

**War, Myth, Memory:**  
**Tolstoy's Diachronic Reception of Homer**

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Signature: ...*Sveta Yefimenko*.....

## Abstract

This thesis examines Lev Tolstoy's diachronic reception of Homeric epic poetry. Situated in the field of classical reception in nineteenth century Russian literature, it argues that Tolstoy's writing initially celebrated the Homeric notion of heroism by adapting it to a nationalistic discourse; then transitioned to problematizing traditional epic heroism in Tolstoy's middle period by means of a historiographical critique; and culminated in a reconciliation with heroic epic in Tolstoy's later work by spiritualizing the category of Homeric poetry. By applying a Nietzschean reading to Tolstoy's published and unpublished material, this study contends that Tolstoy's historiographical approach was essentially nihilistic, a position which prompted Tolstoy's creation of the radical intellectual category *istoriia-iskusstvo*, or history-art. I show how this historical-aesthetic orientation provided a theoretical justification for Tolstoy's deliberate manipulation of Homer's poetry and identity.

An investigation of how Tolstoy appropriated, adapted, and reconfigured elements of Homeric material in his writing, from some of his earliest short stories, 'The Raid' and 'The Woodfelling', to his final significant work of fiction, *Hadji Murat*, sheds light on how Homer's poetry served Tolstoy not only as an aesthetic model, but as an ethical, historiographical, and spiritual reference point. In doing so, this thesis explains Tolstoy's constantly shifting literary and intellectual projects and concerns from the perspective of his commitment to traditional heroic epic, which remained constant throughout his writing career. Finally, I demonstrate how Tolstoy developed, legitimized, and canonized his own version of Russia's cultural identity, collective memory, sociopolitical values, and religious faith, by drawing on Homer's poetry. I will contextualize Tolstoy's reception of Homeric material in relation to the Crimean War, the social responsibility of artistic and historical disciplines, and the empire's expansion into the Caucasus.

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## Editorial Principles

### Translations

For Tolstoy's major works – *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* – this thesis relies on Constance Garnett's translations. For Tolstoy's final novel, *Hadji-Murat*, I use Aylmer and Louise Maude's translation, edited by Jim Manis (2001). For Tolstoy's religious writings, I used Jane Kentish's version (1987). Where my own translation seemed more suitable, I supply my translation. When quoting just a few words, I provide the transliterated original in the body of the text; for longer quotations, I supply the original Cyrillic text in Appendix A. Where possible, I provide a brief explanation for how my translation deviates from that of Garnett, Kentish, or the Maudes. Unless otherwise indicated, all other translations are my own.

### Transliterations

All Greek and Russian terms are transliterated in the body of the text. I follow the Library of Congress system for transliteration of Cyrillic, except in the cases of well-known names, such as Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, or Gogol. Note that the Library of Congress system is not utilized by Garnett and the Maudes, who use conventional English transliteration, writing, for example, 'Bolkonsky' instead of 'Bolkonskii' and 'Hadji Murad' instead of 'Hadji Murat'. Except for well-known names, such as Achilles, Sophocles, or Ithaca, I use the Greek spelling that Richmond Lattimore employs (for example, 'Menelaos' and 'Hektor' instead of the Latinized 'Menelaus' and 'Hector').

### Style

Ninety volumes comprise Tolstoy's collected works; for aesthetic reasons, when referencing volume numbers, this thesis departs from the MHRA style guide, providing the Arabic, rather than the Roman, numeral. Note that the ninety volumes were edited and published out of sequence, thus, for example, the publication of Tolstoy's 'Diaries' ('Dnevnik') is dated 1937 to 1934.

### A Note on Publication Overlap

Parts of Chapter Four of this thesis appear in my chapter 'From Sky to Sea: When Andrei Bolkonskii Voiced Achilles' in the volume *Reading Backwards: An Advance Retrospective on Russian Literature* (2021). I am indebted to the volume's editors, Professors Muireann Maguire and Timothy Langen, whose insight and advice contributed greatly to my essay, and would like to extend my appreciation to the volume's anonymous reviewers.

Sections of Chapter Six appear in my article "Listen Then, Avars, to What I Tell You": The Unification of Chechen and Avar Oral Culture in Tolstoy's *The Cossacks* and *Hadji Murat*, in the special 'Folklore and Protest' issue of *Folklorica: Journal of the Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Folklore Association* (forthcoming 2022). The article benefited greatly from the thoughtful comments of Professor Jeanmarie Rouhier-Willoughby and the anonymous reviewers at *Folklorica*.

## Introduction

### Project Overview

The literature of Greco-Roman antiquity figured substantially in Tolstoy's development as an artist and thinker. Much of Tolstoy's fictional and non-fictional writing drew on the philosophy of Plato and the biography of Socrates, he was an enthusiastic reader of Herodotus in the original Greek, and his didactic non-fiction texts include quotes from Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus. However, Tolstoy's greatest debt is, arguably, to Homer, the poet-singer who has traditionally been credited with composing the ancient Greek epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, in the seventh century BC.

In 1857, a 29-year-old Tolstoy exclaimed in his journal: 'I was reading the Iliad. There it is! A miracle!' ('*Chital Iliadu. Vot ono! Chudo!*').<sup>1</sup> This sense of Homer as miracle-worker never left Tolstoy. In 1891, more than three decades after this eager entry, Tolstoy made a list of writers that had most influenced his career.<sup>2</sup> The list is chronological: between 1848 and 1863, when he produced the novel *The Cossacks* (*Kazaki*, 1863) and began his first acknowledged masterpiece, *War and Peace* (*Voina i Mir*, 1867), Tolstoy named six authors; they included Plato and Homer.<sup>3</sup> Listing the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* side by side, Tolstoy remarks that these poems had a 'great' ('*bol'shoe*')<sup>4</sup> influence on his career. Two decades later, at the conclusion of his life, Tolstoy composed a brief, dialogical sketch in which a 'Realist' and a 'Classicist' engage in debate about the enduring value of the *Iliad*.<sup>5</sup> The former disparages the epic as a mere 'fairy tale' ('*skazka*'). The Classicist

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<sup>1</sup> 'Diaries and notebooks' ('*Dnevnik i zapisnie knizhki*') in *L.N. Tolstoy: Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, 90 vols, ed. by V.G. Chertkov and others (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo 'Khudozhestvennaia Literatura', 1935-1964), vols 46-58, vol 47 (1937), p. 152. In references hereafter, this collection will be abbreviated as *PSS*, followed by volume number and page number.

<sup>2</sup> This reading list was compiled at the request of Russian author and critic Mikhail Lederle (1857-1908).

<sup>3</sup> *PSS* 66, p. 68. The other authors listed are, in order: J.W. von Goethe (1749-1832), Victor Hugo (1802-1885; specifically, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, 1831), the poet Fedor Tiutchev (1803-1873), the poet Aleksei Kol'tsov (1809-1842), and the poet Afanasii Fet (1820-1892). Notice that Plato and Homer stand out for being the only 'authors' on the list who did not compose in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the reference to Plato includes the dialogues, *Phaedrus* and *The Symposium*.

<sup>4</sup> *PSS* 66, p. 68.

<sup>5</sup> *PSS* 37, pp. 336-37. This sketch, titled 'Science' ('*Nauka*') remains unpublished.

agrees that the *Iliad* is a fairy tale, but with a qualification: 'Yes, but there is no other like it in the world' ('*Da, no takaia, kakoi drugoi net v mire*').<sup>6</sup>

Although Tolstoy's references to Homer and the Homeric epics, both in his published and unpublished writing, are frequent and numerous, the three citations above illustrate that, whether as a young, middle-aged, or elderly writer, Tolstoy acknowledged Homer's literary influence with reverence. While he appropriated Homeric material in ways and for purposes that changed dramatically throughout his long career, the sense of reverence remained constant. Near the end of his life, Homer's poems were the *only* literary works that Tolstoy included as examples of 'the highest art' ('*vysshee iskusstvo*')<sup>7</sup> among the world's spiritual productions. In his aesthetic treatise, *What is Art?* (*Chto takoe iskusstvo?*, 1897), Tolstoy described the Homeric epics as having the same cultural, moral, and aesthetic value as the Old Testament, the Vedic hymns, and the Christian gospels.

This thesis examines Tolstoy's diachronic reception of Homeric material. While critics such as Harold Bloom,<sup>8</sup> George Steiner,<sup>9</sup> and Boris Eikhenbaum<sup>10</sup> have observed the connection between Tolstoy and Homer as creators of epic texts, such comments have been general and have focused on style, remarking on formal techniques which Homer and Tolstoy share, such as the use of 'Homeric' epithets and panoramic scope. However, since Tolstoy's writing career spanned six decades, from the middle of the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth centuries, his reception of Homeric epic underwent myriad transformations, both literary and philosophical. This thesis examines these transformations as evidenced in Tolstoy's appropriation, adaptation, and refiguration of Homeric epic elements, and discusses how these elements helped develop and legitimize Tolstoy's historical, philosophical, and religious views. I argue that Homer's poetry served Tolstoy not only, or even primarily, as an aesthetic model, but as a

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<sup>6</sup> PSS 37, pp. 336-37.

<sup>7</sup> PSS 30, p. 109.

<sup>8</sup> Harold Bloom, *Where Shall Wisdom be Found?* (New York, NY: Riverhead Books, 2004), p. 71.

<sup>9</sup> George Steiner, *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky: An Essay in the Old Criticism* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 71.

<sup>10</sup> 'Ocherednie problemy izucheniia L. Tolstogo', in Eikhenbaum B., *O proze: Sbornik statei*, ed. by I. lampol'skii (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1969), pp. 185-200 (pp. 190-91).



historical, historiographical, and spiritual reference point that helped him articulate a uniquely Tolstoyan vision of Russian cultural and religious identity.

To illustrate the changes in Tolstoy's reworking of Homer, I examine Tolstoy's writing chronologically, from early writing that has rarely been addressed by scholars, such as the short story 'The Woodfelling' ('*Rubka lesa*', 1855) and the novella, *Two Hussars* (*Dva gusara*, 1856); to selections from *War and Peace* (*Voina i mir*, 1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1878); to Tolstoy's final novel, *Hadji Murat* (1912). I intend to demonstrate how, and for what reasons, Tolstoy's early writing celebrated the martial virtues of the *Iliad*; how Tolstoy's middle-period writing problematized what Tolstoy considered to be the hero-dominated, Iliadic concept of historiography; and, finally, how Tolstoy's late writing achieved reconciliation with Homeric poetry by means of spiritualizing heroism. The arc of celebration, problematization, and reconciliation follows Tolstoy's own intellectual and religious development as demonstrated in his texts on education, religion, and aesthetics.

### *Literature Review*

To contextualize Tolstoy's engagement with Homer, I have relied on scholarship that addresses classical reception in nineteenth-century Russia, and that focuses on Tolstoy's reception of the classical tradition. The former has been supplied primarily by the pioneering work of Zara Martirosova Torlone, Judith Kalb, and G. S. Knabe, in a field that is still in its early stages. Torlone has recently co-edited a volume on classical reception in Eastern and Central Europe. The volume's editors describe the text as contributing to the 'diversification of the classical tradition' and observe: 'Outside of Central and Eastern Europe, the region's rich and longstanding history of classical receptions is largely unknown'.<sup>11</sup> Judith Kalb authored the Introduction<sup>12</sup> to the text's section on Russia and the chapter, 'Homer

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<sup>11</sup> Zara Martirosova Torlone, Dana Lacours Munteanu, and Dorota Dutsch, 'Introduction' in *A Handbook to Classical Reception in Eastern and Central Europe*, ed. by Zara Martirosova Torlone, Dana Munteanu, and Dorota Dutsch (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), pp. 1-12 (p. 3).

<sup>12</sup> Judith Kalb, 'Classical Reception in Russia: An Introduction', in *A Handbook to Classical Reception*, ed. by Zara Martirosova Torlone, pp. 449-56.

in Russia';<sup>13</sup> both were invaluable resources, providing a historical survey and cultural context for the appropriation of Greek antiquity and Homeric epic in the Russian empire.

Torlone's *Russia and the Classics: Poetry's Foreign Muse* (2009) examines how classical antiquity influenced Russian poetry from the Petrine reforms to the twentieth century; her later text, *Vergil in Russia: National Identity and Classical Reception* (2014), considers more narrowly the reception of Vergil between the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries in Russia. Focusing on the role of Rome in Russia's cultural development, Kalb's *Russia's Rome: Imperial Visions, Messianic Dreams 1890-1940* (2008) investigates how Russian writers of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries deployed the symbolism of ancient Rome to explore the country's national and cultural identity. In Russian, the work of G.S. Knabe, *Russkaia Antichnost'* (*Russian Antiquity*, 1999) was particularly useful for my project. Knabe contextualizes Russia's turn from Roman to Greek cultural sources and analyses the nation's privileging of Homeric epic immediately before and during the Decembrist period, which provides the setting for much of Tolstoy's early- and middle-period writing. Knabe also discusses how the classical tradition was mediated by Russian folklore, which is relevant to my discussion of Tolstoy's association of Homeric epic with traditional folk songs in the Caucasus.

Among Tolstoy scholars, the work of Gary Saul Morson, Donna Orwin, and Jeff Love provided both context and literary critical analyses of Tolstoy's writing. In *Seeing More Wisely: Anna Karenina in Our Time* (2007), for example, Morson's ethically grounded analysis of *Anna Karenina* provides the counter point for my argument in Chapter Five that the novel need not be approached primarily on moral terms, and on why Anna's character can be fruitfully read as an Odyssean trickster. Donna Tussing Orwin's scholarship on Tolstoy has also been significant for this project. Her edited collection of essays, *Anniversary Essays on Tolstoy* (2010), includes Orwin's chapter, 'Leo Tolstoy: pacifist, patriot, and *molodets*', a

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<sup>13</sup> Judith Kalb, 'Homer in Russia', in *A Handbook to Classical Reception*, ed. by Zara Martirosova Torlone, pp. 469-79.

work that contains an excellent English-language explication of *molodechestvo*; I translate this important Russian concept (not unproblematically) as ‘the essence of youthful boldness’. Orwin’s analysis of *molodechestvo* as a cultural and psychological category has helped me formulate Tolstoy’s approach to war-making as a morally ambivalent category. Of equal importance to this project has been the collection of essays edited by Orwin and Rick McPeak, *Tolstoy on War: Narrative Art and Historical Truth in “War and Peace”* (2012). This invaluable text analyses Tolstoy’s treatment of war from various angles, including the historical, historiographical, militaristic, and philosophical.

Jeff Love’s essay in Orwin’s and McPeak’s volume, ‘The Great Man in War and Peace’,<sup>14</sup> with Love’s introduction to Inessa Medzhibovskaya’s volume, *Tolstoy and His Problems: Views from the Twenty-First Century* (2018),<sup>15</sup> provided theoretical reference points for my consideration of Tolstoy’s aesthetic approach to history. Relying on philosophical, rather than literary-critical, tools of investigation, Love argues that, for Tolstoy, the experience of war facilitates existential insight. Love analyses Tolstoy’s brand of nihilism, which aided my own formulation of the notion of historical nihilism which, as I argue in Chapter Three, is inherent in the intellectual category of *istoriia-iskusstvo*, or history-art, that Tolstoy created during his middle and late-middle writing periods.

Among scholars who focus on Tolstoy’s relationship to Homer, I found helpful F.T. Griffiths’ and S.J. Rabinowitz’ volume, *Epic and the Russian Novel: From Gogol to Pasternak* (2011), on how Russian literature appropriated and reworked the epic genre in terms of its own religious commitments. The text contains a chapter on Tolstoy’s reception of Homeric epic structure, as evidenced in the narrative inconsistency the authors find in both *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. Aside from this analysis, there has been no sustained, detailed academic investigation of Tolstoy’s reception of Homer. While, in Chapter Four of this thesis, I respond to

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<sup>14</sup> Jeff Love, ‘The Great Man in War and Peace’, in *Tolstoy on War: Narrative Art and Historical Truth in “War and Peace”*, ed. by Rick McPeak and Donna Tussing Orwin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), pp. 85-97.

<sup>15</sup> Jeff Love, ‘Prologue: Tolstoy’s Nihilism’, in *Tolstoy and His Problems: Views from the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Inessa Medzhibovskaya (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018), pp. 22-38.

and develop the links Griffiths and Rabinowitz find between the protagonist of *War and Peace*, Andrei Bolkonskii, and the Iliadic hero, Achilles, I argue against Griffiths' and Rabinowitz' association of Pierre Bezukhov and *Anna Karenina's* hero, Konstantin Levin, with Odysseus, and justify my position on the grounds that both Tolstoy's protagonists lack what most distinguishes Odysseus: a talent for disguise and deceit.

Texts such as Charles Martindale's *Redeeming the Text: Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception* (1993) and *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (2008,) edited by Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray, have helped me understand how classical reception is a matter of interpretation – 'Meaning is always realized at the point of reception',<sup>16</sup> as Martindale writes – so that what counts as 'classical' is very often ideological. Barbara Graziosi's 2002 text, *Inventing Homer: The Early Reception of Epic*, has inspired my conceptualization of my project. In commenting on classicists' sustained interest in, and disagreements about, the historical Homer, Graziosi observes that debates regarding Homer's poetry and identity also took place in antiquity. However, the key difference between ancient and modern approaches to the question is that the former did not attempt to establish an authoritative position regarding Homer's birthplace, dates of composition, or type of poetry, to the exclusion of all other interpretations. Homer's anonymity, Graziosi argues, is one of the poems' markers, especially for subsequent generations of listeners and readers: '[T]he author Homer is where you establish your own special connection and interpretation. [...] [D]escribing and defining Homer is a powerful means of establishing one's own interpretation of the poems'.<sup>17</sup>

This reader-oriented model of reception has shaped my analysis of Tolstoy's appropriation of Homeric epic. Since I approach Tolstoy's relation to Homer diachronically, and since Tolstoy's views regarding history, ethics, and religion

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<sup>16</sup> Charles Martindale, *Redeeming the Text: Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Barbara Graziosi, *Inventing Homer: The Early Reception of Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 89.

shifted throughout his life, I regard Tolstoy as receiving not one, but many, Homers, whom he defined from multiple platforms of interest. In investigating Tolstoy's relationship to Homer, I have not found one 'true' Homer who influenced Tolstoy. Instead, I have witnessed Tolstoy fashioning his own 'historical' Homers throughout his life, with whom he sometimes agrees and sometimes quarrels. Defining Homer led Tolstoy to his own unique interpretation of the poems, whether literary, historiographical, or spiritual. Graziosi's argument – that identifying the figure of Homer is part of what it means for any artist to engage in reception of Homeric epic, perhaps the most important part – sheds light on why I do not rely exclusively on Tolstoy's published texts, but also look at his non-literary and unpublished material, including obscure articles on education and religion, manuscript drafts, journals, notebooks, and letters.

It is in less public and often unknown spaces that Tolstoy articulates his identification of who Homer was and what Homer meant to him at any given time. To cite a few examples: in 1857, Tolstoy exclaims in a journal that Homer knew the essence of love and compares Homeric epic *morally* (not formally) to the Bible; in an 1862 article, Tolstoy relates his attempts to teach peasant children about Homeric gods; he writes in an 1850s draft for *The Cossacks* that violence followed by feasting is 'Homeric'; he argues in another article that the epics' orality is what makes them a pedagogical model; and he observes in a draft for *War and Peace* that taking pleasure in Homeric poetry requires, like the music of Bach, an aristocratic cultivation. As Tolstoy's Homer varies from being a proto-Christian, to a champion of violent heroes, to an educator of the common people, to an advocate for anti-technological naturalism, to an elite, European-style artist, we see Tolstoy variously and opportunistically re-defining Homer's identity.

Of course, these identities are incommensurable with any historical Homer or with each other, but they *are* commensurable with Tolstoy's theoretical, aesthetic, religious, and literary priorities at any given time. In defining Homer, Tolstoy defined himself. Since I am interested primarily in Tolstoy's conscious, deliberate appropriation of Homeric material, these unpublished (or published and often

neglected by scholars) writings inform my close reading of the Homeric influence that is evident in Tolstoy's published material. To elucidate these connections, this thesis approaches each chapter with the following, interrelated questions:

1. What are the general literary, political, theoretical, or spiritual aims and foci that motivate and situate Tolstoy's reception of Homer's poems at a given time in his writing career, and how does Tolstoy's identification of Homer reflect these aims and foci? I have identified these intentions and preoccupations in Tolstoy's published didactic articles and texts, along with his unpublished journals, notebooks, manuscript drafts, and letters.
2. How does the literary text express these aims and foci, as evidenced in both strong, 'obvious' and subtle, 'weak' resonances, adaptations, and reconfigurations of Homeric material in Tolstoy's stories, novellas, and novels?
3. How does consideration of the resonances, adaptations, and refigurations of Homeric material in Tolstoy's writing inform or alter our reading of each work, and of Tolstoy's literary and intellectual project at the time?

Again, since my focus is Tolstoy's *deliberate* reception of the epics, these questions are guided substantially (though not entirely, as I shall soon discuss) by the tacit understanding that Tolstoy 'knows what he's doing' or 'says what he means'. This method of close reading is situated in an interpretive framework that Paul Ricoeur terms 'the hermeneutics of faith', and which Eve Sedgwick refines in her concept of reparative reading.

In his influential book, *Freud and Philosophy* (1970), Paul Ricoeur outlines two theories of interpretation. The first aims at 'the restoration of meaning' and is underwritten by the belief that the symbol under investigation – in the case of this thesis, Tolstoy's literary text – means what it says it means, and the critic's role is to recover this meaning. Faith, for Ricoeur, guides this endeavour: 'What faith?

No longer, to be sure, the first faith of the simple soul, but rather the second faith of one who has engaged in hermeneutics, faith that has undergone criticism [...]. It is a rational faith, for it interprets, but it is a faith because it seeks, through interpretation, a second naiveté'.<sup>18</sup> This faith involves becoming voluntarily complicit in, or making oneself susceptible to, the text's stated meaning. Ricoeur regards the second 'suspicious' approach to interpretation as exemplified by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Karl Marx (1818-1883), and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), who 'read' symbols mistrustfully, seeking to reveal their concealed, 'true' meaning, which may reside in ideology (for Marx), biology (for Nietzsche), or psychology (for Freud). On this model, interpretation is demystification, and proceeds by means of what Ricoeur terms the 'hermeneutics of suspicion', where the link between 'meaning and consciousness of meaning [...] become[s] doubtful'.<sup>19</sup> For analysis guided by this mode, Ricoeur argues, 'understanding is hermeneutics [...]. [T]o seek meaning is no longer to spell out the consciousness of meaning, but to *decipher its expressions*'.<sup>20</sup> For Ricoeur, this leads invariably to destroying the truth of the text, which is grounded in the 'fable-making function', to set in its place a demystified Truth.

