks*) as it is philosophical. The late Tolstoy sensed more acutely than the early Tolstoy the extent to which civilized culture was beginning to encroach on and corrupt the pre-modern world of indigenous peoples.

During the era in which Tolstoy wrote *Hadji-Murat* the author also wrote many treatises denouncing various aspects of modern religion, government, art, and education, and he became an advocate of the cause of the anarchistic Caucasian sect, the Dukhobors. For the author of *The Cossacks* modern civilization is seen as a potentially corrupt force which must be tempered by the individual's return to the simpler, nobler virtues of the indigenous peoples living in the Caucasus. For the author of *Hadji-Murat* modern civilization is a wholly corrupt structure which cannot be redeemed, and which now threatens dominance over even the native cultures of the Russian South. In this connection we recall, for instance, the image of the black field in the introduction to the novel. In the same way that the landed proprietor has leveled the organic growth of nature with his modern plough, so civilized Russian society in the novel threatens to destroy the natural vibrancy of life in the Caucasus with its unique blend of modern sophistication and raw, military force.

In *Hadji-Murat* Tolstoy's authorial eye thus penetrates more deeply than in his first novel, or in his earlier Caucasian tales, into the destructive powers of modern civilization. To be sure, there are in the earlier works descriptions of human violence

and destruction. But the reader of those works often has the feeling that there is a union between the rhythm of nature and the rhythm of human violence, as in the scene from *The Cossacks* in which Lukashka murders a Chechen in cold blood. If in that scene the force of nature and the force of human violence are mysteriously in sync with one another, then the destruction of the Chechen *aoul* in *Hadji-Murat* is shown to result in an interruption of the otherwise healthy, symbiotic relationship that exists between the natural and the human world:

> The old grandfather sat by the wall of the ruined *saklya* cutting a stick and gazing stolidly in front of him. He had only just returned from the apiary. The two stacks of hay there had been burnt, the apricot and cherry trees he had planted were broken and scorched, and worse still all the beehives and bees had been burnt. (35, 80; 629)

The artistic style of these lines is characteristic of the artistic style throughout *Hadji-Murat*. The narrator arouses in the reader a feeling of horror at the violence and moral corruption in the world. He does this, not through overt moralizing or obvious pathos-engendering techniques, but by keeping his distance from the world being described and presenting it to us with complete artistic objectivity. In this respect the artistic style of *Hadji-Murat* mirrors the artistic style of Tolstoy's first novel.

But there is at least one important difference between the style of the two novels, and the overall philosophical vision presented in each work is correspondingly different. In *The Cossacks* an intensive poetic dialogue exists between the narrator's voice and Olenin's "I." This dialogue becomes, in turn, paradigmatic of the larger metaphysical drama of the novel, the drama of the human subject in pursuit of stable meaning in an elusive world. The impression of endless flux and possibility, communicated in Tolstoy's first novel, is superseded in *Hadji-Murat* by an awareness

of fatalistic necessity as the ultimate philosophical reality in the world. Within this more pessimistic philosophical framework the possibility of human individuality and productive self-assertion still exists. But now the human impulse for creative self-assertion is not so much an existential luxury as it is an existential and even physical necessity in the world. In *Hadji-Murat* the universal human need to create order out of chaos is not, as it was in *The Cossacks*, the rarefied concern of a young, Russian aristocrat in search of philosophical truth; or of a young Russian writer in search of artistic truth. It is now also the real, practical concern of an Avarian *dzhigit*, whose personal fate, as well as that of his family, hinges on his ability to choose decisively among several equally unattractive options: to stay with the Russians, to return to Shamil, or to go his own way. It is also the practical concern of a Chechen village community that has been destroyed by the Russian raiders: "The old men prayed, and unanimously decided to send envoys to Shamil asking him for help. Then they immediately set to work to restore what had been destroyed." (35, 81; 630) To Olenin the Caucasus represents the possibility of a brave, new world. To Hadji-Murat and to the inhabitants of Makhmet, the Caucasus is a physical home. The old men who set about restoring their village do not aspire, à la Olenin, to create something new and exciting for themselves. They aspire rather to *recreate* an actual world that once existed but which has been destroyed.

Is this not, in some sense, just what Tolstoy himself does in *Hadji-Murat*? In his last artistic creation, the author recreates a world that he himself had once destroyed. He reasserts an artistic past, which he had begun to reject in principle in his *Confession* (1880-82), and which he attacked explicitly and formally in "What is

Art?" (1897). *Hadji-Murat* represents not only "a welcome reassertion of the intuitive morality of the great artist over the systematic morality of the teacher and prophet."[163] It represents also a re-assertion of the organic artist of the earlier novels. In *Hadji-Murat* Tolstoy combines elements from his earlier novelistic creations and the strong moral positions of his later years to produce a work that is both a retrospective and a re-creation, both a revisiting and an expansion, of his artistic and biographical past. In his final work Tolstoy becomes the quintessential searching subject. Like many of his own characters, who always strive to create a unifying order out of the chaos of their experience, Tolstoy organizes the disparate elements of his own personal and artistic biography into a unifying whole.

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[163] In Cain's formulation Tolstoy's essay "What is Art?" may be presumed to be included in the category of systematic moralizing, which Tolstoy is said to have overcome in his final novel. [T.G. S. Cain, *Tolstoy* (London: Paul Elek, 1977), p.187.] Other critics have also remarked on the presence of ostensibly "un-Tolstoyan" ideas and its unexpected appearance at a time when Tolstoy seemed to be exclusively concerned with moralistic writings. David Kvitko, for instance, thinks it "surprising" that "'Hadji-Murat' recalls in style and theme his [Tolstoy's] very first manner of writing; it is a beautiful novel in which Tolstoy forgot almost completely to moralize." [David Kvitko, *A Philosphic Study of Tolstoy* (New York, 1927), p.103.] L.D. Opulskaia has gone so far as to suggest that there is hardly a modicum of religious/ethical thought in the novel. [L.D. Opulskaia, "O iubeleinom sobranii sochinenii Tolstogo," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, LXIX, no.2 (1961), p.522.]

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