We can helpfully extend Ricoeur's examples to include any method of inquiry which takes for granted that the meaning of a literary text resides in its unspoken, hidden motivations and assumptions. Indeed, Eve Sedgwick remarks that Ricoeur's 'hermeneutics of suspicion' is 'by now nearly synonymous with criticism itself'.<sup>21</sup> In her influential article on what she terms 'paranoid reading' as contrasted with 'reparative reading', Sedgwick argues for a position of generous openness to the text that emphasizes how it can instruct or sustain readers.<sup>22</sup> More recently, Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus have called into question 'symptomatic reading',<sup>23</sup> which assumes that only the 'repressed' meaning of a text is worthy of

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<sup>18</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. by Denis Savage (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, p. 33.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 124.

<sup>22</sup> Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, pp. 150-51.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, 'Surface Reading: An Introduction', *Representations*, 108 (2009), 1-21 (p. 3).

literary-critical inquiry and seeks a master code to its decipherment. As an alternative practice, Best and Marcus advance 'surface reading'. This method takes many forms: one involves treating the text's surface as an 'affective and ethical stance', while another urges considering the surface as 'a practice of critical description'.<sup>24</sup> In each case, the text is approached on its own terms and allowed to speak for itself, as a source rather than an object of knowledge. To pay attention to surface as a practice of critical description is to trust that 'texts can reveal their own truths because texts mediate themselves; what we think theory brings to texts (form, structure, meaning) is already present in them'.<sup>25</sup>

Of course, it is not exclusively, or even primarily, Tolstoy's narrative voice that creates his various Homers; therefore, it is not only Tolstoy's published 'surface' that this thesis examines. The hermeneutics of faith and the associated practices of reparative and surface reading empower me to follow Graziosi's injunction of building Homer's identity for oneself within Tolstoy's creation of, and identification with, his own Homers across the entirety of his oeuvre. This includes his unpublished and non-fictional writing. In practice, this means that, for example, when Tolstoy observes in his journal that *War and Peace* is an instance of 'historical' literature in the same manner that Homer's *Iliad* is 'historical' literature,<sup>26</sup> I avoid the depth model of interpretation and straightforwardly take Tolstoy to mean that he regards *War and Peace* as historical and contiguous with Homeric epic.<sup>27</sup> When this sentiment is reiterated via Tolstoy's confession to the author Maksim Gorky (1868-1936) – in Tolstoy's personal, non-authorial, non-narrative voice – that *War and Peace* is 'like' the *Iliad*,<sup>28</sup> I take Tolstoy to mean that he has

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<sup>24</sup> Best and Marcus, 'Surface Reading', p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> PSS 48, p. 267

<sup>27</sup> This important statement, along with the subsequently cited remark to Gorky, will be explored in much greater detail in the following chapters. They are referenced here only as examples of how this thesis practices restorative, or reparative, reading.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Maksim Gorky, *Reminiscences of Tolstoy, Chekhov and Andreyev*, trans. by Katherine Mansfield, S.S. Koteliansky, and Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth Press, 1948), p. 57.



produced, or thinks he has produced, a work that is similar to the poem Homer had produced, and I critically approach it as such.<sup>29</sup>

With her method, situated in queer theory, Sedgwick writes that a reparative position involves utilizing one's resources to assemble incomplete or dangerous aspects of the world into a coherent alternative: '[A]ssemble or "repair" [...] part-objects into something like a whole – though, I would emphasize, *not necessarily like any preexisting whole*'<sup>30</sup> (italics in original). That Tolstoy's creation of Homer was (probably) not motivated by a sense of personal danger related to gender performance is not important for the applicability to his case of Sedgwick's methodology: 'Once assembled to one's own specifications, the more satisfying object is available both to be identified with and to offer one nourishment and comfort in turn'. In this thesis, a double reparation exists: first, Tolstoy's deployment of literary, theoretical, and historical resources to achieve his unique reading of Homer, leading to his production of, and identification to his own satisfaction with, an assembled 'whole', though not preexisting, Homer who 'performs' Tolstoy's own views. Second, and simultaneous with the first, is my surface reading of Tolstoy's created Homer; of course, this is not a 'real' Homer, but, more modestly (and reparatively), one who Tolstoy believed existed, at least at that moment in his career. This thesis practices reparative, or restorative, reading by approaching Tolstoy's writing in terms of how its Homeric resonances and adaptations enrich, develop, and sometimes alter that writing in generative and surprising ways. In simple terms, I attempt to restore to Tolstoy's texts Homer's identity as Tolstoy designed it.

Of course, we ought not expect consistency in Tolstoy's personal, authorial, and narrative (and draft narrative) voices on Tolstoy's reception of Homeric poetry, and this thesis emphasizes the inconsistency in how Tolstoy read and appropriated

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<sup>29</sup> A suspicious reading of these private statements might, for example, contend that Tolstoy's comparison of his text with the *Iliad* indicates an unspoken need to legitimize his work in the eyes of a competing author (consider, for example, Harold Bloom's famous – and psychoanalytical – notion of how the 'anxiety of influence' motivates writers) or invoke for his work canonical status. While these latter tendencies may be valuable and interesting to examine, they are not consistent with a 'naïve' hermeneutics of faith as applied to Tolstoy's deliberate reception of Homeric material.

<sup>30</sup> Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 128.

Homer's identity and texts, tracing its changes throughout his career. In their typology of surface reading, Best and Marcus include regarding surface as 'the location of patterns that exist within and *across* texts' (italics mine), which proceeds by finding 'what is manifest in multiple texts as cognitively latent but semantically continuous with an individual text's presented meaning'.<sup>31</sup> To that end, my reparative reading moves across Tolstoy's texts and examines semantic continuities. However, this thesis treats Tolstoy's published texts – and, therefore, the narrator's voice(s) – as the definitive 'surface', making use of selections from his journals, letters, and manuscript drafts as supporting rather than primary evidence, and only in those cases where it supports what is articulated in the surface text.<sup>32</sup>

However, as promised above, this thesis deviates from wholly trusting Tolstoy's texts on two occasions and engages in the hermeneutics of suspicion (or bold speculation). In Chapter Three, I argue that Tolstoy deliberately misreads Homer to advance his own version of Homeric historiography. Chapter Five, which is the most experimental chapter of this thesis, builds a case for reading Anna Karenina's character as an Odyssean figure. Both arguments, however, draw on Tolstoy's notebooks, drafts, and journal entries for evidence, which is consistent with reading reparatively and finding patterns across the entirety of Tolstoy's oeuvre. If the creator of the character Anna Karenina would not endorse her resonance with Homer's Odysseus, the voice that narrates *Anna Karenina*, including its manuscript drafts, might. Additionally, since I do not suggest that Tolstoy intended the comparison, whether unconsciously or otherwise, I avoid imputing to the novel hidden or unspoken meanings. Rather, I develop an alternate identity for Anna out of meanings immanent in, and consistent with, the published text. The development of this identity, which takes the novel's surface as its source, can solace and instruct readers of the heroine's tragedy. It is important to reiterate that I make such speculative links only when the published text hints at, implies, or

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<sup>31</sup> Best and Marcus, 'Surface Reading', p. 11.

<sup>32</sup> For example, when Chapter Three relies heavily on an 1870 entry from Tolstoy's unpublished, personal journal to develop its argument, it is supported with material drawn from the 'surface' text of *War and Peace* and Tolstoy's published articles.

otherwise carries them – in other words, when the surface reading and the symptomatic reading, which subscribes to the depth model of truth, cooperate.

### *Chapter Outline*

The first chapter of this thesis will consider epic as a literary category and survey the history of its definition, from Hesiod to Tolstoy. It will offer an argument for Tolstoy's definition of epic, evidenced with remarks in his journals, notebooks, letters, and fiction, and describe how Tolstoy approached Homeric material. In the subsequent chapters, I will examine the theoretical associations between Homer and Tolstoy and show Tolstoy's changing theoretical positions regarding what he considered Homeric throughout the successive stages of his writing career. I will analyse selected works from Tolstoy's early, middle, late middle, and late periods to demonstrate how his writing evolved from the celebration of Homeric material, to its problematization, before, in Tolstoy's final work of fiction, ultimate reconciliation.

Chapter Two surveys Tolstoy's earliest work, from the short story 'The Woodfelling' to his first novel, *The Cossacks*. It argues that Tolstoy links Russian martial values to ancient Greece generally and Homeric epic specifically and shows how this celebrates both Russian identity and the traditionally epic values it displays. My focus is on Homeric martial values as celebrated models for behaviour in a Russian context, Homeric themes of historical regression (theoretical analysis thereof), and the creation of historical memory via the epic genre (stylistic analysis).

In Chapter Three, I will demonstrate how Tolstoy linked his historical fiction to Homeric epic to problematize Homeric epic to advance his unorthodox approach to history. Drawing on Tolstoy's journal entries and passages from *War and Peace*, this chapter will argue that Tolstoy aimed to transcend the contradiction he saw between history and literature by creating a radically new intellectual category which he termed *istoriia-iskusstvo*, or history-art, leading him to a historiographical

method that I term historical nihilism. This chapter will apply the early work of Friedrich Nietzsche, as Nietzsche's analysis of the Homeric Question (and his approach to history) helps to clarify Tolstoy's 'nihilistic' position. This will help deepen and clarify readers' understanding of Tolstoy's approach to history as the creative art of epic.

The fourth chapter includes a textual comparison and close reading of key passages from *War and Peace* and the *Iliad*, discussing the existential implications of war. It aims to demonstrate how Tolstoy models his writing on Homer's and interrogates the ethical validity of the very material he appropriates. Relying on sections from Tolstoy's journals, notebooks, and letters, I will investigate Tolstoy's unique theory of historical writing and how it interrogates Homeric epic without, however, rejecting it. Informed by Nietzsche's metaphysics, this chapter shows how the warlike virtues Tolstoy regards as Homeric are problematized in light of an existential meditation on mortality the form and content of which reworks aspects of the *Iliad*. First, I will show how the character and narrative arc of Andrei Bolkonskii are modelled on those of Homer's Achilles; I will then analyse the two heroes in terms of their display of what is, as I argue, the Nietzschean category of psychological nihilism.

The fifth chapter focuses on selected passages from *Anna Karenina* to investigate the novel's resonances with Homer's *Odyssey*, particularly in its relation to themes of family and home, as contrasted with the militaristic concerns of *War and Peace*. Applying the trickster archetype as elaborated by Lewis Hyde,<sup>33</sup> I will argue that reading Anna Karenina as an Odyssean trickster figure helps readers avoid the extremes of either pitying or condemning her. Finally, in the sixth chapter, I will evaluate Tolstoy's late work *Hadji Murad* as a reconciliation with the naturalistic, militaristic values of traditional heroic epic. I will suggest that what scholars regard as Tolstoy's unexpected 'return' to the heroic categories of his youth in his final novel, ought instead to be approached as spiritualization of the heroic epic

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<sup>33</sup> Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes the World: How Disruptive Imagination Creates Culture* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2017).

category. I show how, in Tolstoy's final novel, natural and warlike Homeric values are refined into a component of religious experience.

## **Historical Overview**

### *Nineteenth Century Classical Reception in Russia*

Tolstoy's appropriation of Homeric material took its cue from Greco-Roman, and specifically Homeric, reception in Russian intellectual culture in the early nineteenth century. It is, therefore, important to situate Tolstoy's reception of Greek literature within the wider history of classical reception in Tsarist culture, some of the cultural and historiographical overtones of which I will consider here. It was not until the decade of 1870 that Tolstoy was able to read Homer in the original Greek; his first, defining encounters with Homeric epic were made possible by means of popular translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. These translations were, from Tolstoy's perspective, published remarkably recently – 1829 in the case of the *Iliad*, and 1849 in the case of the *Odyssey* – and were the result of decades of work by two leading poets, Nikolai Gnedich (1784-1833) and Vasilii Zhukovskii (1783-1852). While they were not the first translators of Homer into Russian, their renderings were definitive and enjoyed popular acclaim. Following the Petrine reforms, the French Revolution, the Napoleonic invasion, the 1821 uprising in Greece, and the Decembrist 1825 uprising on its own soil, Russian intellectual culture underwent significant transformation. The literature of this time reflected a re-evaluation of national identity, and Gnedich's and Zhukovskii's timely interpretations resonated strongly with Russia's development of a national literature and search for a national myth.

Of course, Gnedich and Zhukovskii inherited more than a century of reception of Greco-Roman material in Russian literature. Early eighteenth-century poets such as Konstantin Bat'iushkov (1787-1855), who translated Greek poems into Russian and was influenced by the poets Anacreon (sixth century BC) and Sappho (fl. 600

BC),<sup>34</sup> and Vasilii Trediakovskii (1703-1769), who consciously imitated the odes of Pindar (fifth century BC) (in Trediakovskii's words, he attempted to 'pindarize', 'pindarizovat'<sup>35</sup>), helped set the direction for Russian classical reception. This direction emphasized not only an aesthetic and cultural continuity between Greece, Rome, and Russia, but also a political one. Antioch Kantemir (1708-1744), lauded as the father of Russian poetry, translated into Russian poets like Anacreon and Horace (65-8 BC), and composed verses in support of the administrative policies of Peter I (1672-1725), which aimed at centralizing imperial power.<sup>36</sup> Invoking antiquity helped justify the expansion of the Russian empire, the first Russo-Turkish War, and the annexation of Crimea;<sup>37</sup> the contribution of national literature to nation building in eighteenth-century Russia was underwritten by a perceived affiliation with classical Greece.<sup>38</sup>

Classical reception was complicated by antiquity's arrival in Russia as a unique amalgamation of Greco-Roman cultural output, Western Europe's imprint on classical material, and the cultural tradition of Christianity. Following the Slavs' conversion to Christianity in the tenth century, the introduction into Russia of Byzantine ideology by the Southern Slavs, and the development of the Eastern

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<sup>34</sup> Peter France, 'Vologda to St Petersburg', in *Writings from the Golden Age of Russian Poetry*, by Konstantin Batyushkov, trans. and ed. by Peter France (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), pp. 22-23.

<sup>35</sup> Grigory Starikovskiy, 'Mikhail Lomonosov: the case of the Russian Pindar', *Classical Receptions Journal*, 5 (2013), 268-84 (p. 271). The term 'to pindarize', that is, to write like Pindar, was coined by French poet Pierre de Ronsard (1524-1585).

<sup>36</sup> Frederick L. Kaplan, 'Tatishchev and Kantemir, Two Eighteenth Century Exponents of a Russian Bureaucratic Style of Thought'. *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 13 (1965), 503-20. For example, Kantemir drew strongly on Vergil's glorification of Augustus in the first-century BC epic poem, the *Aeneid*, with his unfinished *Petrída*, begun in 1730. The heroic poem celebrated the final years of Tsar Peter I (1682-1725); its full working title was *Petrída, or a Poetic Depiction of the Death of Peter the Great, Emperor of All Russia (Petrida: ili opisanie stikhotvornoe smerti Petra Velikogo, Imperatora Vserossiiskogo)*. Peter encouraged the association between himself and Augustus, imitating Roman triumphs, casting himself as 'Father of the Fatherland' and 'Imperator', and commissioning the translations of texts such as Aesop's fables and selections from Caesar's *The Gallic Wars* (58-48 BC), along with Guido delle Colonne's (1210-1287) medieval Latin *History of the Destruction of Troy* (thirteenth century).

<sup>37</sup> Kirin, Asen, 'Eastern European Nations, Western Culture, and the Classical Tradition', in *Classics and National Cultures*, ed. Susan Stephens (Oxford and London: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 141-62.

<sup>38</sup> In a similar vein, Mikhail Lomonosov (1711-1765), a court poet and another founder of Russian literature, consciously 'pindarized' when composing his 1739 ode in praise of the Russian Empress: *An Ode in Blessed Memory of Her Majesty the Empress Anna Ioannovna on the Victory Over the Turks and Tatars and the Taking of Khotin in 1739 (Oda blazhennyya pamiati Gosudaryne Imperatritse Anna Ioannovne na pobedu nad Turkami i Tatarami i na vziatie Khotina 1739 goda)*. This work equates Russian military achievements with those of other Western empires: '[A]s he composed and revised the 'Ode on the Taking of Khotin', Lomonosov certainly had in mind both the cultural and political equality with the West'. Starikovskiy, 'Russian Pindar', p. 278.

Orthodox religion, early Tsarist Moscow forged strong cultural, historical, and religious links to Constantinople as a unique Roman-Christian empire that had successfully integrated both Christianity and imperial Rome. When the Byzantine Empire collapsed in 1453, the duchy of Moscow, recently freed from the Mongols, experienced the first stirrings of national consciousness. Moscow now saw itself as the sole supporter of Orthodox Christianity in the world. The grand prince of Moscow, Ivan III (1440-1505), named himself a 'tsar' presumably due to his succession to Constantine XI, a position supported by his marriage to Sophia Palaiologina (1450-1503), the last Byzantine emperor's niece.<sup>39</sup> Due to the Byzantine empire's links to both ancient Greece and Rome, Russia's own historical and religious connection to Byzantium suggested a relationship between Russia and classical antiquity that had originated in ancient Greece and continued through Rome and Byzantium to culminate in the Russian empire.

For these reasons, as early as the sixteenth century, Russia laid claim to being the inheritor of Greco-Roman antiquity, having designated Moscow as the 'Third Rome'. Building on the chronology established by Metropolitan Zosimus (d. 1494), in which the Russian empire was the historical successor to Byzantium and, therefore, to Rome, what came to be known as the 'Third Rome doctrine' was developed by Philotheus (1465-1542), a monk in Pskov. Consider the oft-quoted passage, from a 1523 epistle from Philotheus to Tsar Vasillii III: '[A]ll Christian empires have come to an end and are gathered together in the singular empire of our sovereign in accordance with the books of prophecy, and this is the Russian empire: because two Romes have fallen, and a third stands, and a fourth there shall not be'.<sup>40</sup> In the 1700s, this Byzantine link supplied evidence for Russia's

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<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of the origins of the view that Ivan III was regarded – and whether he regarded himself – as the legitimate inheritor of the Byzantine Empire, see George P. Majeska, 'The Moscow Coronation of 1498 Reconsidered', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 3 (1978), 353-61. See also Ihor Ševčenko, 'Byzantium and the Eastern Slavs After 1453', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 2 (1978), 5-25.

<sup>40</sup> Marshall Poe, 'Moscow, the Third Rome: The Origins and Transformations of a "Pivotal Moment,"' *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 49 (2001), pp. 412-29, (p. 4). Significantly, the original letter terms Vasillii's empire 'the Roman empire', not 'the Russian empire'. Later copyists substituted 'Russian empire' for Philotheus' original 'Roman empire', because, as Poe argues, they missed the nuance of the monk's metaphor, even while grasping the overall meaning. Judith Kalb observes: 'Generations of Russians would posit and claim Rome's imperial, Western heritage or Byzantium's Eastern, religious stature, at times, as in the Third Rome doctrine, asserting a unique ability to synthesize and surpass the two. In so doing, they

connection to ancient Greece, as well, with Catherine II proclaiming the Byzantine Empire the heir to ancient Greek culture.<sup>41</sup> Russian poetry glorified the relation between Russia and ancient Greece, helping to validate the first Turkish War, fought between 1768 and 1774, on the grounds that the Russian empire had a moral duty to defend its ancestral country from Ottoman rule.<sup>42</sup> The 1783 annexation of Crimea invoked the same Greece-Russia association: Crimea had once been the location of Chersonesus, a Greek trading colony the origins of which date back to the sixth century BC.

Significantly, the thirteenth-century Slavonic summary of the Old Testament, the *Tolkovaia Paleia* (the *Interpreted Testament*) argued that the Russian language was divinely revealed by the Greek tongue.<sup>43</sup> This is consistent with arguments advanced in the tenth century by the Bulgarian monk Chernorizets Khrabr (ninth to tenth centuries). Khrabr's literary text, *On the Letters* (*O pis'menekh'*, ninth to tenth centuries), theorized that the first Slavic alphabet (the Glagolitic alphabet) was superior to that of the Greeks because the latter was pagan; this argument enjoyed wide popularity in medieval Russia<sup>44</sup> and a version of it was revived in the eighteenth century. In addition to the nation-building project following the Petrine reforms, eighteenth-century literature was responding to the new literary syntax that was replacing the church-based Old Slavonic. This was evident in the poetry of Bat'iushkov and Mikhail Lomonosov (1711-1765), along with that of Antioch Kantemir (1708-1744), Aleksandr Sumarokov (1717-1777), and Gavriila Derzhavin (1743-1816). For Lomonosov, the Greek literary tradition was perfected on Russian soil, having reached its apotheosis in the 'eloquence' (*'krasnorechie'*) of the Orthodox church, rendering Greek the optimal linguistic model for Russia.<sup>45</sup> The first Russian writers turned to antiquity to bolster the political and spiritual

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would construct a complex myth of a Russian [...] Rome'. Judith Kalb, *Russia's Rome: Imperial Visions, Messianic Dreams, 1890-1940* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), p. 6.

<sup>41</sup> Kirin, 'Eastern European Nations', p. 144.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Iurii M. Lotman, Lidiia Ia. Ginsburg, and Boris A. Uspenskii, *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History*, trans. by Boris Gasparov, ed. by Alexander D. Nakhimosvsky and Alice Stone Nakhimosvsky (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 35.

<sup>44</sup> Lotman, *Semiotics*, p. 35.

<sup>45</sup> G.S. Knabe, *Russian Antiquity: The Content, Role, and Fate of Russian Culture's Inheritance of Antiquity: Programme for a lecture course* (*Ruskaia Antichnost: Soderzhanie, rol', i sud'ba antichnogo nasledia v kul'ture Rossii: Programma-konspekt lektsionnogo kursa*) (Moscow: RGGU, 1999), p. 114.



legitimacy, as well as the literary power, of their work. Classical reception in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was inseparable from the effort to articulate the nation's identity, demonstrate the value of its cultural achievements, and place its literature in the context of the European tradition.

By the nineteenth century, educated Russians were long familiar with the Greco-Roman literary tradition they encountered in classical gymnasia established by Catherine II (1729-1796), and were aware of the archaeological excavations of Chersonesus and the discovery of Scythian burial mounds in the Caucasus.<sup>46</sup> The Decembrist era featured an emphatically heroic strain in the literary interpretation of antiquity; as evidenced in the writing of poets like Aleksei Merzliakov (1778-1830), Vladimir Raevskii (1795-1872), Kondratii Ryleev (1795-1826), and Anton Del'vig (1798-1831), 'antiquity and nationalism merged',<sup>47</sup> a trend which inaugurated a contrast between Greek and Roman inheritance. The absence of a centralized government and a nationalistic mythology were perceived by Decembrist sympathisers as typical of Greek, not Roman, social structures, and Vergil's *Aeneid* came to be regarded as inferior to the Homeric poems.<sup>48</sup> The influential literary critic Vissarion Belinskii (1810-1848), admired by liberal-minded intellectuals, observed in 1835 that 'the *Iliad* was created by the people, it was a reflection of the life of the Greeks, it was a sacred book for them [...]. But tell me, for heaven's sake, what are these *Aeneids* [...]?'<sup>49</sup> Greek literature generally and Homeric poetry specifically appealed to liberal political thinkers who had nationalistic aims, while Roman culture was associated with tyranny and empire.<sup>50</sup>

Although translators like Kir'iak Kondratovich (1703-1790), Ermil Kostrov (1755-1796), and Pëtr Ekimov (1735-1795) had tried their hand at rendering into Russian the *Iliad* in its entirety,<sup>51</sup> it was the arrival of Gnedich's *Iliad* that emblemized the political atmosphere of the Decembrist era: 'Gnedich's translation was not only a translation, but a manifestation of a particular direction of Russian literature of that

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<sup>46</sup> Judith Kalb, 'Classical Reception in Russia: An Introduction', p. 454.

<sup>47</sup> Knabe, *Russian Antiquity*, p. 131.

<sup>48</sup> Robert Maguire, *Exploring Gogol* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 300.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Knabe, *Russian Antiquity*, p. 135. For some writers, such as Pushkin, the seemingly 'freer' Roman Republic was also a lens through which to critique Russia's autocracy; see Kalb, *Russia's Rome*, p. 12.

<sup>51</sup> For a discussion of the history of the reception of Homer in Russia, see Kalb, 'Homer in Russia', pp. 469-79.

time overall [...]. [T]he preference for Greek antiquity, the perception of Greek inheritance as based upon the notion of the *narod*, its proximity to the Russian cultural tradition, characterizes the rhetoric of this position'.<sup>52</sup> Zhukovskii's 1849 translation of the *Odyssey* met with approval from writers and thinkers who sought a 'native' literary history and culture. Sergei Uvarov (1786-1855), the Minister of Public Education in the 1830s and 1840s, argued for the development of a truly 'national literature'<sup>53</sup> ('*slovesnost' narodnaia*') that accounted for the unique features of the Russian language. Zhukovskii was sensitive to the paradoxical demand for both a national literature and a resistance to foreign influence;<sup>54</sup> his translation attempted 'to inscribe a distinct identity while maintaining an intimate relationship with the foreign'.<sup>55</sup> Russia's reaction to Zhukovskii's translation was political: Il'ia Vinitskii argues that the poem was interpreted by Russia's intellectual elite as an 'iconic expression of the idea of return (of the poet, of the soul, of poetry, of the nation) to pure sources, to the spiritual motherland [...] associated with Russia'.<sup>56</sup> The translations and interpretations of Homer's poems were thus adapted to suit the ideological needs of the nineteenth century.

The reception of Homer was not confined, however, to its literary and political uses in Russia; the question of the historical Homer was gaining momentum throughout the nineteenth century. The field of classical philology in Europe changed dramatically in the decades after the 1795 publication of Friedrich Wolf's (1759-1824) *Prolegomena to Homer*. This paradigm-shifting work inaugurated the modern phase of Homeric criticism by undermining the traditional account of a

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<sup>52</sup> Knabe, *Russian Antiquity*, p. 137. See Appendix A.1 for original. Consistent with this view, Pushkin, closely associated with the Decembrists, famously praised Gnedich's translation of the *Iliad* in a poem titled, *To Gnedich (Gnedichu, 1832)*: 'For a long while you alone conversed with Homer' ('*S Gomerom dolgo ti besedoval odin*'), A.S. Pushkin: *Sobranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh*, ed. by D.D. Blago and others, Vol. 2 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1959), p. 353.

<sup>53</sup> David L. Cooper, 'Vasilii Zhukovskii as a Translator and the Protean Russian Nation', *The Russian Review*, 66 (2007), 185-203, (p. 195).

<sup>54</sup> The latter position was exemplified by public figures such as Uvarov and Belinskii, and perhaps most extremely by the 'mad' philosopher Pëtr Chaadaev (1794-1856), who argued that the Russians are essentially distinct from Greco-Roman antiquity (see Torlone, *Vergil in Russia*, p. 131). This 'Russia first' view was reiterated in the Slavophile arguments of thinkers such as Aleksey Khomiakov (1804-1860) and Ivan Kireevskii (1806-1856).

<sup>55</sup> Cooper, 'Zhukovskii', p. 186.

<sup>56</sup> Il'ia Vinitskii, *Teodisseia Zhukovskogo: Gomerovskii epos i revolutsiia 1848-1849 godov*, *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 2 (2003). My translation.

single poet who produced the epics. Instead, Wolf argued that the epics were a collection of multiple contributors over time. As a result, Homeric scholarship was divided among those who called themselves the Analysts, supporting Wolf's view that the epics consisted of many voices and accretions, and those who called themselves the Unitarians, who argued for a single poet. Among Russian thinkers, the debate intensified in 1857, when the philologist Pavel Leont'ev (1822-1874) translated into Russian George Grote's influential *A History of Greece*,<sup>57</sup> which supported the Wolfian view.<sup>58</sup>

Around the mid-nineteenth century, leading Russian writers and thinkers took up the argument in favour of an identifiable, historical Homer: Zhukovskii disparaged Wolf for transforming a great master into a useless idea;<sup>59</sup> the classical scholar F.F. Sokolov published a work titled *The Homeric Question (Gomerovskii Vopros*, 1868) that defended a historical Homer;<sup>60</sup> in 1844, Belinskii argued against the Wolfian view in one of a series of articles on Pushkin;<sup>61</sup> Gogol' wrote sarcastically in 1846 how 'foolish' ('*glupy*') were the 'clever Germans' ('*nemetskie umniki*') to 'imagine' ('*vydumat'*') that Homeric epic was the result of 'national songs and rhapsodies' ('*narodnye pesni i rapsodii*').<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile, Tolstoy's (approximately) contemporary writers were responding to and celebrating Greek culture generally, and Homeric epic specifically, in their own ways. Dostoevsky linked Homer to Jesus Christ<sup>63</sup> and Turgenev argued for the importance of 'accepting the influence' of Greece and Rome on Russian literature.<sup>64</sup> Gogol, who had praised Zhukovskii's translation of the *Odyssey* as faithful to the original's

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<sup>57</sup> *Istoria Grecheskoi Literaturi : Epos. Lirika. Drama klassicheskogo perioda (A History of Greek Literature : Epic, Lyric, Drama of the Classical Period)*, ed. by S.I. Sobolevskii and others (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1946), p. 152.

<sup>58</sup> George Grote, *A History of Greece: From the Earliest Period to the Close of the Generation Contemporary with Alexander the Great*, Vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1862), p. 38.

<sup>59</sup> *Perepiska V.A. Zhukovskogo i A.P. Elaginoi: 1813-1852 (The Correspondence of V.A. Zhukovskii and A.P. Elagina: 1813-1852)*, ed. by E.M. Zhiliakovaia (Moscow: Znack, 2009), p. 525.

<sup>60</sup> *Istoria Grecheskoi Literaturi*, p. 152.

<sup>61</sup> Vissarion Belinskii, 'Stat'ia Sed'maia: Poemi: "Tsigani", "Poltava", "Graf Nulin"' in V.G. Belinskii. *Sobranie Sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, ed. F.M. Golovenchenko, vol 3 (Moscow: OGIZ, GIKHL, 1948).

<sup>62</sup> 'Ob Odisee, perevodimoi Zhukovskim: (Pis'mo k N.M.A...vu)', in Gogol' N.V. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 14 vols, vol 8, pp. 236-44 (p. 241).

<sup>63</sup> Kalb, 'Homer in Russia', p. 473.

<sup>64</sup> Chauncey E. Finch, 'Turgenev as a Student of the Classics', *The Classical Journal*, 49 (1953), 117-22 (p. 117).

moral ethos,<sup>65</sup> attempted to craft his own heroic epic in his novel *Taras Bulba*<sup>66</sup> (1835) and used Homeric similes in *Dead Souls*<sup>67</sup> (*Mertvie Dushi*, 1842). He, too, argued that Vergilian prose reflected an imperialist ideology that had no place in Russian culture, for which the Homeric oral tradition was more appropriate.<sup>68</sup>

In this dynamic atmosphere of ideologically and aesthetically motivated interpretations of Homeric epic, Tolstoy first encountered Gnedich's and Zhukovskii's landmark translations during the 1830s and 1840s. Gnedich's *Iliad* had a substantial impact on Tolstoy's first novel, *The Cossacks*, for which Tolstoy began to develop ideas as early as 1852. As I intend to show in subsequent chapters, while Tolstoy did not explicitly argue for or against a historical Homer, he was very likely aware of the debates between the Analysts and the Unitarians, with his own approach to the epics indicating tacit support for the Wolfian view. As evidenced in Tolstoy's correspondence and journal entries, he regularly referenced and discussed Greek literature and, specifically, Homer's poems, with his friends, family, and colleagues, in an atmosphere where such discussions were both commonplace and expected.

### **Tolstoy's Homer: A Timeline**

By the time *The Cossacks* was published in 1863, Tolstoy's writing ceased to praise violence in a straightforward manner. In the decades of 1880 and 1890, Tolstoy's ethics rejected all forms of violence altogether. However, in his final major work of fiction, *Hadji Murad*, the delight in successful battle that once characterized Tolstoy's early productions is re-affirmed. Tolstoy's vision for ethical conduct in general, and its relationship to violence particularly, altered considerably throughout his career. We will see how violence, for Tolstoy, especially group violence, came to be indicative of paganism and a sort of 'natural' and 'primitive' existence that is historically overcome by means of religious education. In his early

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<sup>65</sup> Kalb, 'Homer in Russia', p. 472.

<sup>66</sup> Carl R. Proffer, 'Gogol's *Taras Bulba* and the *Iliad*', *Comparative Literature*, 17 (1965), 142-50.

<sup>67</sup> Torlone, *Vergil in Russia*, p. 300.

<sup>68</sup> Torlone, *Vergil in Russia*, p. 299. See also Robert Maguire, *Exploring Gogol*, pp. 299-300.

fiction, journals, and letters, Tolstoy praised paganism and the naturalness with which he linked it. Subsequently, he began to relate paganism to the irreligious immorality he came to abhor. As I intend to show, Tolstoy eventually associated the Greeks with flawed ethics. All the Greeks, that is, except for Homer. We will examine passages from Tolstoy's published fiction, private journals, and didactic articles in which Tolstoy categorizes Homer alongside modern, European writers, artists, and philosophers and we will see how, strikingly, Tolstoy eventually comes to describe the Greeks as morally undeveloped while simultaneously correlating Homeric epic with the Bible.

Tolstoy's relationship to Homer – whether he sees Homeric material as a literary model, an instance of philosophical or historiographical error, a deeply personal manifesto for his own life, or a spiritually motivated teaching – is linked to his perspective on nature, violence, and ethics at any given time. Tolstoy's position on violence is perpetually shifting – even within the same work. Griffiths and Rabinowitz, writing about Tolstoy's championing of peaceful domesticity at the end of *War and Peace* while simultaneously describing a young man's fantasies of battle, conclude that '[W]hat will ultimately grow out of the hard-won achievement of peace and family happiness will be a renewed intoxication with war and a rebirth of heroic solipsism. The essence of Tolstoyan visions seems to be the revisions. The man cannot make up his mind'.<sup>69</sup> As an epic writer, Tolstoy does not have to make up his mind. If Tolstoy's ethical vision changes, his writing maintains coherence in its relation to epic material as a continuous reference point. In more than half a century, from his 1852 journal entry in which he reports Russia's need for conquest, to the 1906 novel *Hadji Murad*, Tolstoy's writing begins and ends with an epic description of war, along with an affirmation of its associated values, though for different reasons.

When Tolstoy's view of violence changed, his war narratives also changed. Since these narratives are all grounded in Russian history and function as repositories of collective memory, Tolstoy's changing relationship to violence has the effect of

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<sup>69</sup> F.T. Griffiths and S.J. Rabinowitz, 'Tolstoy and Homer', *Comparative Literature*, 35 (1983), 97-125, (p. 148).

changing what is worth remembering by the nation at any given time. If *Sevastopol' in December* glorifies Russian military conquest, *Hadji Murat* deplors it. Whether conquest ought to be recollected in pride or in shame depends on which book is being read.<sup>70</sup> I suggest that this is because, in Tolstoy's late work, violence is no longer natural, intuitive, and inevitable. Rather, violence becomes an ethical failing that must be interrogated and condemned. The fifty-year span between the Homeric *Sevastopol' in December* and the Homeric *Hadji Murat* saw Tolstoy struggling with the legitimacy of violence. After *War and Peace*, violence ceased to be natural for Tolstoy because nature ceased to be good. Orwin has argued that after the 1860s, nature became a source of immorality for Tolstoy: 'As Tolstoy perceived a split between nature and moral goodness, he turned from nature to culture – and peasant culture became his new standard of morality'.<sup>71</sup>

Perhaps paradoxically, Tolstoy managed to find Homer in peasant culture, too, associating folk singing and Biblical teaching specifically with Homeric epic. We shall see how Tolstoy constantly adapted what the poetry of Homer 'meant' to suit his own ethical metamorphoses throughout his career as though he were determined to ensure that, regardless of which values it endorses, his writing must be an inheritor of Homeric epic. In articulating his shifting attitudes to violence, goodness, and history, Tolstoy emphasized or greatly de-emphasized different aspects of Homeric material at different times. In the following timeline, it is my intention to relate, as succinctly as possible, the arc of Tolstoy's appropriation of Homer. I will present and briefly analyse selected passages from Tolstoy's journals, notebooks, letters, articles, and fiction from a historical perspective. Since the major works – *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina*, *The Cossacks*, the *Sevastopol' Sketches*, and *Hadji Murat* – will be examined in detail in subsequent chapters, they will be mentioned only in passing here. Instead, I will focus on shorter or lesser-known works to shed light on the chronology of Tolstoy's relationship to Homeric epic. Wherever it is relevant, I will contextualize Tolstoy's

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Donna Tussing Orwin, *Tolstoy's Art and Thought, 1847-1880* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 145.

attitude to Homer at any given time with his overall attitude to other Greek material in which he was interested.

I. 1850s: *Early Period and the Militaristic, Primitive Homer*

In this section, I will discuss the following texts: *Childhood* (*Detstvo*, 1852); *Sevastopol' in May* (*Sevastopol' v mae mesiatse*, 1855); *Sevastopol' in December* (*Sevastopol' v dekabre mesiatse*, 1855); and 'Lucerne' (*Liutsern'*, 1857).

In chapter twenty-three of his 1852 novella *Childhood*, Tolstoy relates an exuberant scene between two children. The first-person narrator and a family friend are laughing hysterically and uncontrollably: the laughter is described as 'Homeric', ('*gomericheskii*').<sup>72</sup> Immediately after the scene, the narrator learns that his beloved grandmother has died. In Russia, the phrase *gomericheskii khokhot*, Homeric laughter, appeared in the early nineteenth century following Gnedich's translation of the *Iliad*,<sup>73</sup> and referred to the laughter of the gods. Since the laughter of immortal gods is, from the perspective of mortals, tragic, it is likely that Tolstoy is using the phrase (which he did not use again in any other writing) ironically, contrasting the self-indulgence of childhood with the grim reality of death.

Lamenting the vanity of battle, the 1854 story *Sevastopol' in May* refers to Homer and Shakespeare as examples of writers who emphasized love, glory, and suffering rather than the literature of vanity that is so typical of 'our' ('*nashe*') epoch. For Tolstoy at this time, violence itself is unproblematic, unless it is caused by the wrong reasons, and Homeric violence is, for him, motivated by the right reasons – glory, love, and suffering. *Sevastopol' in December* compares the defenders of Sevastopol' favourably to the heroes of ancient Greece, praising the military commander Vladimir Kornilov (1806-1854) for being a legendary hero 'worthy of ancient Greece'<sup>74</sup> ('*dostoinyi drevnii Gretsii*'). This demonstrates that

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<sup>72</sup> PSS 2, p. 65.

<sup>73</sup> E.V. Kolodochkina, 'Onomasticheskie frazeologizmi vo francuzkom i russkom iazikakh' in *Kul'turnie Sloi vo Frazeologizmakh i v Diskursivnikh Praktikakh*, ed. by V.N. Telia (Moscow: Iaziki Slavianskoi Kul'turi, 2004), pp. 168-73, p. 169.

<sup>74</sup> PSS 4, p. 16.

Tolstoy's early work approved of what he regarded as Homeric heroic axiology<sup>75</sup> and overtly referenced Homeric material.

The short story 'Lucerne' features a wandering rhapsode who performs ancient Tyrolean songs – there is an implicit association with Homer, whom the literary tradition conjures as a nomadic bard. The narrative establishes the relation of nature to morality that characterized Tolstoy's early writing: 'Civilization – bliss; barbarism – evil; freedom – bliss; unfreedom – evil. This imagined knowledge destroys the instinctive, blissful, primitive needs of goodness in human nature'.<sup>76</sup> In 1857, what Tolstoy regards as primitive and even barbaric is, for him, superior to the ethical system of dichotomous good and evil perpetuated by civilized society. In spring of that year, Tolstoy is toying with the idea of anarchy in his notebook and reaches the abrupt conclusion that 'The future of Russia is Cossackdom – freedom, equality and mandatory military service for everyone'.<sup>77</sup>

The ethical distinction between civilization and nature led Tolstoy to associate the Cossack way of life as more authentically 'Russian', supported by his view that a natural warrior society is more capable of acting justly. The warlike Cossacks can serve as a model for Russia, but only insofar that violence is pursued for the noble goal of national heroism, as exemplified in the second to last paragraph of *Sevastopol' in December*: 'You will clearly understand and imagine for yourself those people [...] as heroes who in a difficult time did not fall but gained in courage and with pleasure prepared for death, not for the city, but for the motherland. For a long while this *epic of Sevastopol'* will leave its traces in Russia, when the hero was the Russian *narod...*' (italics mine).<sup>78</sup> Tolstoy's characterization of the Siege of Sevastopol' as the 'epic of Sevastopol'" that was fought by 'heroes' encourages comparison to the epic siege of Troy. Since neither the Greeks or the Trojans are distinguished in the *Iliad* as ethically superior, Russia's national spirit can be associated favourably with either side, whether Russia wins or loses the war.

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<sup>75</sup> For a discussion of how the virtue of courage, and the associated pursuit of honour, informs the heroic character in Homer's epics, see Stuart Lawrence, 'Ancient Ethics, the Heroic Code, and the Morality of Sophocles' Ajax', *Greece & Rome*, 52 (2005), 18-33. See also pages 93-94 of this thesis for a description of the nine honour-linked virtues evident in Homeric heroes as identified by Paul Merchant.

<sup>76</sup> PSS 5, p. 25. See Appendix A.2 for original.

<sup>77</sup> PSS 47, p. 204. See Appendix A.3 for original.

<sup>78</sup> PSS 4, p. 16. See Appendix A.4 for original.



In an October 1857 letter to literary critic Vasilii Botkin (1812-1869) and fellow writer Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883), Tolstoy reports that the writer Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin (1826-1889) had failed to persuade him that ‘in all of Europe, nobody will reread Homer and Goethe anymore’, remarking that this is unthinkable.<sup>79</sup> Tolstoy regards Homer as essential reading for all Europe, a conclusion due almost entirely to Botkin’s influence. Botkin had a substantial impact on Tolstoy’s literary career; Tolstoy frequently sent Botkin his writing to benefit from the older author’s critique. Botkin’s own attitude to Homer is evident in an 1843 article on the status of German literature, where he describes Homer as a ‘real poet’: ‘If only Homer were to appear now, we would have a most superior epic genre’.<sup>80</sup> Tolstoy’s 1857 letter to Botkin and Turgenev, cited above, sheds light on how crucial Botkin’s passing suggestion, in a letter to Tolstoy written in June of the same year, had been for Tolstoy’s literary development. In advice that doubtless reflected his own admiration for Homer, Botkin had insisted that Tolstoy re-read Homer’s epics, praising the *Iliad* to Tolstoy as a ‘balsam to cure modernity’<sup>81</sup> (*‘bal’zam ot sovremennost’*). Apparently interested in such a tonic, Tolstoy followed Botkin’s advice and re-read the *Iliad* that same year, with enormous consequences for his career.

In a July 1857 journal entry, Tolstoy jots down an idea for what will eventually become his first novel, *The Cossacks*: ‘[A] Cossack – wild, fresh, like a Biblical legend’.<sup>82</sup> Here, we see the primitivity championed in *Lucerne* related to both legendary writing and Christianity. In August of that year, a month after following Botkin’s advice, Tolstoy remarks that the *Iliad* is influencing the development of *The Cossacks*, stating for the first time Homer’s direct influence on his work: ‘I was reading the *Iliad*. There it is! A miracle! [...] I have to rework the entire Caucasus story’.<sup>83</sup> Two days later, he reiterates the sentiment: ‘The Iliad is forcing me to

<sup>79</sup> PSS 60, p. 234. See Appendix A.5 for original.

<sup>80</sup> ‘*Germanskaia Literatura v 1843 Godu*’ in Botkin V.P. *Literaturnaia kritika. Publitsistika. Pis’ma*. ed. by B.F. Egorov (Russia, Biblioteka russkoi kritiki, 1984) <[http://az.lib.ru/b/botkin\\_w\\_p/text\\_1843\\_germanskaya\\_literatura.shtml](http://az.lib.ru/b/botkin_w_p/text_1843_germanskaya_literatura.shtml)> [accessed 1 January 2018] See Appendix A.6 for original.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in PSS 60, p. 22.

<sup>82</sup> PSS 47, p. 146. See Appendix A.7 for original.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152. See Appendix A.8 for original

completely rethink [The Cossacks]'.<sup>84</sup> Two weeks later, he is still reading the poem: 'I was reading Homer. Charming'.<sup>85</sup> These entries demonstrate that the 'wild' and 'primitive' world of the Cossacks is linked to Homeric epic in Tolstoy's mind, and that *The Cossacks* is beholden to the *Iliad* both stylistically and ethically no less than is *War and Peace*. From the remarks made in *Lucerne* disparaging civilization and privileging 'barbarism', Tolstoy's responsiveness to Botkin's advice of reading the *Iliad* to 'cure modernity', Tolstoy's correlation of primitivity with legends and Christianity, and the association of Cossacks with the *Iliad*, I conclude that, in 1857, Tolstoy linked Homeric epic with the unmediated and 'uncivilized' moral goodness he located in nature.

The first decade of Tolstoy's career develops a constellation of concepts, both concrete and abstract, around the notion of 'epic'; they include historical events and people such as battles, Greek heroes, and Cossacks, legendary narratives of historical events and people, memories of historical events and people, the goodness of nature, primitivity, morality, and Homeric poetry as both literary and ethical influence.

## II. 1860s: Early Middle Period and the Progressive Homer

In this section, I will discuss the following texts: 'The School at *lasnaia Poliana* in November and December' ('*lasnopolianskaia shkola za noiabr' I dekabr' mesiatsy*', 1861), 'Progress and the Identification of Education' ('*Progress i opredelenie obrazovaniia*', 1863), and *War and Peace* (*Voina i Mir*, 1869).

In the years before he undertook continuous work on *War and Peace*, Tolstoy became interested in pedagogical questions and published a series of articles on the subject. In 1860, he founded a school for peasant children on his estate. In an 1862 article, *The School at lasnaia Poliana in November and December*, Tolstoy relates the nature of his pedagogical project and how he tried to read the *Iliad* to his students, noting the necessity of 'translating' Gnedich's translation into ordinary

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 152. See Appendix A.9 for original.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 153. See Appendix A.10 for original.

Russian.<sup>86</sup> The children could not understand how Apollo flew from a mountain without injuring himself, and Tolstoy endeavoured to explain the supernatural character of Greek gods which, Tolstoy claims, the children could not understand, either. This educational venture illustrates that Tolstoy was putting into practice his earlier argument that knowledge of Homer is essential to a proper education – even when it necessitates teaching polytheistic concepts to Christian children.

In the 1862 article *Progress and the Identification of Education*, Tolstoy argues against historicism by using the *Iliad* as an example. Investigating whether, when evaluating an artwork, it ought to be approached as separable from the historical moment that produced it, or identified primarily in terms of its historical context, Tolstoy contrasts valuing the *Iliad* as ‘the grandest epic composition’<sup>87</sup> (*‘velichaishee epicheskoe proizvedenie’*) with viewing it as simply a historical instance; it is obvious that Tolstoy takes the ‘side’ of the former. In setting the *Iliad* outside the tide of history, Tolstoy also reiterates the association he developed in the previous decade between Homer and Biblical texts: ‘I ask the reader to note that Homer, Socrates, Aristotle, German fairy tales and songs, Russian epic, and finally the Bible and the gospel did not need the printing press to remain eternal’.<sup>88</sup> The constellation of meanings established in the 1850s now includes other ancient Greek figures linked to folk and oral narratives of multiple countries.

In this decade, Tolstoy’s attitude to Russian exceptionalism has changed in emphasis but not in intensity, from the glory of military conquest to a secular and political revolution of ideas. Continuing to find superior ethics among the ‘primitive’ Cossacks, Tolstoy again makes the case in his notebook that Russia’s identity is resonant with the Cossack way of life because the Cossacks lack the concept of private property. He writes in 1865: ‘All over the world, Russia’s national task consists of bringing into the world the idea of a social structure without private property [...]. This truth is not a dream – it is fact – represented in peasant communes and *Cossack* communes [...]. This idea has a future’<sup>89</sup> (italics in original). In this decade, the warlike Cossack communities were associated with

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<sup>86</sup> PSS 8, p. 59.

<sup>87</sup> PSS 8, p. 326.

<sup>88</sup> PSS 8, p. 342. See Appendix A.11 for original.

<sup>89</sup> PSS 48, p. 85. See Appendix A.12 for original.

Russian peasants in Tolstoy's view, while de-civilization remained an ethical ideal and part of Russia's 'national task'. This observation is found among brief jottings and extracts for *War and Peace*; as Tolstoy worked on the novel, thoughts of Russian national identity and its political system were clearly on his mind.

The correlation between Cossackdom and Homeric epic remained, as evident from Tolstoy's argument in *Progress and the Identification of Education* (followed immediately with a reference to Homeric art) that ancient Greece was more politically just than contemporary society:

Have the most conscientious political actors, believing in the progress of equality and freedom, really not been persuaded [...] that in ancient Greece and Rome there was more freedom and equality than there is in the new England with its Chinese and Indian wars, in the new France [...] the new America with its extremely cruel war for the right to slavery? [...] [B]elievers in the progress of art, have they not been persuaded that in our time there are no Phidiases, Raphaels, Homers?<sup>90</sup>

Ancient Greek culture and Cossack society are, for Tolstoy, still examples of a 'balsam for modernity' in their ethical orientation and are now identified with Russia's sociopolitical responsibility on a world stage. In spring of 1870, Tolstoy yet again identified Russia's past with that of the Cossacks in an astonishing observation: 'All of Russian history has been made by the Cossacks. No wonder the Europeans call us Cossacks. The *narod* desires to be Cossack'.<sup>91</sup> At this time, Homer maintains his aesthetic supremacy in Tolstoy's eyes and is linked with the Renaissance artist Raphael along with the ancient Greek sculptor Phidias. This association is related to a remark Tolstoy makes in a draft for *War and Peace*, arguing that true grace is reflected 'in Homer, Bach, and Raphael'.<sup>92</sup>

The attitude to Homer that Tolstoy conveys in the early 1860s is one of admiration for the ancient poet as artist. However, there is another component in Tolstoy's reception of Homer at this date: the concept of a natural, 'uncivilized' existence as

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<sup>90</sup> PSS 8, pp. 334-35. See Appendix A.13 for original.

<sup>91</sup> PSS 48, p. 123. See Appendix A.15 for original.

<sup>92</sup> PSS 13, p. 239.

socially just is part of the constellation of meanings in which Homeric epic has a defining role. That *War and Peace*, a work indebted to Homer in terms of its narrative techniques, themes, and values, was completed during this decade, is significant, as is the note Tolstoy made in his journal in 1863, which we encountered above: 'The epic manner is becoming the only natural one for me'.<sup>93</sup> The novel will be discussed in detail in chapters three and four; for now, it is sufficient to observe that in the second half of the decade, Tolstoy felt confident enough in his own epic prowess to problematize his Homeric inheritance from a historiographical perspective, while simultaneously privileging it from an aesthetic perspective. Put differently, Tolstoy sought to distinguish his own epic voice by distancing himself from Homer intellectually, while legitimizing his writing by remaining loyal to Homer's formal and axiological qualities.

### III. 1870s: Middle Period, 'Sick with the Greeks' and the Bashkir Homer

In this section, I will discuss the following texts: Tolstoy's personal correspondence and *Anna Karenina* (1878).

In the 1870s, Tolstoy's admiration for ancient Greece comes into question as he begins to point out what distinguishes the Russian historical moment from Greek antiquity, rather than what unites the two. After reading Aristophanes' play *Wealth* (*Ploutos*, 408 BC) in early 1870, Tolstoy retorts in his journal that the idea of poverty as natural is 'very well for a fifth-century Greek, but for us [...] [it] does not make sense'.<sup>94</sup> After noting this contrast, Tolstoy condemns borrowing ancient Greek art forms: 'And we [...] try to imitate Greek artistic methods!'.<sup>95</sup> He adds also a perplexing analogy: 'The admiration of Europeans for Greek poetry is similar to the admiration of an intelligent schismatic for a word from a senseless schismatic song, to admiration for the Apocalypse. Simple-mindedness'.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> PSS 48, p. 48. See Appendix A.14 for original.

<sup>94</sup> PSS 48, pp. 111-12. See Appendix A.16 for original.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. See Appendix A.17 for original.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. See Appendix A.18 for original.

The salient question is whether Tolstoy's sudden dismissal of ancient Greek art forms, made on seemingly ethical grounds, applies to Homer. At the end of 1870, Tolstoy writes to Prince Sergei Urusov (1827-1897), a famous chess player whom he befriended during the Crimean War, that he is occupied with learning Greek, has already begun to read Xenophon, and expects to be reading Homer in a month.<sup>97</sup> If Tolstoy no longer approves of Greek poetry but nevertheless wishes to learn Greek, it is presumably to read ancient Greek texts that are not poetic. Xenophon and Plato fit the description, but Homer is incontrovertibly a poet. In early 1871, Tolstoy writes to the poet Afanasii Fet describing his ecstasy on reading Homer in the original Greek. The letter provides key evidence of not only how Tolstoy identified Homer in the 1870s, but also of his attitude to the popular and canonical translators of Homer, such as Zhukovskii and the German poet Johann Heinrich Voss (1751-1826):<sup>98</sup>

Only now I can judge. Homer is only sullied by our translations, borrowed from the German example. It's a vulgar but involuntary comparison – boiled and distilled warm water or water from a spring that makes your teeth ache, with radiance and sunlight and even with splinters and specks which make it even cleaner and fresher. All these Vosses and Zhukovskiis sing in such a treacly-emotional, throaty, and insinuating voice, but that devil sings and roars with all his lungs, and it never enters his head that somebody will ever listen to him.<sup>99</sup>

It is evident that, for Tolstoy, what remains praiseworthy in Homeric poetry is partly its 'splinters and specks' (*shchepki i sorinki*) – in other words, its 'primitive' lack of polish. This is because, as Tolstoy explains, 'that devil' (*tot chërt*) Homer was not motivated by the admiration of others, so expressed himself with unreflective passion, alternately singing and screaming whatever he felt. It is significant that Tolstoy seems to be deliberately ignoring the tradition of Greek poetical

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<sup>97</sup> PSS 61, p. 245.

<sup>98</sup> Notice that Tolstoy contrasted not only the popular Russian, but also the German, translations of Homer with the original Homeric Greek poems, which adds perspective to his view that the original version is superior.

<sup>99</sup> PSS 61, pp. 247-48. See Appendix A.19 for original.

performance as *agōn* (described, for example, in Hesiod's *Works and Days*; Tolstoy was familiar with Hesiod<sup>100</sup>) yet was obviously aware that Homer was not a writer, but a performer. Tolstoy concludes the letter to Fet thus: '[W]ithout knowledge of Greek, there is no education'.<sup>101</sup> We see that in 1870, Homer remains for Tolstoy both a great artist and essential to education not despite but precisely because of his allegedly unmediated, passionate primitivity. Nevertheless, why Homer escapes the condemnation incurred by other Greek poets is not altogether clear; I suggest that it has to do with Homer's supposedly 'primitive' naturalness.

The 1870s are distinguished by the completion of *Anna Karenina*, the central theme of which, as Tolstoy told his wife, is 'the idea of the family'<sup>102</sup> ('*mysl' semeinaia*'). What is significant about Tolstoy's reception of Homer throughout this decade is its ethical and personal nature.<sup>103</sup> While *Anna Karenina* seemingly critiques unrestrained natural instinct, the letters Tolstoy wrote during visits throughout the 1870s to the Samara steppe display an exuberant attitude to nature. He lived, hunted, and studied Greek among the Bashkir people, writing to his wife in 1871:

I feel myself approaching a Scythian state [...]. There is much that is new and interesting: the Bashkirs, who give the sense of Herodotus, and the Russian peasants, and the villages, particularly beautiful due to their simplicity and the kindness of the people [...]. [...] A *muzhik* told me recently that we eat grass like horses. [...] I wake at 6 [...] then read a little, walk

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<sup>100</sup> See his reference to the 'subject matter' of Hesiod in *What is Art?*, *PSS* 30, pp. 152-53.

<sup>101</sup> *PSS* 61, p. 248.

<sup>102</sup> S.A. Tolstaia, *Dnevniki v dvukh tomakh*, Vol. 1, 1862-1900 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1978), p. 502.

<sup>103</sup> Donna Orwin has argued that the decade was characterized by Tolstoy's moving away from nature as ethical model, and that the middle-aged author showed himself to be critical of vitality in *Anna Karenina*: 'Tolstoy no longer felt free to celebrate the idyllic and natural sentiment of [a literary character's] existence in the garden'. Orwin, *Art and Thought*, p. 160.

across the steppe in only my shirt, drink more koumiss, eat a piece of roast mutton, and either go hunting or go riding.<sup>104</sup>

In many ways, this passage recollects the youthful author's experiences among the Cossacks; a life of roast meat, hunting, and riding is unmistakably Homeric. That Tolstoy himself is making the comparison between the Bashkirs and the ancient Greeks is evident in that he terms his emotional state 'Scythian' and writes that the Bashkir people 'give a sense of Herodotus' ('*Gerodotom pakhnet'*), whom Tolstoy was reading in the original Greek. Here, Tolstoy is again comparing 'uncivilized' societies with antiquity. He writes to Fet: 'The region here is beautiful, by its age it is just emerging from virginity'.<sup>105</sup> In the same letter, Tolstoy reports, 'I'm also reading Herodotus, who with detail and great accuracy describes the very *galactophagi*, Scythians, among whom I live'.<sup>106</sup> I suggest that Tolstoy read the ancient Greek historian as a 'guide' to nineteenth-century Bashkir people. Curiously, the reference Tolstoy makes to *galactophagi* – milk eaters – appears in Book Thirteen of the *Iliad*, as Zeus looks over the Trojan armies. *Galaktophagi* is a Homeric term for the Scythians which, by this point, Tolstoy has encountered in the poem in its original, Homeric Greek.

I argue that part of what fascinated Tolstoy about the Bashkirs and inspired his efforts to live among them is that he thought of them as, in a literal sense, Homeric people. He does not describe the Turkic-speaking, Muslim Bashkirs as the *descendants* of Scythians – if, indeed, such a relation means anything – but as the actual people described by ancient authors. In feeling himself 'approaching a Scythian state', Tolstoy is effectively stating that he is becoming Homeric. Sofia Tolstaia had insisted on her husband visiting Samara partly because she believed

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<sup>104</sup> PSS 88, 182. See Appendix A.3 for original. Note that Tolstoy happily compares himself to a horse, a comparison he makes during those times when he accomplishes little literary work (see, for example, PSS 61, p. 236), remarking that such work is 'harmful' – after all, 'primitive' people do not write. This may provide another clue for why Homer is not dismissed along with the other Greek poets: according to literary tradition, Homer was illiterate. Illiteracy is a quality typical of the figures we are meant to admire in Tolstoy's novels (*Eroshka*, *Platon Karataev*, *Hadji Murad*), and may help explain the writing guilt from which Tolstoy suffered in this decade. If Homer's epics did not require the printing press, as Tolstoy argued in the 1860s, then neither shall Tolstoy.

<sup>105</sup> PSS 61, p. 256. See Appendix A.22 for original.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* See Appendix A.23 for original.



that his Greek studies were causing him to forsake life altogether.<sup>107</sup> The obsessive nature of Tolstoy's interest in ancient Greece is evident in a letter Tolstoy sent to Fet in February, 1871: 'I live entirely in Athens. At night in my dreams I speak Greek'.<sup>108</sup> It seems that both Fet and Urusov shared Tolstoy's concerns that Tolstoy's Greek studies have become dangerously unhealthy: 'Your friends Fet and Urusov are both certain that you are sick with the *Greeks*, and I agree with them'<sup>109</sup> (italics in original).

Tolstoy's projection of antiquity onto the Bashkirs led to a peculiar, if not altogether astonishing, experiment: in 1875, Tolstoy organized a horse racing competition in the Samara province. It was attended by several thousand Bashkirs, Kirghiz people, Ural Cossacks, and Russian peasants from nearby villages. Tolstoy's son recalls that his father prepared prizes for the winners (a rifle, a silk robe, a silver watch);<sup>110</sup> that the two days prior to the competition were filled with feasting (the champions consumed fifteen sheep, one horse, and one English colt); that each evening the men gathered for a fighting competition; and a traditional throat singer regaled the competitors. This was not an event that the local population typically organized – Tolstoy arranged this spectacle entirely himself. It is undeniable that this series of events recalls vividly the sporting contests of ancient Greece, complete with prizes of silver, silk, and weaponry.<sup>111</sup> After this experience, Tolstoy writes to Fet:

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<sup>107</sup> Tolstoy scolds her husband in a letter in summer of 1871: 'If you are working on the Greeks, drop them. Probably this affects you more than anything. Drop it, please [...] these efforts are harmful to you' PSS 83, p. 177. She writes again a few weeks later: 'If you are still brooding over the Greeks, your health will not improve. They brought this sorrow on you and indifference to real life. No wonder it is a dead language, it brings a human soul to a dead state. Don't you think that I don't know why these languages are called dead, but I imbue that with another meaning'. PSS 83, p. 180. See Appendix A.24 for original.

<sup>108</sup> PSS 61, p. 249. See Appendix A.25 for original.

<sup>109</sup> PSS 83, p. 197. See Appendix A.26 for original.

<sup>110</sup> I.L. Tolstoy, *Moi vospominaniia* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1969), pp. 83-89.

<sup>111</sup> For example, the funeral games arranged by Achilles to honor Patroclus in Book 23 of the *Iliad* include contests of chariot racing, wrestling, and boxing, with prizes such as silver bowls, cauldrons, and spears; in another example, the celebration in honour of Odysseus in Book 8 of the *Odyssey* features racing, wrestling, boxing, feasting on meat, and singing performances by the bard. It is important to add that Tolstoy's involvement in the Samara province was not entirely 'bread and circuses' and expressed his desire to be a good landlord. Tolstoy was deeply motivated to help ease the suffering of the local population following a regional famine in 1873. See, for example, his 1873 letter of appeal for aid for the Samara populace, published in the Moscow newspaper, *Moskovskie vedomosti*, and the Saint Petersburg newspapers, *Novosti* and *S. Peterburgskie vedomosti*: PSS 62, pp. 35-42.

Why fate brought me to there (to Samara), I don't know; but I do know that I listened to speeches in the English parliament (after all, this is considered very important), and it seemed boring and meaningless, but what I find there – flies, uncleanliness, muzhiks, Bashkirs, and I, with strained respect, with fear, am listening, am watching, and am feeling that all of it is very important.<sup>112</sup>

The contrast between British parliament and the Bashkirs is not incidental. As we saw above, Tolstoy wrote in his 1862 pedagogical article that England, along with other European countries, is unjust and unfree in comparison to ancient Greece. If the British parliament and everything it represents is less 'important' ('*vazhno*') than the preoccupations of the Bashkirs for Tolstoy, it is because the culture of the Samara province, which Tolstoy regards as contiguous with antiquity, is ethically and socio-politically superior. In the 1870s, Tolstoy's reception of Homer became tangible and personal; the concerns of the literary and 'civilized' world had become unimportant afterthoughts for Tolstoy while we can say with little exaggeration that he was attempting to live 'naturally' and perhaps even epically.

#### IV. 1880s: Late Middle Period and the Christian Homer

In this section, I will discuss the following texts: 'Walk in the Light While There Is Light' (*Khodite v svete poka est' svet*, mid-1880s), 'What I Believe' ('*V chem moia vera?*', 1884), *The Greek Teacher Socrates* (*Grecheskii uchitel' Sokrat*, 1885), 'To Whom Do We Belong?' ('*Ch'i my?*', 1887), *The Kreutzer Sonata* (*Kreĭtserova sonata*, 1889), 'On the Relations Between the Sexes' (*Ob otnosheniakh mezhdou polami*, 1890), and *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (*Tsarstvo Bozhie vnutri nas*, 1894).

In the 1880s, Tolstoy's knowledge of Greek was no longer utilized for reading Homer, Xenophon, and Herodotus, but was applied to translating the gospels, signalling Tolstoy's shift toward religiosity. The ethical superiority and sociopolitical justice of ancient Greek culture that Tolstoy had championed in his pedagogical

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<sup>112</sup> PSS 62, p. 199. See Appendix A.27 for original.

articles two decades prior he now re-interpreted as precursors of Christian values. Advising an acquaintance on how best to teach history in 1886, Tolstoy writes: 'Roman and especially Greek history can be used as an illustration of the genesis of evil and its struggle against truth'.<sup>113</sup> This perspective is consistent with an 1885 text that Tolstoy co-authored with educator and political activist, Aleksandra Kalmykova (1850-1926), *The Greek Teacher Socrates*, in which a retroactively Christianized Socrates laments that Greece is a sinful empire, characterized by lust for wealth and violence.<sup>114</sup> By the 1880s, Tolstoy was interpreting the *Iliad* as a text that promoted Christian values. Absorbed wholly in the salvation of his own soul and the propagation of Christianity in Russia, Tolstoy turned to Homeric epic to support his views.

Tolstoy worked for several years in the mid-1880s on a novella, *Walk In the Light While There Is Light*, about early Christianity in ancient Rome. Discussing marriage, the protagonist separates marriage into two categories, pagan and Christian: the former seeks personal satisfaction, while the purpose of Christian marriage is to accomplish God's will. Asked by his former schoolmate how one can disobey God's will in relation to marriage, the protagonist replies:

'I may have forgotten the *Iliad*, which we both read and studied, but you, who live among sages and poets, cannot forget it. What is the *Iliad*? It is a novel about disobeying God's will in relation to marriage. Menelaos, and Paris, and Helen, and Achilles, and Agamemnon, and Chryseis – this is all a description of those terrible disasters that flow onto people and are now occurring because of this disobedience'.<sup>115</sup>

This unusual reading of the *Iliad* supports an ethical distinction between paganism and Christianity, underwritten by a distinction between 'merely' aesthetic and ethical values. These are distinctions to which Tolstoy frequently refers in this decade. The 1884 religious article *What I Believe* critiques pagans who love their

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<sup>113</sup> PSS 63, p. 390. See Appendix A.28 for original.

<sup>114</sup> PSS 25, pp. 429-461. For a translation of and commentary on this work, see Muireann Maguire, 'Tolstoy and the Greek Teachers: The Presocratics and Socrates in Tolstoy's Prose and Educational Writings', *Tolstoy Studies Journal*, 27 (2015), 17-30.

<sup>115</sup> PSS 26, p. 269. See Appendix A.29 for original.

brothers but not their enemies<sup>116</sup> and in 1887, in *To Whom Do We Belong?*, Tolstoy asks: ‘Why do you teach your children pagan wisdom when you are a Christian[?]’<sup>117</sup> The views expressed in *Walk in the Light* about pagan love are repeated in a draft epilogue to *The Kreutzer Sonata*<sup>118</sup> and Tolstoy writes in *On the Relations Between The Sexes* that an American pamphlet dedicated to his views on chastity has, despite its merits, a ‘pagan, Platonic worldview’<sup>119</sup> (*‘iazycheskoe, Platonovskoe mirosozertsanie’*). If the central moral lesson of the *Iliad* is non-pagan, then the *Iliad* not only legitimizes Tolstoy’s views on marriage, but excuses Homer from the charge of paganism.

At the end of the decade, in November 1890, Tolstoy writes in his notebook that he is reading Homer to his daughters.<sup>120</sup> A few days later, he reports that he is feeling tense, and is spending his days in writing and prayer, specifying that it is the *Odyssey* that he is reading to the girls.<sup>121</sup> A few days later, he confesses in a letter to his aunt: ‘I am like a wound-up clock – I rise, walk, write, walk again, read the *Iliad* silently and aloud. The only difference is that I write a lot and willingly’.<sup>122</sup> Here, the reference to reading the *Iliad* has a meditative, even pious, quality to it. In 1890, while he read the *Odyssey* aloud to his children and the *Iliad* both silently and aloud to himself, Tolstoy was writing *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, which also emphasizes the separation between pagan and Christian values. For Tolstoy, Homer is, as ever, inextricably linked to ethical thought, now inspiring and legitimizing Tolstoy’s religious writing as he had once inspired and legitimized the heroism in *The Cossacks* and *War and Peace*.

Tolstoy argued in *To Whom Do We Belong?* against teaching pagan virtues, yet taught Homer’s war epic to peasant children on his estate and now read the *Odyssey* to his own children. It must be acceptable to teach Homeric epic because, for Tolstoy, Homer somehow avoided the harmful ramifications of pagan Greek wisdom. If the entirety of the *Iliad* is a critique of pagan love, and if it issues

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<sup>116</sup> PSS 63, p. 363.

<sup>117</sup> 90, p. 129. See Appendix A.30 for original.

<sup>118</sup> PSS 27, p. 409.

<sup>119</sup> PSS 27, p. 287.

<sup>120</sup> PSS 51, p. 106.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>122</sup> PSS 84, p. 68. See Appendix A.31 for original.

from the same moral view as *The Kreutzer Sonata*, taking up an identical stance in regard to relations between the sexes, it must be because, for Tolstoy, the *Iliad* does not function as a pagan text. Homer has again escaped the condemnation levelled at other ancient Greeks – in the 1870s, it was by reason of his artistry and *narodnost'*, and in the 1890s, it is by reason of his alleged piety.

In the 1890s, Tolstoy interprets Homer to accommodate his religious worldview and the constellation of meanings associated with epic acquires a Christian cast. Seemingly no longer concerned with Russia's military history, Tolstoy is interested in the nation's spiritual state. In some sense, this is the logical conclusion of Tolstoy's lifelong association of Homeric epic with moral goodness, nature, and Biblical texts. In the 1850s, Tolstoy had been praising those military men who, like ancient Greek heroes, conquer and triumph at all costs. More than thirty years later, the narrative of violence has been turned on its head – Iliadic violence is no longer a glorification of conquest, but a moral lesson. Epic is, at this stage in Tolstoy's career, necessarily religious.

#### V. 1890s and 1900s: Late Period and *The Accessible Homer*

In this section, I will discuss the following texts: 'Non-Activity' ('*Nedelanie*', 1893), 'Patriotism or Peace' ('*Patriotizm ili mir*', 1896), *What is Art?* ('*Chto takoe iskusstvo?*', 1897), 'What Is Religion and What Does Its Essence Consist Of?' ('*Chto takoe religija i v chem sushchnost' ee?*', 1901), 'On Shakespeare and on Drama' ('*O Shékspire i o drame*', 1906), and *Hadji Murat* (1917).

In his 1893 article 'Non-Activity', Tolstoy explains why the brutality of paganism was not obvious to people in antiquity: they were unfamiliar with Christian teaching. The article uses the same language to characterize pagan life as the language used in *Walk in the Light While There is Light* to describe the outcome of pagan love as it is presented in the *Iliad*: 'The suffering of people, flowing from a false understanding of life'.<sup>123</sup> As the ethical opposite of Christianity, for Tolstoy, paganism continues to characterize people, nations, and ideas that do not abide by

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<sup>123</sup> PSS 29, p. 198. See Appendix A.32 for original.

religious principles. In the 1896 article *Patriotism or Peace*, Tolstoy argues that patriotic violence can be justified only from a 'pagan, crude, patriotic point of view' ('*iazycheskoi, gruboi, patrioticheskoi tochkoj zreniia*') that is '1800 years out of date'<sup>124</sup> ('*otstavshei na 1800 let*').

From these references, we see that, in the 1890s, Tolstoy has concluded that patriotic violence is perpetrated by a reactionary, 'pagan' ethics. Of course, this critique condemns morally much of Tolstoy's earliest writing, a result to which the aging author was famously indifferent. With the tract on aesthetics, *What is Art?*, begun in 1897, it becomes clear why Tolstoy came to distance himself not only from his own past 'paganistic' writing but from all Greek poetry except Homer's. In this work, Tolstoy argues that the ancient Greeks did not separate goodness from beauty because 'the Greeks themselves were so little developed morally';<sup>125</sup> as examples of these ethically 'undeveloped' artists Tolstoy cites the tragedians Sophocles, Euripedes, Aeschylus, and 'especially Aristophanes', calling them 'crude, wild, and frequently incomprehensible to us'.<sup>126</sup>

However, Tolstoy allows that the ancient Greeks also produced work that flowed from a religious consciousness: such were the epics of Homer.<sup>127</sup> The ancient poet is referenced as an example multiple times in the tract. For Tolstoy, Homeric epic was 'true art' because it conveyed religious feeling to the 'masses of working people'<sup>128</sup> ('*massy rabochego naroda*') and was understood by them, just as all true art 'has always been equally accessible for the powerful and wealthy as well as the oppressed and poor'.<sup>129</sup> Indeed, in one of the drafts for *What is Art?*, Tolstoy identifies Homeric epic specifically as that of the ordinary people: 'the poetry of the *narod* – Homer' ('*poeziia narodnaia – Homer*'<sup>130</sup>).

Tolstoy's controversial 1906 polemic against Shakespeare, 'On Shakespeare and On Drama', features the most complete of Tolstoy's reflections on Homeric poetry:

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<sup>124</sup> PSS 90, p. 52.

<sup>125</sup> PSS 30, p. 76. See Appendix A.33 for original.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p 125. See Appendix A.34 for original.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 258.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. See Appendix A.35 for original.

<sup>130</sup> PSS 30, 346.

No matter how far from us Homer is, without the slightest effort we are transported into that life which he describes. And we are transported, significantly, because no matter how foreign to us the events Homer describes are, he believes in that which he says, and seriously says that which he says, and so never exaggerates and the feeling of measure never leaves him. From this emerges not only the surprisingly clear, living, and beautiful characters of Achilles, Hektor, Priam, Odysseus, and the eternally endearing farewell scenes of Hektor, the ambassadorship of Priam, the return of Odysseus, and others; all of the *Iliad* and especially the *Odyssey* is so natural and close to us, as though we ourselves have lived and live among gods and heroes.<sup>131</sup>

Two elements stand out in this glowing assessment, one formal and the other normative, that is, it includes both an evaluation of Homeric poetry as an art form and as a representation of ethical behaviour. First, in evaluating Homer's aesthetic style, Tolstoy praises the ancient poet for writing 'seriously' ('*ser'ëžno*') in a manner that has a sense of 'measure' ('*chuvstvo mery*')—this solemnity enables the poems to transport audiences into specific settings. Second, Tolstoy's ethical assessment of Homeric poetry is evidenced in the scenes he selects to demonstrate Homer's poetic excellence: Hektor's parting from his wife and son, Priam's plea to Achilles, and the return of Odysseus to Ithaca. These scenes, despite their tension, do not take place on the battlefield. They are exclusively moments of peace, reconciliation, or familial love; at this time, Tolstoy is focused on these very themes in both literature and life. It is surprising, however, that there is no mention of religion. Instead, Tolstoy is praising Homer's ability to transport audiences into a polytheistic, hero-worshipping world of warfare that celebrates wealth, power, and sexuality. It seems that the religious feeling Tolstoy located in Homeric epic in the 1880s provided a justification for separating Homer from the vice for which Tolstoy has condemned the rest of pagan antiquity.

The *Iliad* is suffused with violence, and its moments of peace are rare and brief compared to the action sequences of arming, combat, being wounded, and

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<sup>131</sup> PSS 35, p. 253. See Appendix A.36 for original.

returning to battle. Tolstoy chooses to ignore this inconvenience in his article on Shakespeare. Instead, he focuses on the *Iliad's* accessibility in terms of form, and its 'endearing' ('*umiliaiushchikh*') scenes of peace in terms of content. While the importance Tolstoy attributes to Homer's accessibility demonstrates a continued concern with egalitarianism – both the powerful and the oppressed, Tolstoy argues, can readily comprehend Homer – what characterizes Tolstoy's reception of Homer at the turn of the century is related less to social justice or even specifically Christian religion, and more to the spirituality associated with universal brotherhood. We are very far away now from Homeric epic as essentially historical – Homeric epic, for Tolstoy, has become essentially spiritual. By this time, Tolstoy has united the religious convictions of various cultures into a single theme of a relationship with the universal.

The article *What is Religion and In What Does its Essence Consist?*, which Tolstoy began in 1901, explains that the relationship between particular and universal is true for the Greeks, the Jews, the Hindus, and the Buddhists because 'any religion is the establishment of a human's relation to eternal existence, of which he feels himself a part and from which he derives guidance for his activity'.<sup>132</sup> The goal of art, for Tolstoy, is to represent this relation: 'In all cultures those feelings were valued which the artist experienced while contemplating his relationship to the endless world; in poetry, such were Homer, the Hebrew prophets, the Vedas, and others'.<sup>133</sup> The association Tolstoy makes between Homeric epic and religion has come to include all the sacred texts of the world's spiritual traditions. In rejecting paganism, Tolstoy rejected not nature, but the inability to recognize the relation of the individual to the universal.

Tolstoy writes in his journal sometime in 1897, the year he began work on his aesthetic tract: 'The only difference created by the Christian worldview is that it gave a value to Greek irreligious art', adding a few lines later: 'To separate the sensual from the spiritual – that is the task'.<sup>134</sup> The sensual – that which is natural, primordial, and immanent – is what Tolstoy celebrated in Homeric epic in his early

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<sup>132</sup> PSS 35, 162. See Appendix A.37 for original.

<sup>133</sup> PSS 30, 340. See Appendix A.38 for original.

<sup>134</sup> PSS 53, pp. 314-15. See Appendix A.39 for original.



writing. In the novel *Hadji Murat*, begun in 1904, arguably the most Homeric of Tolstoy's works, rather than conjure instances of commensurability between his own views and the values expressed in Homer's poems, as he had done in his articles on education and aesthetics and in *Walk in the Light While There is Light*, Tolstoy created the type of work that he regards as characterizing Homeric poetry. In his final novel, Tolstoy combined into one work the constellation of meanings that he had variously attributed to Homer and which he used in his own writing throughout the years – nature, historical events, historical memory, legend, Homeric epithets, war narrative, heroism, ethics, illiteracy, primitivity, accessibility, *narodnost'* – and added a spiritual dimension that makes the immanence of nature transcendent. Tolstoy's secular and religious concerns were, I suggest, ultimately reconciled in his spiritualization of the epic mode.

Consistent with this process of spiritualization of epic heroic qualities, in the last years of his life, Tolstoy located in Russia a vitalistic and 'primitive' national spirit that is not only superior to European decadence but is also associated with the 'uncivilized' culture of the ancients. He writes in his journal in 1906:

We often look at the ancients as if they were children. But we are children before the ancients, before their deep, serious, unsullied understanding of life [...]. If the Russian *narod* are uncivilized barbarians, then we have a future. Western people are civilized barbarians, and they have nothing to wait for. For us to imitate Western *narody* is akin to a healthy, working, unspoiled youngster to be envious of a balding, young, Parisian rich kid sitting in his hotel. Ah, que je m'embête! Not to envy or imitate, but to pity.<sup>135</sup>

This passage, in its mixture of nationalism, populism, and patriotism, could have been written by Tolstoy in 1857. It brings Tolstoy's attitude very close to the arguments he was making on behalf of Russia's 'national task' in the 1850s and echoes his praise of the 'virginal' land of the Bashkirs in the 1870s. However, I suggest that it is a mistake to read this as a return to the militaristic values of

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<sup>135</sup> PSS 55, p. 233. See Appendix A.40 for original.

Tolstoy's youth. Tolstoy would rather see a pagan Russia than a Russia suffering from European nihilism because, as he specifies, the former would imply that the nation still 'has a future'. As we have seen, for Tolstoy, paganism is a historical state of moral ignorance; thus, Russia's lack of civilization means that the nation has a chance for spiritual development. To articulate and validate a Russian spirit that is unspoiled by European values, Tolstoy associates the nation with a 'primitive' antiquity. It is very likely that Tolstoy is thinking of Homer in this passage, and that he regards Russia as an 'uncivilized' child who still has much to learn from her mentor. Tolstoy's early work had anticipated the link between 'primitive' cultures and the Russian spirit in narratives set during the Crimean and Caucasian war; it is to these early war narratives that we turn in the first chapter of this thesis.

## Chapter One

### National Heroism

'Few are the children who turn out to be equals of their fathers, and the greater number are worse; few are better than their father is'.

(Hom. *Od.* 2.276-77)<sup>136</sup>

As an emerging writer in his early twenties, Tolstoy was deeply concerned with Russia's military past and national identity. This concern lasted throughout his life and work. While attempting to articulate his own version of Russian history and national identity in his fiction, nonfiction, and personal journals and notebooks, Tolstoy relied more on the epic genre, particularly Homeric epic, than on historical facts. In some instances, those facts were recast or altogether altered to reflect Tolstoy's view of what Russian history ought to have been, since, as I will show in this chapter, he was acutely aware that historical narratives can alter how a nation recollects its past. Since much of Tolstoy's early fiction was drawn from, and reimagined aspects of, his experiences in the Caucasian and Crimean wars, it was often concerned with historical questions, especially as they relate to the Russian national character. This chapter investigates Tolstoy's treatment of Russian military heroism in his early work as an adaptation of Homeric epic heroism, and its refiguration of the Homeric theme of historical regression within a specifically Russian context.

The first part of this chapter will show how Tolstoy addressed the discrepancy between the past and how it is remembered, and how he sought to re-shape Russia's collective memory by means of his own historical narratives. Concurrently, this chapter will consider how Tolstoy's writing was deliberately modelled on and legitimized by Homeric epic for the purpose of historical reconstruction and subsequent passage into collective memory. While keeping in mind that Tolstoy's reception of Homer was not monolithic and varied considerably, even dramatically, throughout the six decades of his writing career, we will see that

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<sup>136</sup> Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by Richard Lattimore (New York: Harper Collins, 2009).

in his earliest work, Tolstoy related Homeric epic to ethics. After characterizing the qualities of and values inhering in the epic genre, I shall turn to selected passages from Tolstoy's early fiction and journal entries to build a case for how Tolstoy defined the epic genre.<sup>137</sup> Specifically, I will look at passages from *The Cossacks* and Tolstoy's journal entries from the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s to support my construction of a Tolstoyan definition of epic.

Subsequently, I will show how Tolstoy's conception of epic engages with the politicized notion of national memory, the latter informed by Tolstoy's military service in the Caucasus between 1851 and 1854. I shall investigate in detail *Sevastopol' in December (Sevastopol' v dekabre mesiatse, 1855)*, a novella that relies heavily on Tolstoy's participation in the 1855 Siege of Sevastopol'. My investigation is informed by Jan Assmann's theoretical framework of communicative and cultural memory,<sup>138</sup> and demonstrates how Tolstoy linked autobiography and elements of Homeric material in the novella to, first, reconstruct the historical account of the siege and, second, to produce the literary effect of reader participation by employing the two memory modes in a unique way.

## **Epic, Politics, and Memory**

### *I. Epic Defined*

Let us begin by defining the adjectival term 'Homeric', and then considering how it is associated, for Tolstoy, with epic as both genre and system of values. While 'epic' is a contested notion, it is typically interpreted to be a literary form grounded in both history and everyday reality, a panorama including the great and the trifling which orients the reader's (or hearer's) present to his or her past: 'A chronicle, a "book of the tribe", a vital record of custom and tradition, and at the same time a

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<sup>137</sup> While the definitions I consider may have a more general scope and be applicable to other epic productions, I will focus exclusively on Homeric epic to then examine how it functioned at an ideological and social level both in ancient Greece and in nineteenth century Russia, specifically as received in Tolstoy's texts.

<sup>138</sup> Jan Assmann, 'Communicative and Cultural Memory', in *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 2008), pp. 109-18.

story-book for general entertainment [...] epic itself may have originated in the need for an established history'.<sup>139</sup> Works generally regarded by both critics and readers as epic productions, such as the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (c. twelfth century BC), Vergil's *Aeneid* (19 BC), *Beowulf* (seventh to tenth century AD), and *Paradise Lost* (1667) share an orientation to the historical past. The association of epic with (allegedly) historical events means that epic looks back toward and celebrates the past which, particularly in the case of Homeric epic, the poet claims to simply relate.<sup>140</sup> This relation between story and history is supported by the audience's faith in the ability of epic to convey that past. For this reason, the epic mode tends to boast privileged access to past events.

The European epic tradition begins with Greek oral poetry, which is the only traditional heroic poetry that receives its message from transmitting deities.<sup>141</sup> The nine Muses, ancient Greek deities who facilitated artistic inspiration, provide the *aidos*, or singer, with access to the narrative of the past, and both Homeric and Hesiodic epic calls upon the Muses to supply its content. In Book Two of the *Iliad*, for example, the poet addresses the Muses as deities who 'know all things' (Hom. *Il.*2.485) and have 'remembered all those' (*Il.* 2.492) who fought at Troy, requesting historical content which he will perform as song. Significantly, the Muses are the daughters of Memory, and epic poetry can be regarded as an act of remembering that is formed by the poet into theatre: '[T]he poets' tales are of course presumed true – after all the past is real – but the muses are less an archive than divinities presiding at a performance'.<sup>142</sup> Hesiod's *Theogony* relates the process of accessing and performing the past:

That man is blessed, whomever the Muses love – sweet is the voice that flows from his mouth. For if someone has recent pain in his breast and

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<sup>139</sup> Paul Merchant, *The Epic* (London: Cox & Wyman, Ltd, 1971), p. 2.

<sup>140</sup> For a discussion of how the narrator of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* invokes the all-knowing Muses to help him narrate his tale and 'speak through him', see Gregory Nagy, 'Achilles as Epic Hero and the Idea of Total Recall in Song', in *Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 40-62, (p. 43) and Elizabeth Minchin, 'The Poet Appeals to His Muse: Homeric Invocations in the Context of Epic Performance', *The Classical Journal*, 1 (1995), 25-33.

<sup>141</sup> Andrew Ford, *Homer: The Poetry of the Past* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 31.

<sup>142</sup> Merchant, *Epic*, p. 6.

groans, troubled in heart, but a singer, servant of the Muses, sings of the great deeds of men of olden times of the blessed gods who live on Olympos – then quickly that man forgets his troubles, unconcerned with his sorrows.

(Hes. *Th.*81-85)<sup>143</sup>

Memory has a paradoxical function here, resulting in forgetfulness of some things while facilitating the remembering of other things. Listeners set aside their sorrows to recollect those who lived before by hearkening to the voice of the Muse-beloved poet. The spell works because the recovery of the past is poetic: it is an aesthetic act which establishes distance between the hearer and his or her self while collapsing distance between the hearer and his or her past. In Book Nine of Homer's *Iliad*, Achilles, who has withdrawn from his companions in sorrow, is shown to be 'pleasuring his heart' (9.189) by playing a lyre and 'singing of men's fame' (9.189); the traditional expression for the theme of Achilles' song is *klea andrōn*, 'the glories of men', and is regarded by many scholars to be synonymous with epic itself.<sup>144</sup> Achilles, too, can be interpreted as setting aside his suffering by means of singing the glorious past. In Book Eight of the *Odyssey*, the bard Demodokos, accompanied by his lyre, sings 'the famous actions of men' (*Od.* 8.73-74) while his audience 'would urge him to sing, since they joyed in his stories' (*Od.*8.91).<sup>145</sup> In both the Hesiodic and Homeric formulation of epic performance, the present selves retreat, or are de-centred, to recollect, celebrate, and centre the past other; this self-forgetful de-centring is a profoundly pleasurable experience.

As an aesthetic experience facilitated by divine (rather than ordinary) memory, the recovered past does not serve a primarily didactic purpose, but reorients the audience to the past by remaking it for the present, while the present responds by being remade in turn:

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<sup>143</sup> *Theogony*, in *The Poems of Hesiod: Theogony, Works and Days, and The Shield of Herakles*, trans. by Barry B. Powell (California: University of California Press, 2017).

<sup>144</sup> Ford, *Homer*, p. 57.

<sup>145</sup> For Odysseus, the song of Demodokos brings pain rather than pleasure precisely because it is not, for him, a recollection of heroes long past, but of his own life experience. In Odysseus' case, therefore, the process of self-estrangement does not 'work' and he does not, therefore, experience the song as an 'epic' as defined here. I will discuss this in much greater detail in the section on memory later in this chapter; see page 44.

The function of [epic] memory is not simply preservation of the past but a psychological experience, to change the present frame of awareness [...]. [S]acred memory moves us [...] not 'back' but elsewhere [...]. This effect has been variously named as a sense of 'participation' [...] but I prefer to take a name out of Homer, via the Greek literary critics, *to enarges*, 'vividness'.<sup>146</sup>

If hearing the past performed in song can change the present frame of awareness, I suggest that this qualitative change emerges from the interaction between history and art that creates a familiar but alternate world the audience contemplates in common, and the singular delight this experience produces.<sup>147</sup> Epic, then, is a privileged means of recovering the past by invoking aesthetic vividness which prompts self-estrangement and thereby decentres the self, resulting in subtle but significant changes in the relationship of the present both to the past and to itself.

## II. *Tolstoyan Epic Defined*

As we have seen, the tumultuous decades of the early nineteenth century in Russia contributed to a literary privileging of Greek antiquity that emphasized liberty and '*narodnost*'<sup>148</sup>. This perception owed much to Homer's participation in the oral tradition, which gives the impression that Homeric poetry reflects popular

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<sup>146</sup> Ford, *Homer*, p. 54. Consider that this view is evidenced in Book Eight of the *Odyssey*, when Odysseus praises the bard Demodokos:

'All too right following the tale you sing the Achaians'  
venture, all they did and had done to them, all the sufferings  
of these Achaians, as if you had been there yourself or heard it from one who was'. (*Od.* 8.489-91)

<sup>147</sup> For a discussion of how the events of epic poetry are primarily situated not in a chronologically defined past, but in a more essential past, and are concerned with the fundamental truth of events rather than their historical origins, see Egbert J. Bakker, 'Remembering the God's Arrival', *Arethusa*, 35 (2002), 63-81.

<sup>148</sup> In this and the chapters to follow, I will make frequent use of the term *narod*, which can be translated as 'the people' or 'the common people' or 'the nation'. It derives from the Slavic *rod* which means 'race' (similar to *genos* in Greek), but also 'birth' or 'origin'. The *narod*, however, is not always 'the populace'. The term has been used at various times in Russian history to refer to either the peasant class or the working class or both, often standing in for the voice of the nation as a whole. It has strong associations with populism, folk tradition, nationhood, and egalitarianism, although it spans ethnic distinctions (this is an important feature in a nation as ethnically diverse as Russia). In this case, *narodnost*' is understood as 'having the quality of the *narod*'.

expression spontaneously, without mediation. The association of novelistic writing with the productions of song culture is particularly salient for an examination of Tolstoy's understanding of epic material and how it functions in novelistic prose.

By considering passages dedicated to literary analysis in Tolstoy's journals, notebooks, letters, and published writing, I have arrived at a comprehensive Tolstoyan definition of epic. In his youth, Tolstoy found what he termed epic when he lived among the Terek Cossacks during his military service in the Caucasus. In 1856, he read a story about a Chechen woman written by his brother, Nikolai. Tolstoy praised specifically its epic quality: 'Now this is a huge epic talent'.<sup>149</sup> The next day, he records the emotional effects of epic production: 'I read N[ikolenka's]<sup>150</sup> story, cried again. While singing a Cossack song – also. I'm beginning to love the epic legendary character. I'll try to make a poem out of the Cossack song'.<sup>151</sup> The 'epic legendary character' is, I suggest, appealed to Tolstoy at this time as an aesthetic quality characterizing the epic genre, as is evidenced in his interest in traditional ethnic songs and oral culture took on an ethnographic quality: in 1852, Tolstoy recorded two Chechen *uzami*, or folk songs, conveyed to him by his Chechen companion, Balta Isiaev. Neither song had ever been committed to writing before, and Tolstoy wrote each one in transliterated form, using the Russian alphabet with diacritics, and then translated them line by line into Russian.<sup>152</sup>

As is evident from these notes, in his twenties, Tolstoy was displaying curiosity about oral Cossack and Chechen culture, praising the epic genre, and feeling inspired to partake in it.<sup>153</sup> It is revealing that his intention to 'make a poem out of

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<sup>149</sup> PSS 47, p. 81. See Appendix A.41 for original.

<sup>150</sup> Tolstoy here refers to a story by 'N'. It is likely a reference to his brother Nikolai's story, since the passage follows so closely the previous reference to the story and describes it as 'epic' qualified by the crucial 'again'. The identity of N. is unimportant for the argument I am making, however, since even if it is not his brother's story that Tolstoy is re-reading, it is nevertheless a story he considers epic and associates with Cossack songs.

<sup>151</sup> PSS 47, p. 82. See Appendix A.42 for original.

<sup>152</sup> PSS 46, p. 90.

<sup>153</sup> In 1852, the same year we are discussing, Tolstoy composed a series of poems. One of them is a *nostos* poem about Cossacks returning from battle. It begins: 'Hey, Mar'iana, leave off work' ('*Ei, Mar'iana, bros' rabotu*') and relates how a young Cossack woman adorns herself to greet her returning beloved; alas, she



the Cossack song' which later developed into Tolstoy's first novel, *The Cossacks*, is prose begotten by a poem begotten by an ethnic song that had brought its listener to tears. The subject matter of the Cossack song that affected Tolstoy so much and which he describes as 'epic' ('*epicheskiĭ*') and 'legendary' ('*legendarnyiĭ*') is likely similar to the content of a song in the novel with which Eroshka, a Cossack, regales the protagonist Olenin. The narrator specifies that Eroshka's songs are representative of 'authentic'<sup>154</sup> ('*nastoiashie*') Cossack and Chechen songs. Eroshka's song is about the 'old past'<sup>155</sup> ('*starina*') and is a lament, a sorrowful retelling of how a young warrior witnesses violence, conquest, enslavement, and loss. This subject matter is consistent with the themes of battle, death, and nature that figured in the traditional songs of those Terek Cossacks the narrator describes and among whom Tolstoy lived.<sup>156</sup> Moreover, we are told that Eroshka's song has a 'melancholy chorus' ('*pechalnyi pripev*') consisting solely of the exclamation 'Ai! dai, dalalai!' which brings Eroshka to tears.<sup>157</sup> To a surprising

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sees the warrior's corpse borne along by other returning warriors, with his dagger and *shashka* beside him. Two points are salient. First, in composing poetry about war, love, death, and loss, Tolstoy reiterates in his own poems the 'epic' themes of the Chechen poems he transliterated in 1852, as we shall see below. Second, if we are justified in regarding this poetic Mar'iana as a prototype for the heroine of Tolstoy's first novel, then the poem is further confirmation that *The Cossacks* originated as poetry (or perhaps song). *PSS* 1, pp. 301-03.

<sup>154</sup> *PSS* 6, p.108.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Below are two excerpts from traditional Terek Cossack songs, such as Tolstoy is likely to have encountered:

It's no eagle flying high  
Beneath the clouds,  
It's a standard above the Cossacks  
Proudly, proudly waving [...]

And:

As lived on the mountain  
Is life beneath the mountain,  
Beneath the white, beneath the birch  
Lies the Cossack – killed.  
This little Cossack  
Has no father or mother,  
No-one to lament for him,  
Or bind up his head.

*Pesni Tereka: Pesni Grebenskikh i Sunzhenskikh Kazakov*, ed. by B.N. Putilov (Groznyi: Checheno-Ingushkoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1974), p. 30. My translation. See Appendix A.43 for original.

<sup>157</sup> *PSS* 6, p. 108.

degree, this cry is similar to the Chechen songs that Tolstoy had transliterated,<sup>158</sup> which also included a reference to the *molodets* figure, a warlike, folkloristic archetype of a ‘fine youth’ that will become important for Tolstoy’s war writing.

Tolstoy’s preservation of both Chechen *uzami* is striking given the dearth of available material and the rarity of such preservation and translation at the time. For example, the translation into Russian of the above song was published for the first time in 2005 with the title, *Uzam of an Independent Young Woman (Uzam samostoiatel’noi devushki)*; the translator worked directly from Tolstoy’s manuscript.<sup>159</sup> While the Russian linguist Peter von Uslar (1816-1875) was the first scholar to systematically study the Chechen language, his monograph on the subject was published in 1862, a decade after Tolstoy’s transliterations and translations, and did not include the *uzam* quoted above. The first standalone collection of Chechen folklore, *From Chechen Folk Songs (Iz Chechenskikh Pesen)* by Aslan-bek Sheripov, appeared in print only in 1918, and did not include the above *uzam*, either.

Tolstoy sought to preserve the acoustic quality of the *uzam* in the reiterated cry of ‘Ai ai’, subsequently adapting it to Eroshka’s song.<sup>160</sup> This indicates that he was sensitive to the performed quality of folk song as distinct from its written version.

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<sup>158</sup> To consider the Chechen song Tolstoy translated, I include an excerpt of my translation into English of Tolstoy’s translation into Russian of one of the Chechen folk songs:

‘Aï aaï ai ai aï aï! How sad I am, my dear mother.  
Tell me why they brought the *molodets*’ stallion to our stable?  
Aïaï aïaï aï, whose Crimean carbine is mounted on our wall,  
why was it brought, do you know?  
‘A Georgian Prince brought the weapon,  
he came to be betrothed to you’.  
Dear mother, my heart is not with him.  
I found such a *molodets* for myself,  
Who makes the night into day’.

*PSS* 46, pp. 89-90. See Appendix A.44 for Tolstoy’s version, including his transliteration of Chechen using the Russian alphabet.

<sup>159</sup> Anatolii Prelovskii and I.B. Munaev, *Chechenskaia narodnaia poeziia v zapisiakh XIX-XX vv* (Moscow: *Novyi kliuch*, 2005), p. 351.

<sup>160</sup> Since Tolstoy was familiar with the basics of the Chechen language, he may well have known that the supreme deity of the ancient Chechen people was Della, which is the Chechen term for God. It is not unlikely that such choruses and their variations – da la la, or ai da dai – were derived from ‘Della’ and had once carried semantic content. Yu. G. Agadzhanova, ‘Pesni grebenskikh i sunzhenskikh kazakov’ in *Pesni Tereka*, p. 39.

Performance theorist Peggy Phelan writes: 'Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance'.<sup>161</sup> That Tolstoy was conscious of this distinction is evident not only in his affective responses to performed songs (he weeps as he sings), but also in his literary – in some sense, even scholarly – efforts to render into verse how the original performance *sounded* in both his journal and in Eroshka's song, carefully recording and adapting to Russian the wordless cry. Near the end of *The Cossacks*, the affective power of this cry is reiterated as a group of doomed Chechens face their impending execution:

Suddenly from the Chechens arose the sound of a mournful song, similar to Eroshka's 'Aï daï, dalalaï'. The Chechens knew that they could not escape, and to prevent themselves from being tempted to take flight they had strapped themselves together, knee to knee, got their guns ready, and were singing their death-song.<sup>162</sup>

Since this song – a performance – is compared to Eroshka's, it is likely to also be a grieving memory of past events. The narrator specifies that the song helps the Chechens accept their fate. Applying the Hesiodic and Homeric formulation of how bardic singing functions, we see that the song helps the Chechens accept death because it invokes forgetfulness by facilitating remembering; they forget their fear by means of communion with the collective. Such songs are inherently sorrowful, and they make Eroshka cry just as they made the young Tolstoy cry. The author and his character weep because the song is moving, of course, but it achieves this poignancy because it is a performed disclosure of past events through aesthetic vividness. Eroshka, Tolstoy, and the Chechen warriors are not privy to a mere recitation of a past they can still recall, but to its incarnation as they relive it. For the youthful Tolstoy, this vividness is germane to the epic genre. By 1865, Tolstoy reports in his journal: 'Huge ideas! A plan for the history of Napoleon and

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<sup>161</sup> Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993) p. 146.

<sup>162</sup> *PSS* 6, p. 144. See Appendix A.45 for original.

Alexander hasn't weakened. A *poema*, the hero of which should by rights be a man round whom everything is grouped, and the hero should be that man'.<sup>163</sup>

First, consider that Tolstoy describes epic as a '*poema*', poem. While the term can indicate a prose work, it is significant that Tolstoy did not identify the future *War and Peace* as a *povest'* (story), *roman* (novel) or even *rasskaz* (narrative, tale, short story), but specifically a *poema*, which has strong associations with legendary and lyrical narration. Moreover, in the same year, he makes the following telling observation in his journal: 'Just as a singer or a violinist who fears a false note will never inspire an emotional response in his listeners, so a writer or an orator will not offer a new idea or feeling if he fears that others will disprove, or disagree with, his position'.<sup>164</sup> That the writer, whom Tolstoy equates with an orator ('*pisatel' ili orator*'), is compared to a singer or a musician ('*pevets ili skripach*'), shows just how closely Tolstoy linked song, performance, and literary production at the time that he was beginning *War and Peace*.<sup>165</sup> I suggest that, for Tolstoy, epic has a distinct, aesthetic form that can be recited or sung – in short, it draws on performed narrative – and the consistent link between performance and epic both in Tolstoy's journal entries and *The Cossacks* helps support this view. While it is, of course, a lexical and unsystematic association, it nevertheless anticipates (by nearly a century) the work of Milman Parry and Albert Lord in Yugoslavia in the 1930s, when they recorded traditional South Slavic songs and situated epic poetry within the context of oral traditions. The theory of Homeric composition developed by Parry and Lord identifies epic poetry with the singing of stories by means of remembered formulas; each song is spontaneously adapted to the individual performance context, considering both audience and occasion.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> PSS 48, p. 61. See Appendix A.46 for original.

<sup>164</sup> PSS 48, p. 106. See Appendix A.47 for original.

<sup>165</sup> For a discussion of the relationship of Tolstoy's writing to music, see Caryl Emerson, 'Tolstoy and Music' in *Anniversary Essays on Tolstoy*, ed. by Donna Orwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 8-32.

<sup>166</sup> M.W.M. Pope, 'The Parry-Lord Theory of Homeric Composition', *Acta Classica*, 6 (1963), 1-21. For an explication of how Parry and Lord found 'their own living Homer' in Montenegro, see the new biography of Parry by Robert Kanigel, *Hearing Homer's Song: The Brief Life and Big Idea of Milman Parry* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2021), p. 4. See also Albert Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).

In terms of content, Tolstoy regards his projected epic *poema* as grounded specifically in the histories of Alexander and Napoleon; *this is consistent with* the depiction of epic as *klea andrōn*, ‘the glories of men’, in both Homeric and Hesiodic texts. That the history appropriate to epic ought to involve military conflict is evidenced in a laconic remark Tolstoy made in 1870. Contemplating the nature of comedy, tragedy, epic, and drama, he notes: ‘The taking of Chersonesus by Vladimir is an epic. Men’shikov marries Peter II to his daughter, his exile and death – drama’.<sup>167</sup> Why the second historical event is dramatic rather than epic is not immediately clear until we consider two factors. First, Chersonesus was a Greek colony in southwest Crimea, founded by Dorian and Ionian settlers in the sixth century BC; as discussed in the Introduction, Russia’s tenth-century conquest of the region was portrayed by intellectual elites, such as Catherine II’s court poets, as evidence of Russia’s historical links to Greek antiquity. Presumably, for Tolstoy, a narrative of Russia’s conquest of Chersonesus is associated implicitly with ancient epic poetry. Second, recall that, for Tolstoy, the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, *War and Peace*, and Cossack songs are examples of epic.<sup>168</sup> What these latter works have in common with the medieval capture of Chersonesus is their evocation of violence and conquest, which provide ample opportunity for heroism. Although the *Odyssey* is significantly less violent than the other texts, it does nevertheless conclude with a prolonged battle, gruesome slaughter, substantial references to the Trojan War, and celebrates violent heroics throughout.

It is consistent with the foregoing analysis that Tolstoy does not intend to directly convey facts about Alexander and Napoleon or present them in a straightforward manner – he intends to write a *poema*, or a fictional account, not a historical tract. Modelling his work on bardic epic, Tolstoy seeks for the truth of the past to be mediated by aesthetic vividness. Tolstoy regards epic, then, as prompting intense affect by means of estrangement and vividness. Linking this quality to Tolstoy’s description of epic poetry as related to true past events related to battle that have

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<sup>167</sup> PSS 48, p. 344. See Appendix A.48 for original.

<sup>168</sup> In 1865, Tolstoy classifies novelistic writing into four categories, placing Homeric epic and *War and Peace* into a form of composition that relies on ‘the representation of customs built on historical events – the *Odyssey*, the *Iliad*, 1805’. PSS 48, p. 267. This entry and its significance for Tolstoy’s reception of Homer will be explored in greater detail both in this and in subsequent chapters.

been reconstructed aesthetically, we arrive at a definition of epic which, whether deliberately or not, resonates substantially with the one Hesiod developed nearly three thousand years ago. It is this tradition, then, that Tolstoy aims to inherit when he writes in an 1863 journal entry, just as he begins *War and Peace*: 'The epic manner is becoming the only natural one for me'.<sup>169</sup>

We shall see in this and subsequent chapters that the reasons why Tolstoy privileged Homeric epic and the uses to which he put it changed throughout his writing career. In the 1850s, Tolstoy's first decade as a professional, published author, his reliance on epic was informed by his own military service in the Caucasus and the Crimean War, and its political aim had a distinctly patriotic air. In the *Sevastopol' Sketches* (1855), which draw on Tolstoy's participation in the Siege of Sevastopol', Tolstoy refigured Homeric narrative techniques and characterizations to help construct national identity and a sense of political unity in Russia. In the following section, I will consider what we mean when we say that writing is 'Homeric' and why Tolstoy sought to employ the category in his early writing.

### *The Iliad and Russian National Identity*

Perhaps the first deliberate and large-scale appropriation of the *Iliad* for political purposes by an individual was enacted by Alexander III of Macedon (356-323 BC). More than a century after the Persian Wars, Alexander, who was said to claim descent from Achilles and perform sacrificial rituals among the ruins of Troy, sought to extend the notion of Panhellenism to include the Persian Empire, which he had conquered. Alexander ceremoniously placed the scrolls of the *Iliad* into the treasure room of the defeated Persian King Darius, to signify the unification of the Greek and Persian empires: '[Alexander] is both Macedonian general and Persian king, and his treatment of Homer's *Iliad* shows the synthesis of Hellenic and Persian ideals. [...] The text and its physical context work together: Homer is arrayed in Persian regalia, and Darius' containers [...] are filled with the cultural

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<sup>169</sup> PSS 48, p. 48. See Appendix A.49 for original.

wealth of Greece'.<sup>170</sup> This view of Homeric epic as an instrument that can be symbolically wielded for political or communal purposes is explored in James Redfield's work, which investigates the application of heroic epic to the public sphere: 'Heroic epic secures the public by giving it a world alternate to its own, a world between unreality and reality which its members can contemplate in common. From this point of view, the epic is a social institution'.<sup>171</sup>

Legitimizing Panhellenism or Greek imperialism by means of Homeric epic, then, functioned by articulating a sort of alternate reality that had been consciously – and perhaps also unconsciously – engineered. This is not only an instance of how epic can function politically, but also demonstrates that nostalgia for an ideal past is often politically aimed at shaping the future and, crucially, need not be limited to a past that existed. While the Panhellenic or imperialistic visions may have established a precedent for utilizing Homeric epic to achieve political aims in Classical and Hellenistic Greece, these goals certainly did not exhaust the poems' sociopolitical applicability then or since. As exemplified in the case of the Decembrists, discussed in the Introduction, interpreters closer to our own time have taken up Homer's poems to craft an alternate world.<sup>172</sup> As one of many interpreters of Homeric epic, Tolstoy had his own ethico-political aims in view when he refigured elements of the poems in his early writing. It is perhaps not surprising that before he achieved full authorial maturity in the 1860s, the youthful Tolstoy's goals should align closely not only with those of the Decembrists and writers such as Gogol and Belinskii, but also with the poems' own explicit ethos.

An Iliadic emphasis on military success, glory, and the celebration of a unified national spirit is apparent in Tolstoy's early fiction and journal entries; articulating a

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<sup>170</sup> Christopher Brunelle, 'Alexander's Persian Pillow and Plutarch's Cultured Commander', *The Classical Journal*, 112 (2017), 257-78 (p. 264).

<sup>171</sup> James M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad: The Tragedy of Hector*, Expanded Edition (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 40.

<sup>172</sup> Katherine Harloe, for example, remarks: 'Throughout the Ages the Trojan War has [...] been given new interpretations linked to the more immediate political and cultural circumstances of each generation of readers. The slants given to the story – and even the heroes favoured – have differed in different periods'. 'The Siege of Troy' in *Famous Battles and How they Shaped the Modern World C 1200 BCE-1302 CE: From Troy to Courtrai*, ed. by B. Heuser and A. Leoussi (Yorkshire: Pen and Sword Military, 2018), pp. 21-50 (p. 27).

unified Russian identity and a common patriotic goal was very important for him at this time. To place in historical context Tolstoy's early interest in Homeric epic, recall that Russia saw great social and political transformation in the first half of the nineteenth century, including the war with Napoleon, the Russo-Turkish war, the Decembrist revolt, and the disastrous 1853 Crimean War in which Tolstoy participated. This personal involvement doubtless had a significant influence on his subsequent interest in war narrative. In 1852, the twenty-four-year-old writer notes in his journal that he spent the morning daydreaming about conquering the Caucasus.<sup>173</sup> In November of that same year, he links glory and violence in his own life: 'I am utterly convinced that I must obtain glory [...]. For some time now I see in my dreams the Tatar invasion'.<sup>174</sup>

Two years later in Odessa, when these dreams had become reality after Tolstoy joined the war, he reflects on a disastrous battle in his journal and its relation to the country's recent history. For the youthful Tolstoy, the desire for military conflict and the trauma it brings coalesced into intense patriotism – not just in the country, but within himself and, in his view, his compatriots: 'Once again we attacked and were once again defeated [...]. Horrible slaughter. [...] Great is the moral strength of the Russian people. Many political truths will emerge and evolve in the present difficult moment for Russia. The feeling of ardent love for the fatherland that has arisen and issued forth from Russia's misfortunes will long leave its traces on her'.<sup>175</sup>

These various dreams, criticisms, and anxieties culminated in Tolstoy's articulation of a patriotic national identity in the 1855 novella, *Sevastopol' in December*.

Tolstoy experiments with technique by employing a second person narrative voice throughout the work; this has the effect of making the reader not only complicit in Imperial Russia's battle against the Ottoman, British, and French empires, but also of determining what the reader thinks and feels, which is boundless admiration for the Herculean Russian spirit:

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<sup>173</sup> PSS 48, p. 119.

<sup>174</sup> PSS 46, p. 196. See Appendix A.50 for original.

<sup>175</sup> PSS 47, p. 27. See Appendix A.51 for original.



The chief, joyous conviction you have obtained is the impossibility of taking Sevastopol', and not only of taking Sevastopol', but swaying the strength of the Russian people anywhere at all – you saw this impossibility [...] in that which is called the spirit of the defenders of Sevastopol'. [Y]ou are convinced that they can do a hundred times more... that they can do everything.<sup>176</sup>

This straightforward praise of a necessary battle is superficially Iliadic. In his youthful preoccupation with Russian heroism and Russian identity, it is perhaps natural that Tolstoy would have turned to the *Iliad*, a war epic that so effectively presented an alternate, unified Greece.<sup>177</sup> For scholars such as George Steiner and Paul Friedrich, comparing Tolstoy and Homer is justified because Tolstoy's writing shares narrative and stylistic features with the ancient poet: both writers use stock epithets, recurrent phrases, omniscient narration, basis in historical fact, and include in their narratives seemingly mundane details of everyday life.<sup>178</sup> However, I suggest that aside from the shared formal qualities between Tolstoy's and Homer's texts, of equal import is Tolstoy's emphasis on national identity and how war is remembered. These are epistemic categories which are supremely significant for our analysis of Tolstoy's early and middle periods. By the 1860s, Tolstoy explicitly invited comparison between his writing and Homer's, both privately in his journals<sup>179</sup> and publicly to Maksim Gorky. To Gorky, Tolstoy

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<sup>176</sup> PSS 4, p. 16. See Appendix A.52 for original.

<sup>177</sup> Tolstoy's attitude to military conflict will gradually become more nuanced until, as we shall see in later chapters, in works such as *Anna Karenina*, it will be an undercurrent of secondary importance to an ethical examination of the social world. This shift mirrors the change in values and scope of the Homeric epics themselves. The differences between them are as important as the similarities. Most obvious, perhaps, is the *Iliad*'s violent, warlike ethos which contrasts dramatically with the *Odyssey*'s focus on a protracted homecoming and related domestic concerns. Griffiths and Rabinowitz describe the influence these divergent narratives had on the European literary tradition: 'What was influential was the yoking of two nearly antithetical heroes, Achilles and Odysseus, and the shift of scene and values from the plains of Ilium, where even the gods look on, to a hero's own backyard in Ithaca. The talents worthy of reacceptance by a Penelope may finally rival those once needed to conquer Hektor'. Griffiths and Rabinowitz, 'Tolstoy and Homer', p. 148.

<sup>178</sup> George Steiner, *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky: An Essay in the Old Criticism* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1996) pp. 81-85. See also Paul Friedrich, 'Tolstoy, Homer, and Genotypical Influence', *Comparative Literature* (2004) pp. 283-299.

<sup>179</sup> As mentioned in footnote 21, Tolstoy expressed in his journal in 1865 that *War and Peace* belongs in the same literary category as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* because all three works feature a 'representation of customs built on historical events'. PSS 48, p. 267

observed that *War and Peace* 'is, without false modesty, like the *Iliad*'.<sup>180</sup> This conscious comparison between himself and Homer was apparent at least as early as the previous decade.

As early as 1852, Tolstoy was approaching his fledgling writing career in terms of both history and the Greek epic tradition. While working on *Childhood*, Tolstoy wrote to his aunt, Tat'iana Ergol'skaia (1792-1874) the following: 'For some time, I have come to love historical books [...] my literary affairs go little by little [...]. One thing, which I began long ago, I have reworked three times [...] perhaps it is like the work of Penelope'.<sup>181</sup> We can see from these two sentences that not only was Tolstoy familiar with Homeric personages, but that he was casting himself as one of them, if only playfully. The comparison was not merely a passing comment and was one that Tolstoy must have welcomed, as evidenced in Tolstoy's aunt's response when the narrative in question was complete: 'At last, my dear, *Penelope's work* has reached an end' (italics in original).<sup>182</sup>

The passages quoted above from Tolstoy's journals and letters dated between 1852 and 1854 make clear that before he enlisted in the Crimean War, the young writer was reading history, reflecting on Greek epic characterization, and dreaming of military conquest. On the frontier, he became increasingly invested in the cultural, social, and political future of Russia. This can be seen in the intense patriotism expressed in war narratives such as *Sevastopol' in December*. Such early work demonstrates Tolstoy's interest in crafting a narrative based on historical battles that celebrates conquest and presents the latter as resulting from the superior Russian spirit, which functions as a unifying force. In this sense, Tolstoy's earliest writing is replete with the ideological and sociopolitical features of Iliadic epic. Drawing on a historical battle in the following *Sevastopol' in December* passage, Tolstoy deploys the Homeric technique of juxtaposing communicative

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<sup>180</sup> Gorky in *Reminiscences of Tolstoy*, p. 57.

<sup>181</sup> PSS 59, p. 177. See Appendix A.53 for original. To my knowledge, this comparison of himself to Penelope is the only recorded instance of Tolstoy casting himself as a Homeric character. In some sense, then, Penelope's weaving is brought into relation to Homer's singing and Tolstoy's writing.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p. 197. See Appendix A.54 for original.

and cultural memory, discussed in detail below, that will help determine how the Siege will be remembered:

[T]he tales of the early days of the siege of Sevastopol' [...] when that hero, worthy of ancient Greece, Kornilov, riding around the troops, would say, 'We will die, boys, but we will not surrender Sevastopol'' and our Russians, incapable of fancy phrases, would answer, 'We'll die! Hooray!' – only now the tales of those times have ceased to be for you a beautiful historical inheritance but have become truthful and factual.<sup>183</sup>

Before I analyse this significant passage, let us recall that Sevastopol' did eventually fall to the enemy, which Tolstoy was, of course, aware of. Reading these lines, however, has the effect of neutralizing the defeat into a sort of moral victory for Russia's 'Greek' heroes, such that, if Sevastopol' was taken, it was not because it was 'surrendered' but because all the heroes had (willingly) died.

Consider, first, that the narrator is explicitly comparing Russian heroes to ancient Greek heroes – the immediate connection readers are invited to make is with the likes of Homeric heroes, both Greek and Trojan, and relatedly, to associate the Siege of Sevastopol' with the siege of Troy. Second, there is a distinct emphasis on 'our' Russians – the Russians thus presented belong to both the narrator and the reader. This has the effect of implicating the reader in the affective experience of patriotic pride. Third and most important, the narrative articulates a distinction between 'tales' ('*raszkazy*'<sup>184</sup>) of the glorious past and the present in which that past is recollected. As past becomes present, oral tales of war pass into concrete fact ('*sdelalis' dostovernost'iu, faktom*'<sup>185</sup>), from legend to history. By preserving past heroic deeds to be contemplated by future generations, *Sevastopol' in December* does not only contribute to memory of the siege, but actively re-shapes that memory, functioning as the social institution identifiable with the epic mode. In 1855, Tolstoy was learning to use elements of the epic genre to political effect, and

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<sup>183</sup> PSS 4, p. 16. See Appendix A.55 for original.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

the way that this was accomplished in this novella invokes the distinction between cultural and communicative memory, as I will show in the following section.

### *Collective Memory and Communicative Memory*

One of the defining features of epic poetry is the influence it exerts on how a nation remembers its past. The notion of collective memory functions as an operative metaphor in memory studies, signifying how the process of remembering, selecting elements from, and reconstructing, the past is transferred from an individual's private *cogito* to a shared, public space.<sup>186</sup> Elizabeth Minchin defines collective memory as 'a social phenomenon[...]; the communal store of shared experiences, shared stories and shared memories that members of any social group acquire over time as they interact with the world around them'.<sup>187</sup> In this sense, epic poems function as a social institution, becoming established into media, traditional ceremonies, narratives, rituals, cuisine, songs, and dances. This latter category of objectivized memory – which includes literature – is what Jan Assmann terms formal 'cultural memory'.<sup>188</sup> In both literate and oral societies, cultural memory has specialists who are responsible for its preservation, such as shamans, bards, and priests; traditionally, preserving the group's cultural memory was the poet's task.<sup>189</sup> Cultural memory is distinguished from a social, 'communicative memory', concerned with information regarding the recent past and cohering within stories individuals tell one another.<sup>190</sup> Communicative memory is an everyday form of

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<sup>186</sup> See, for example, Astrid Erll, 'Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction' in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 2008) pp. 1-18.

<sup>187</sup> Elizabeth Minchin, 'Memory and Memories: Personal, Social, and Collective Memory in the Poems of Homer' in *Homeric Contexts: Neoanalysis and the Interpretation of Oral Poetry*, ed. by Franco Montanari, Antonios Rengakos, Christos C. Tsagalis (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012) pp. 83-100 (p. 83).

<sup>188</sup> Jassmann, 'Communicative and Cultural Memory', pp. 109-18.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>190</sup> Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique* 65 (1995), 125-33 (p. 126).

articulation bounded by a temporal horizon that reaches no further than eighty years into the past, spanning three interacting generations.<sup>191</sup>

Attempting to shape Russia's national memory of its past military conflicts is, I suggest, an integral feature of Tolstoy's early work. By means of second person narration, both cultural and communicative memory are invoked and transformed in a unique way in *Sevastopol' in December*. The text presents the memory of the siege as belonging not to a character or even a historical personage, but to the reader. Since communicative memory is typical of oral cultures, Tolstoy's story has the effect of involving the reader with Imperial Russia's history and its oral transmission on a personal level, imbuing the phrase 'we Russians' with subjective relevance. No matter who the reader is, when engaging with the text, he or she becomes a Russian recollecting the nation's praiseworthy behaviour at the Siege of Sevastopol' and 'talking' about it with the narrator, who addresses the reader directly:

You have set sail from the shore. All around you the sea is already glimmering in the morning sun [...]. You look at the motley vastness of ships, scattered both near and far on the bay [...] you listen to the measured sounds of the oars [...] and the majestic sound of shooting which, as it seems to you, is increasing in Sevastopol'.

It is not possible that, with the thought that you too are in Sevastopol', your soul has not been pierced by a sort of feeling of courage, of pride, that your blood has not begun to course more quickly in your veins...<sup>192</sup>.

'You look', 'you listen', 'you feel', the narrator urges the reader; the effect is not one of reading a text but of acting on spoken commands. It functions as an experience of the siege that is both personal and orally transmitted. The memory thus shared with the narrator is also supremely vivid: already in this early work, the richly detailed visual and auditory experience has a solemn, grand quality, resonating

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<sup>191</sup> Assmann and Czaplicka, 'Cultural Identity', p. 127.

<sup>192</sup> PSS 4, p. 4. See Appendix A.56 for original.

with Iliadic descriptions about the shores of the Troad heaving with ‘the ships of the Achaians’ (*Il.* 1.305) on the ‘bright sea’ (*Il.* 1.141), while Tolstoy’s description of the ‘pink rays of the morning sun’ adapt the famous Iliadic references to ‘Dawn [...] with her rosy fingers’ (*Il.* 1.477).<sup>193</sup> Most significant, however, is that Tolstoy’s use of second person narration as communicative memory, and its effect of making the reader admire the battle and its participants, recalls the use of second person singular address in the *Iliad*. The narrator of the poem addresses the audience five times. For example, the audience is called to witness the Greek armies marching in Book Four:

[Y]ou would not think  
all these people with voices kept in their chests were marching;  
[...] and upon all  
glittered as they marched the shining armor they carried. (*Il.* 4.422-432)

Compare another instance in Book Five, which describes the Greek hero Diomedes fighting:

[Y]ou would not have told on which side Tydeus’ son was fighting,  
whether he were one with the Trojans or with the Achaians,  
since he went storming up the plain. (*Il.* 5.85-88).

In telling his hearers what they would – or would not – think, Homer addresses the audience directly and thereby engages them in communicative memory.<sup>194</sup>

*Sevastopol’ in December* functions not only as communicative memory, but also as an instance of cultural memory which is formal and established into the public sphere and its institutions by means of the published text. Thus, Tolstoy takes on the poet’s task of guarding – what he presents as – the group’s memory. Cultural memory ‘represents its members’ awareness of what unites them and what

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<sup>193</sup> Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. by Richmond Lattimore (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

<sup>194</sup> For a discussion of narrative address in the *Iliad*, see Elizabeth Block, ‘The Narrator Speaks: Apostrophe in Homer and Vergil’, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-2014), 112 (1982), 7-22.

distinguishes them from others; it relates to their self-image; and it plays a normative role – those who live in this culture are expected to endorse and to aspire to the same virtues as their ancestors'.<sup>195</sup> In Homeric epic, such memory is mediated, legitimized by the Muses, and is conveyed by the bard. This is the province of the epic's narrator. However, there is tension between the two memory modes within and without the poem: for example, while Nestor, the Greek king of Pylos, engages in communicative memory within the epic in Book One of the *Iliad*, the narrative of his recollection is part of the audience's cultural memory. The epic is not only representing memory, but also performing memory and transforming it into culture. In 1855, Tolstoy employs the Homeric technique of performing communicative memory – in which the reader shares – by means of institutionalized cultural memory that celebrates the virtues of Russian heroes.

Minchin describes the interweaving of cultural and communicative memory in Odysseus's reaction to the song of Demodokos.<sup>196</sup> Concealing his face with his cloak, Odysseus weeps when Demodokos sings the battles of Troy. The war has passed into remote cultural memory for everyone except the hero who lived through it, and the poet's song collapses time between personal experience and that which should only be recalled from a great distance, begetting an intensity which Odysseus cannot endure. The reader of *Sevastopol' in December* is invited to participate in recollecting the Siege in a way that is similarly emotionally challenging. The reason that the recollection Tolstoy prompts in his readers is emotionally challenging and the reason that Odysseus wept when he heard the song of the bard are the same: what Tolstoy's narrator and his reader have seen for themselves in the Caucasus has been promoted to cultural memory by the very existence of the text, shifting the personal and particular into the public and universal. For Odysseus, Tolstoy's narrator, and Tolstoy's reader, time is collapsed, bringing cultural and communicative memory together in a way that promotes intense affect.

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<sup>195</sup> Minchin, 'Memory', p. 85.

<sup>196</sup> Minchin, 'Memory', p. 96.

In this early work, Tolstoy is already reaching into a past he makes his audience share with him for the purpose of retelling the *klea andrōn* in an aesthetically compelling form. Tolstoy's tale is conscious of itself as participating in the epic narrative of 'those times', and wishes to be promoted to institutionalized knowledge which, by the very existence of the text, has already been achieved. The shaping of collective memory of war is seen for the first time in Tolstoy's oeuvre in *Sevastopol' in December*. As we shall see in the following chapters, it will become a feature of Tolstoy's major novels, most prominently in *War and Peace*, but also in *The Cossacks*, *Anna Karenina*, and finally, *Hadji Murad*.

### **'Our Russians'**

*That's Homer in the Caucasus, Not Lermontov*

In 1851, Tolstoy accompanied his brother Nikolai, who was then an officer in the Russian army, to the Caucasus to join the latter's regiment. After enlisting in the army, Tolstoy served in the Caucasus for two years and participated in the 1853 campaign against the uprising under Imam Shamil (1797-1871), before being posted in 1853 to Sevastopol' as a second lieutenant, following the outbreak of the Crimean War (1853-1856). Tolstoy's combat experience included frequent exposure to small arms and artillery fire, and he was recommended three times for the Cross of St George, tsarist Russia's highest award for heroism under fire.<sup>197</sup> Although the military experiences in the Caucasus and in the Crimea contributed enormously to his writing, Tolstoy drew on them in reverse order: he first wrote the *Sevastopol' Sketches* and then composed short stories set in the Caucasus, before returning to the Caucasus theme again in *The Cossacks*. Indeed, Tolstoy's writing continued to revisit the Caucasus region throughout his career, in works such as the 1872 novella, *The Prisoner of the Caucasus (Kavkazskii plennik)* and his final novel, *Hadji Murat*.

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<sup>197</sup> Paul Friedrich, 'Tolstoy and the Chechens: Problems in Literary Anthropology', *Russian History*, 30 (2003), 113-43 (p. 120). The award was denied all three times on 'procedural' grounds.



In 1852, while serving in the Caucasus, Tolstoy recorded his attitude to war in his journal, directly beneath the Chechen songs he transliterated and translated into Russian (the cycle I discussed in the opening section of this chapter): 'It is strange that my childhood view of war – *molodechestvo* – is for me the most soothing'.<sup>198</sup> The notion of *molodechestvo* derives from the *molodets* figure of Russian folk tradition. The *molodets* is a warlike, heroic youth, who is always praiseworthy and always both beautiful and good; the term is typically preceded by the epithet 'dobry' – 'good'. In her discussion of the *molodets* and the associated concept of *molodechestvo*, Orwin observes: 'its abstract suffix "stvo" indicates the essence of such a youth, so it should be, and fundamentally is, positive'.<sup>199</sup>

This association of war with heroism and poetry held for Tolstoy until the summer of 1854, by which time he was an officer in the Crimea. He records in his journal that he has 'discovered'<sup>200</sup> ('otkryl') Lermontov's poem *The Dying Gladiator* (*Umiraiushii Gladiator*, 1836), commenting that its 'pre-death dream of home is surprisingly beautiful'.<sup>201</sup> The poem tells of a barbarian gladiator who dies in the

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<sup>198</sup> PSS 46, p. 91. See Appendix A.57 for original.

<sup>199</sup> Donna Tussing Orwin, 'Leo Tolstoy: pacifist, patriot, and molodets' in *Anniversary Essays on Tolstoy*, ed. by Donna Tussing Orwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 76-95 (p. 78). Tolstoy's 'childhood view' of *molodechestvo*, particularly in its association with the mountainous terrain of the Caucasus, was not unique to him. Russian poets such as Derzhavin, Karamzin, Lermontov, and perhaps most famously, Pushkin, had praised the 'untamed' beauty of the Caucasian landscape since the 1820s; see Susan Layton, 'The Creation of an Imaginative Caucasian Geography', *Slavic Review*, 45 (1986), 470-85. Moreover, such Caucasus-centred writing was strongly influenced by the ongoing Russian conquest of the region, thus providing a platform for celebrating Russian military might; see, for example, Katya Hokanson, 'Pushkin's Invention of the Caucasus', *The Russian Review*, 53 (1994), 336-52.

<sup>200</sup> PSS 47 pp. 9-19.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.* See Appendix A.58 for original.

This 'pre-death dream of home' is a theme Tolstoy may have learned from Homer and works into his writing; consider, for instance, Andrei's recollections of his family before Austerlitz and Borodino (where he is fatally wounded) or Hadji Murat's memories of his family before his final, fatal battle. In the *Iliad*, Achilles envisions returning to Phthia to his father and an imagined wife prior to making the decision to remain in Troy, where he will die:

'For if the gods will keep me alive, and I win homeward,  
 Peleus himself will presently arrange a wife for me.

[...]

And the great desire in my heart drives me rather in that place  
 to take a wedded wife in marriage, the bride of my fancy,  
 to enjoy with her the possessions won by aged Peleus. [...]  
 And this would be my counsel to others also, to sail back  
 home again [...]' (//.393-417).

dust of the Roman amphitheatre ‘like a forest animal’<sup>202</sup> (*‘kak zver’ lesnoi’*) without returning home to his father and children, or claiming his ‘loot and glory’ (*‘dobycha i slava’*). The next day, Tolstoy reports that he is reading Lermontov’s *Izmail-Bei* (written in 1832, published in 1843), an epic poem about a violent tribesman seeking vengeance. Tolstoy reflects that he likes the poem because he is ‘beginning to love the Caucasus with a posthumous but powerful love’.<sup>203</sup> In the next sentence, he explains why he loves the Caucasus: ‘Truly good is this wild region where two very different things – war and freedom – are so strangely and poetically linked’.<sup>204</sup> These reflections provide evidence that not only does the young Tolstoy consider the region inherently poetic, but that this poetic quality is connected with violent heroism. Put differently, the ethnogeography of the Caucasus was associated with a certain literary genre for Tolstoy. As we saw above, in 1854, he was interested in Cossack and Chechen oral songs, which he characterized as both ‘epic’ and ‘legendary’ and which inspired his own writing. These associated themes – violent heroism in a ‘wild’ region – became prevalent in Tolstoy’s earliest stories.

Two years later, in 1854, Tolstoy begins to connect contemporary Russian heroism with ancient Greece. In a November 1854 letter to his brother, Sergei, the young officer describes the behaviour of his fellow Russian troops during the Siege of Sevastopol’: ‘The spirit of the troops is greater than any description. In the time of ancient Greece there was not this much heroism’.<sup>205</sup> He adds: ‘The bombardment on the fifth remains one of the most brilliant and glorious exploits not only in Russian, but in world, History’<sup>206</sup> (capitalization in original). For Tolstoy, Russian heroism, ancient Greek heroism, and world history are linked in a way that expresses both heroic epic themes and scope. Tolstoy goes on to describe to his brother the plan organized in his artillery headquarters for a military journal aimed

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<sup>202</sup> *Umiraiushii gladiator* in *M.Iu. Lermontov: Sobranie sochinenii v 4 tomakh*, Élektronnoe izdanie vol 1, ed. by I.S. Chistova and others (Institut russkoi literaturi rossiiskoi akademii nauk, Russkaia virtual’naia biblioteka, 2020), p. 270. <<https://rvb.ru/19vek/lermontov/ss4/vol1/poems/327.html>> [accessed 18 January 2021]

<sup>203</sup> *PSS* 47, p. 10. See Appendix A.59 for original.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.* See Appendix A.60 for original.

<sup>205</sup> *PSS* 59, p. 281. See Appendix A.61 for original.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 282. See Appendix A.62 for original.

at soldiers, chronicling the 'heroes' ('geroev') and 'brave exploits' ('podvigi') of the army;<sup>207</sup> this ultimately evolved into the *Sevastopol' Sketches*.

Tolstoy's original comparison of Russian heroism to that of ancient Greece is worked into *Sevastopol' in December*, where Captain Kornilov is compared to a Greek hero.<sup>208</sup> We see here that Tolstoy was motivated to record a historical memory of a glorified Russian martial spirit that rivals that of Greece. We see from the letter to Sergei that, although inspired to love the military frontier by Lermontov's heroic poetry, for Tolstoy it is specifically Greek heroism that is the standard against which any claim to heroics must measure itself. If Russian military success is equal to, and even surpasses, that of ancient Greece, then Tolstoy is not merely justified but historically obligated to bear witness to and record events of the war. As he did so, it is evident from a remark in *Sevastopol' in May* that Tolstoy was thinking specifically of Homeric heroism: 'Why did Homers and Shakespeares write about love, about glory and suffering, while the literature of our time is only the endless novel of "Snobs" and "Vanity?"'.<sup>209</sup> This rhetorical question praises the literature of the past and separates glory, a desirable and necessary aspect of what it means to suffer and to love, from trifling vanity, concerned only with its own ends. The remark critiques not only William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863), but all the literature 'of our time' (this includes Lermontov) as allegedly preoccupied with trivialities – unlike the work of Homer and Shakespeare.

This fulfils a validating and legitimizing role in *Sevastopol' in May*: the contrast between literatures is invoked in a narrative which, in criticizing vanity and devoting itself to the glory and suffering of Russian heroes, aligns itself with the non-trivial literature of 'the past', with the likes of Shakespeare and, crucial to Tolstoy's association with ancient Greek heroism, with Homer and Homeric heroes. The *Sevastopol' Sketches* are retellings of heroic deeds which rival the greatest

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., pp. 282-83.

<sup>208</sup> See pages 65 to 66.

<sup>209</sup> *PSS* 4, p. 24. See Appendix A.63 for original. This remark refers to the novels *Vanity Fair* and *The Book of Snobs* (both published in 1848) by William Makepeace Thackeray, whom Tolstoy read consistently throughout his life.

exploits in world history – they are, in short, epic works akin to Homer’s – and which bring Russian military achievements onto the world-historical stage. Such passages in the *Sketches* compel readers to relate Tolstoy’s narratives to Homer’s, while equating the Russian heroism they praise with that of ancient Greece, advancing the supposition that combat permits development of moral values and offers an opportunity for self-sacrifice in a way that peaceful conditions cannot. Heroism is formed in the crucible of violence, shaping character along patriotic lines. The notion of war as national moral educator is reiterated in Tolstoy’s journals, as he writes from the depths of the Siege of Sevastopol’: ‘Those people who are now sacrificing their lives will be citizens of Russia and will not forget their sacrifice. With great dignity and pride they will take part in social affairs, and the enthusiasm kindled by war will mark their character forever with self-sacrifice and nobility’.<sup>210</sup>

While the *Sevastopol’ Sketches* are situated in Crimea, Tolstoy’s other writing composed between 1852 and 1856 is set, and inspired by his military service, in the Caucasus. This mountainous region was, we will remember, both wild and violent in Tolstoy’s view, and inspired his love for epic poetry. Tolstoy’s Caucasus-centred work, which we will consider in the rest of section, offers further examples of how he related the notion of heroism to ancient Greece. The narrator of the short story, ‘The Raid’, attempts to define courage in conversation with the battle-hardened Captain Khlopov. The narrator, a young volunteer, first considers what he calls ‘Plato’s’ definition of courage – the knowledge of what one ought and ought not fear – but finds that Captain Khlopov’s definition, although less elegantly articulated, is ‘more accurate than the definition of the Greek philosopher’.<sup>211</sup> The courage of the unassuming captain is shown to be more authentically heroic than the bravado of career officers who try to imitate the behaviour of Lermontov’s heroes. Orwin has argued that the narrator identifies the captain’s courage as authentic because, unlike romanticized conceptions of bravery, he displays both

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<sup>210</sup> PSS 47, pp. 27-28. See Appendix A.64 for original.

<sup>211</sup> PSS 3, pp. 16-17. This is likely a reference to Plato’s dialogue, *Laches* (c. 421-418 BC). While its definition of courage is articulated by Socrates, not Plato, since Tolstoy’s narrator refers to the definition as Plato’s, for the sake of consistency, I have done the same.

knowledge and steadfastness, which follows Plato's definition.<sup>212</sup> However, we must keep in mind not only that the captain's definition is described as superior to Plato's, but that the captain dismisses the effort to define courage in the first place as mere 'philosophizing', thereby discrediting the alleged purpose of Tolstoy's narrative. Furthermore, the captain is described multiple times as quintessentially Russian: he has 'one of those simple, calm, Russian faces into the eyes of which it is pleasant and easy to gaze'<sup>213</sup> and his humility reflects the 'particular and great quality of Russian courage'.<sup>214</sup>

The characterization of the truly Russian captain personifying a truly Russian courage shows that, first, courage has for Tolstoy not only a philosophical but a national dimension. Second, courage which is essentially Russian is superior to any other nation's courage, even if it has been defined by Plato. In other words, Platonic courage is introduced so that Russian courage can supersede it. The captain's humble courage serves an extradiegetic purpose: in its absence of vanity, the act of narrating it means that Tolstoy is not philosophizing like Plato but composing epic like Homer. Put differently, in the literary act of praising and celebrating a figure such as Captain Khlopov, Tolstoy is continuing the tradition of non-trivial heroic epic exemplified by Homer. This is opposed both to the writing of 'our time' exemplified by Lermontov and to mere philosophical reflection exemplified by Plato. When considered alongside Tolstoy's claim that even ancient Greece had never equalled the Russians' bravery, the privileging of truly Russian courage in 'The Raid' demonstrates that the youthful Tolstoy utilized conceptions of ancient Greek heroism to promote Russian heroism as its superior inheritor and, therefore, deserving of an epic narration aligned with Homer's in its non-trivial promotion of glory, suffering, and love.

In the 1852 story 'The Wood-felling', set in the Caucasus, the first-person narrator observes:

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<sup>212</sup> Donna Tussing Orwin, 'Courage in Tolstoy' in *The Cambridge Companion to Tolstoy*, ed. by Donna T. Orwin (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 222-36 (p. 223).

<sup>213</sup> *PSS* 3, pp. 18-19. See Appendix A.65 for original.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37. See Appendix A.66 for original.

I have always and everywhere, especially in the Caucasus, noticed a particular tact in our soldier during times of danger to remain quiet and avoid those things which may have negative repercussions for the spirit of his comrades. The spirit of the Russian soldier is not based, like the courage of the southern peoples, on a rapidly firing and cooling enthusiasm [...]. He does not need effects, speeches, war cries, songs and drums [...]. In the Russian, the truly Russian, soldier, you will never notice bragging, bravado, the desire to forget oneself, to get fired up in times of danger; on the contrary, modesty, simplicity, and the ability to see danger as completely different from danger are the hallmarks of his character.<sup>215</sup>

This passage echoes both the tone and ethical values with which ‘The Raid’ had credited the captain and has multiple elements to consider. First, the narrator’s observation focuses ‘especially’ on soldiers in the Caucasus; it is significant that this is where the truly heroic Captain Khlopov makes his permanent home. This moral geography implies that the absence of refined civilization underwrites heroism. Second, like the captain, the ideal Russian soldier prefers not to discuss but to act; this association reinforces the argument that the Russian soldier is implicitly heroic while simultaneously reinforcing the captain’s true Russianness.

Third, the Russian spirit is distinct from the courage of ‘the southern peoples’ (*‘iuzhnykh narodov’*); while it is not clear whether Tolstoy is thinking of Greece and Italy so much as the Caucasus here, it nevertheless means that ‘passionate’ heroism championed by Homer (or Lermontov) in a tempestuous hero such as Achilles, for example, does not characterize the humble Russian military spirit, reiterating the idea that all heroism has a national dimension which is what renders specifically Russian heroism ethically unique. This is because, fourth, Russian heroism does not require speeches, boasting, or war cries – unlike, for example, Homeric heroes, who partake in all three<sup>216</sup> – and like the captain, the Russian

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<sup>215</sup> PSS 3, pp. 70-71. See Appendix A.67 for original.

<sup>216</sup> For example, it is the task of Achilles’ mentor, Phoenix, to ensure that his charge becomes not only a great warrior, but also an effective communicator, specifically, ‘a speaker of words’ (Hom. //9.443); Achilles

soldier is both modest and simple. While epic poetry is an appropriate medium for celebrating Russian military achievement, with Homeric epic preferable because it emphasizes a selfless glory, for Tolstoy, the expression of heroism remains both historical and national. Finally, Tolstoy applies the technique we saw him use in *Sevastopol' in December*: implicating the reader in the national narrative by compelling her or him to share in patriotic pride by qualifying the Russian soldiers as 'ours' ('*nashy*').

'The Wood-felling' demonstrates the moral difference between simple, modest, Russian soldiers and their rhetorically gifted and foreign-educated peers in a dialogue between the narrator and the company commander Bolkhov. Bolkhov is a St Petersburg dandy who speaks French, consumes sophisticated luncheons even in the army, and likely received a European education. He admits to the narrator that he is frightened during battle. Moreover, he is disappointed that the Caucasus failed to live up to their legendary status: "In Russia they imagine the Caucasus as something grand, with eternal virgin ice, with powerful streams, daggers, cloaks, Circassian women – all of this is something frightening, but in actuality, there is nothing exciting about it. If at least they knew that we are never in virgin ice, and there's nothing exciting about being in them anyway [...]"<sup>217</sup> The officer who is most associated with Europeans, like the 'passionate' people of 'the south', sought something monumental and poetic in the Caucasus – in short, something epic – and the reality of war, consisting mostly of being afraid in an unpoetic land is far less romantic than what he had anticipated.

The narrator responds to Bolkhov meaningfully: "Have you ever had this experience? Reading poetry in a language which you don't know well: imagining

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acknowledges the importance of rhetorical skill when he admits that, while he is the foremost fighter among the Greeks, there are those who are 'better in council' (*Il.* 18.106). Relatedly, Homer identifies the Greek hero Diomedes as 'Diomedes of the great war cry' (*Il.* 7.399) and Menelaos as 'Menelaos of the great war cry' (*Il.* 17.246); when Achilles returns to the war in Book 18, he 'cried in a terrible voice' to his horses (*Il.* 18.399) and entered the battle 'shouting' (*Il.* 18.424). For a discussion of warrior boasts unique to Homeric epic, which 'often include abusive/scornful remarks addressed to the vanquished [...] as well as an emphasis on the victor's credentials' see Poulheria Kyriakou 'Warrior Vaunts in the "Iliad"', *Neue Folge*, 144 (2001), 250-77 (p. 251).

<sup>217</sup> *PSS* 3, p. 55. See Appendix A.68 for original.

that it's much better than it is?..."<sup>218</sup> (ellipsis in original). The narrator is implying that Bolkhov arrived at his exoticized view of the Caucasus by means of poetry, subtly alluding to epic poems about the Caucasus produced by writers such as Lermontov and Pushkin. The true 'language' of the Caucasus wars, however, is not literary. The language of war is one of ordinary soldiering, a language that Bolkhov does not speak well, which is why his foreign-influenced expectations were misguided. The Russian experience of the Caucasus is something much more small-scale and mundane, as made clear in the conclusion of the chapter. While Bolkhov and the narrator try to display a lofty indifference to the extreme danger posed by a cannon ball that has landed nearby, nonchalantly discussing German and French kings and generals, the simple Russian soldier Antonov interrupts their bombast. Antonov, characterized specifically as a 'type' of a Russian soldier, is identified in an earlier passage as 'that same bombardier Antonov who, back in 37, when left with only one cannon, with no cover, shot back at the powerful enemy and with two bullets in his thigh continued to walk around the cannon and reload it'.<sup>219</sup> This truly heroic individual, who proves himself by action rather than language, is juxtaposed to the artificial, French-influenced, commander Bolkhov who is not part of the *narod*:

When I realized that the enemy had shot at us, everything that had appeared before my eyes before took on a new, majestic character [...]  
'Where did you get the wine?' I asked Bolkhov lazily [...].  
'Well, if I were Napoleon or Friedrich', Bolkhov said at this moment, turning to me coldly, 'I would invariably utter some sort of pleasantry'.  
'You uttered it just now', I answered, with difficulty concealing the alarm that the passing danger had occasioned in me.  
'So what that I said it, nobody will record it'.  
'I'll record it'.  
'Even if you do record it, it will be as criticism [...]', he added, smiling.

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., p. 54. See Appendix A.69 for original.

<sup>219</sup> PSS 3, p. 46. See Appendix A.70 for original.



‘Pah! Damn you!’ Antonov said at this moment, spitting sadly to the side.  
‘Almost got me in the legs.’.<sup>220</sup>

Not only are the narrator and Bolkhov feigning their courage, but there is an explicit connection made here between poetic rhetoric and everyday speech, indicating that the former tends toward hollow phraseology. This notion is concretized further in Bolkhov’s concern that nobody will record his nonchalant courage, and the narrator’s reassurance that he, the narrator, will: ‘The Woodfelling’ is itself the self-reflexive recording that the narrator promises to Bolkhov. However, what has been recorded is not Bolkhov’s bravery, but the artificiality of heroic posturing, and its contrast with the straightforward courage of the Russian soldier. Antonov speaks the mundane ‘language’ of the army without grandiloquence, and this, Tolstoy invites us to conclude, is the mark of heroism – evident in Russians.

Duty also features prominently in the non-trivial, selfless conception of heroism, a martial value that Tolstoy draws from an Iliadic axiology. Orwin has urged the importance of duty to the definition of courage in ‘The Raid’,<sup>221</sup> and it is certainly apparent that the story’s heroic captain serves in the military not for the sake of adventure or praise, but because he regards it as his proper role. When asked why he serves, the captain says simply, ‘One must serve’<sup>222</sup> (*‘Nado zhe sluzhit’*). Since we have seen that, at this time, Tolstoy praised not only Greek heroism but specifically Homeric heroism, I suggest that his understanding of heroism was consciously resonant with the Iliadic axiology of heroism articulated by the Trojan warrior Sarpedon, in his famous address to Glaucus in Book Twelve of the *Iliad*:

‘[I]t is our duty in the forefront of the Lykians  
to take our stand, and bear our part of the blazing of battle’ (*Il.13.315-17*).

The notion that some members of a nation have an obligation to join the military and fight is precisely what renders the captain – and, crucially, the Russian martial

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid., p. 56. See Appendix A.71 for original.

<sup>221</sup> Orwin, ‘Courage in Tolstoy’, p. 223.

<sup>222</sup> *PSS* 3, p. 18.

spirit he represents – heroic in Sarpedon’s sense. The world of Homer’s epics is one of decentralized spheres of power, precarity, and violence: ‘[T]he background condition of life is a condition of war – when men feel themselves free to steal from anyone with whom they are not acquainted and to plunder and exterminate any town against which they have a grievance’.<sup>223</sup> This is the world of epic heroes that we saw Tolstoy identify in the ‘wild’ Caucasus region where he finds ‘war’ and ‘freedom’ to be inseparable. In a lawless terrain where anything might happen, making war is a necessity that has a positive normative value.

Although it was published many years after the texts I am considering in this section, Tolstoy began work on *The Cossacks* as early as 1852. In the novel’s fourth chapter, Tolstoy develops his most complete description of the Caucasus and its inhabitants in a way that is wholly consistent with the ‘wild’ region described in his journal, and can be synthesized with those offered in ‘The Raid’, ‘The Woodfelling’, and Tolstoy’s journals, that we have so far been discussing:

In this region that is so fertile, woody, and so richly overgrown with vegetation, there has lived from time immemorial a warlike, handsome, and rich old-believer Russian population, called the Grebenskie Cossacks. A very, very long time ago, their ancestors, the old believers, fled Russia [...]. Living among the Chechens, the Cossacks intermarried with them, and adopted the customs, the manners, and the morals of the mountaineers, but maintained even there, in all its past purity, the Russian language and old faith [...]. [L]ove for freedom, idleness, robbery, and war constitute the chief traits of [the Cossack] character [...]. His best weapons are those he got from the mountaineers; his best horses are bought or stolen from them.<sup>224</sup>

This passage makes clear why ‘The Wood-felling’ finds the Russian soldier’s particular brand of heroism ‘especially’ evident in the Caucasus: the region is, for Tolstoy, a pristine and uncivilized version of Russia, formed in a past ‘a very, very

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<sup>223</sup> James Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, p. 99.

<sup>224</sup> *PSS* 6, pp. 15-16. See Appendix A.72 for original.

long time ago' (*'ochen', ochen' davno'*). Tolstoy regards the Greben Cossacks and the Caucasus region, unlike the region of the Crimea, as more authentically Russian than even Russia itself because of its unbroken link to the past and the origin of Russian history. Of equal importance is the region's preservation of the old religion that developed prior to the Europeanization of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For Tolstoy, this remote, ancient Russia is populated by warrior tribes who steal and plunder. Paul Friedrich, in his analysis of Tolstoy's experience with the mountaineers, describes the landscape of the Caucasus and its inhabitants thus:

Unique for the Caucasus, [the Chechens] and the linguistically close Ingush were and still are organized into coordinate, patrilineal clans, that, with villages and extended families were entangled in political alliances, partly ritualized theft, and vendetta obligations; kidnapping for ransom or to increase the labour force was already an ingrained custom. Extreme value attached to rituals of hospitality, kinship vengeance and kinship loyalty [...]. As of the late 1990s they still had a highly developed aesthetic culture of music (song), dance, and verbal, notably, epic art.<sup>225</sup>

The parallel with Iliadic society is striking. It shows why Tolstoy was inspired to associate the region and the Russian soldiers fighting there not with Lermontov's heroes but ancient Greek heroes and Homeric poetry. The connection Tolstoy made in his notebook between the Cossacks and the Russian *narod* introduced above is related to a national brand of heroism; let us recall that in 1857 Tolstoy claimed that 'the future of Russia is Cossackdom'<sup>226</sup> and that in 1870 he argued, 'All of Russian history has been made by the Cossacks [...] the *narod* desires to be Cossack'.<sup>227</sup> We can therefore conclude that, first, the Iliadic Caucasus was, for the young Tolstoy, an ancient, authentically Russian land where true Russian heroism is expressed most strongly. Second, the Caucasus region, in its moral

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<sup>225</sup> Friedrich, 'Tolstoy and the Chechens', p. 126.

<sup>226</sup> PSS 47, p. 204. See Chapter One, p. 31.

<sup>227</sup> PSS 48, p. 153. See Chapter One, p. 36.

ethnogeography, was linked in Tolstoy's mind to a national idea that could be realized by returning to the authentically Russian past.

*Conclusion: Duty and Glory in Anticommunity*

Heroes emerge from the social need for warriors: in a Homeric landscape, war is the most critical human activity because defensive war makes possible the creation and maintenance of other social values, such as property, familial life, productive labour, and religious ceremonies.<sup>228</sup> If Tolstoy perceives his fictional warriors to be more heroic in the Caucasus, it is because in entering the mountain frontier, the Russian soldier is better able to express his authentically Russian heroism – even more than he could in the Crimea – because he begins to experience and participate in the social conditions that characterize the dangerous mountain life. Combat exists beyond the bounds of ordinary community – Redfield terms it ‘anticommunity’<sup>229</sup> – and it is characterized by a tension between culture and nature. In securing itself by force, the community engenders a paradox wherein the negative necessity of warfare becomes a positive pursuit of the honour it confers: ‘War thus acquires for the warrior a certain positive value. Heroism is initially a social task; it then becomes a definite set of virtues associated with the performance of this task’.<sup>230</sup> When Captain Khlopov performs this task admirably because he possesses the virtue it requires, Tolstoy shows that this virtue is a uniquely Russian sense of courage.

The story we have been considering, ‘The Woodfelling’, provides insight into this other side of martial duty – non-trivial pursuit of honour and glory – for which Tolstoy explicitly credits Homer and which is qualitatively different from the vanity celebrated ‘in our time’. As we saw above, the narrator in *Sevastopol' in May* expressed that glory and suffering are precisely what makes Homeric epic admirable. Tolstoy's most evident debt to Homeric epic at this time is that his own heroes reflect these qualities. To return to Sarpedon's address to Glaucus:

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<sup>228</sup> Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, p. 99.

<sup>229</sup> Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, p. 104.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid*, p. 100.

'Man, supposing you and I, escaping this battle,  
would be able to live on forever, ageless, immortal,  
so neither would I myself go on fighting in the foremost  
nor would I urge you into the fighting where men win glory.  
But now, seeing that the spirits of death stand close about us  
in their thousands, no man can turn aside nor escape them,  
let us go on and win glory for ourselves, or yield it to others' (*Il.* 12.310-28)

Sarpedon is motivated not by vanity but by duty, and he strives for glory that is not the Trojans' by right. These values can be fulfilled only in combat, where death cannot be avoided, only faced. Tolstoy's conception of heroism is modelled on the same formula: duty begets heroism which is glorious without being vain. The positive value of heroism, once divorced from the need to secure the community, becomes beholden to itself. In other words, the warrior need not be defending any particular community – the Greeks do not fight in Troy on behalf of their home, as Achilles makes clear in Book One of the *Iliad* (152-158) – and the military community becomes a symbolic substitute for the homeland.

Captain Khlopov is a true hero in large part because he flourishes within the anti-community of combat; he has remained in the mountains for eighteen years, has been critically wounded four times, and has very limited communication with his family in Russia. The wildness of the Caucasus necessitates the duty of war, and the duty of war generates heroism like the captain's. Since the war takes place within the authentically Russian Caucasus, it facilitates the national heroism that Tolstoy describes in 'The Raid' and 'The Wood-felling'. In the latter text, the Cossack Captain Trosenko, who is praised for being in possession of a 'hardened, calm courage'<sup>231</sup> (*'zakalennoi, spokoinoi khrabrosti'*) and a 'rare kindness'<sup>232</sup> (*'redkoi dobroty'*), who has the wit to see through deceit and the tact to refrain from pointing it out, has been serving for so long that the company he commanded had

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<sup>231</sup> *PSS* 3, p. 64

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*

become his 'family'<sup>233</sup> ('*semeistvo*'), the headquarters' fortress had become his 'motherland'<sup>234</sup> ('*rodina*'). For Trosenko, 'everything that was not the Caucasus was worthy of contempt and almost unworthy of existence'.<sup>235</sup> This courageous Cossack warrior has transformed the Caucasus into a kinship-based homeland, or *rodina*; that he is Cossack rather than Russian serves to highlight Tolstoy's view that authentic Russian heroism is achieved by means of the warlike way of life among the mountaineers.

Both 'The Raid' and 'The Woodfelling' celebrate the men who exist exclusively within anti-community, where there are neither women, children, nor families, and where army groups become communities unto each other. In Trosenko, the notion that the Caucasus region is a true homeland is made explicit such that he regards it as more 'real', or existing more truly, than Russia. The warrior is neither fully civilized nor wholly primal, and so must be exiled to the boundaries of society where he learns to make his home and which he leaves at his own peril. The early works we have investigated so far present warlike virtue traceable to ancient Greece but perfected in Russia. Tolstoy described suffering heroes motivated by love, not vanity, who dutifully faced death – in Sevastopol' and even more so in the Caucasus region -- as *national* ideals.

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid. See Appendix A.73 for original.

## Chapter two

### Historical Regression and Homeric Ethics

Among Tolstoy's early works, a less civilized and Europeanized version of Russia is conveyed most strongly in the 1856 novella, *Two Hussars* (*Dva gusara*) and his first novel, *The Cossacks* (begun in 1852, published in 1863). As I will demonstrate in this chapter, Tolstoy's writing in the 1850s presented Russia's past as more powerful and more noble than its present. This view – that the past was ethically superior to the present – I term historical regression. Historical regression has a profound affinity with a defining feature of Homeric epic themes and narrative structure: glorification of the past. This chapter will show how, in *Two Hussars*, Tolstoy refigured the Homeric theme of historical regression within a specifically Russian context, and subsequently, in *The Cossacks*, drew literary and spiritual inspiration from the Homeric, warlike virtues associated with a less civilized Russia.

In the first part of this chapter, to demonstrate how Homer's epics inform the category of historical regression in Tolstoy's early work, I will perform a close reading of selected passages from the novella *Two Hussars*. Among Tolstoy's early work, the novella has been comparatively neglected by scholars; this chapter compensates for that omission while illuminating why it is important for a full consideration of Tolstoy's Homeric inheritance. I intend to show how, as Tolstoy's reception of Homeric epic shifted from predominantly martial narratives to those that prioritise sociocultural questions, *Two Hussars* refigured heroism to privilege and promote a certain conception of the Russian national character and an associated national memory. In the second part of this chapter, I will consider how selected passages from *The Cossacks* provide insight into the beginning of Tolstoy's gradual problematization of military heroism and the warrior ethics that sustain it. Far from indicting the warlike Cossack culture, however, I show that Tolstoy located in it an echo of Homeric ethics, which, as I will argue, Tolstoy regarded as deeply humane.

## **'Those Naïve Times': *Two Hussars***

*'In Those Times, Those Naïve Times'*

In *Two Hussars*, Tolstoy again links the Russian national character with Iliadic virtues, as I shall show; however, instead of critiquing the literature of his contemporaries in light of Homeric epic and Shakespearean tragedy,<sup>236</sup> he now directly critiques the present age itself by contrasting it with a superior past. Consider that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russia took the European world as its sociocultural model, a homage which Tolstoy (along with other nineteenth-century writers, such as Dostoevsky and Gogol) questioned, satirized, and criticized. We shall see how, for the twenty-eight-year-old Tolstoy, there were two complementary alternatives to what he regarded as the falseness, vanity, decadence, and spiritual poverty of Russia's attempts to internalize European values: combat and domesticity. As we have seen in the previous chapter's discussion of 'The Raid', 'The Woodfelling', and the *Sevastopol' Sketches*, combat is an opportunity for heroism and a related, authentic Russianness. However, *Two Hussars* shows that the domestic also contains authenticity and goodness, possible both for warriors and the families that wait for them. In *Two Hussars*, the youthful Tolstoy treats war and domesticity as psycho-spatial realms that form the fabric of an ideal social structure. The battlefield and the home, both in nature, transcend the corruption of Europeanized civilization, enabling more genuine, vital, and noble action and relationships, while forming a complete whole which is more authentically Russian than the country's urban centres.

The novella draws on the hierarchical organization of the Homeric landscape, in which a protected city centre has links to wilderness, suitable for hunting, and cultivated land for grazing and farming.<sup>237</sup> The ethical geography of Homeric epic features a demarcation between inhabitable, tillable land and 'the land beyond the limit of agriculture'<sup>238</sup> which wild animals share with war combatants. Invoking this

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<sup>236</sup> As Tolstoy had done in the *Sevastopol' Sketches* – see page 74.

<sup>237</sup> Anthony T. Edwards, 'Homer's Ethical Geography: Country and City in the Odyssey', *Transactions of the American Philological Association (1974-2014)*, 123 (1993), 27-78.

<sup>238</sup> Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, pp. 189-90.



topography, *Two Hussars* is set far from the violent frontier where events such as the Siege of Sevastopol' might unfold, to develop a fuller picture of the ideal society. I shall discuss in the following section how the setting and characterization in Tolstoy's novella serve to adapt and ironize Homeric setting and characterization. I argue that the novella's male protagonist, Count Fëdor Turbin, is an adaptation of Homeric heroes, most notably, Odysseus; the female protagonist, Anna Fedorovna, is a (gender-querying) refiguration of Nestor, the aging king of Pylos; Anna Federovna's daughter, Liza, resonates strongly with the *Odyssey's* young princess, Nausikaa; finally, Count Turbin's son is an ironic reversal of both Odysseus and his son Telemachos, and I shall show how his appearance in the novella functions as a failed recognition type scene adapted from the *Odyssey*.

*Two Hussars* – which started out as the perhaps more aptly named *Father and Son* ('*Otets i syn'*) before Tolstoy changed the title<sup>239</sup> – opens with a cryptic epigram from a poem by the celebrated Hussar poet, Denis Davydov (1784-1839): 'Jomini and Jomini/ But of vodka – not a word'<sup>240</sup> (*Z'homini da Zhomini/ A ob vodke ne polyslova*'). To understand the epigram's significance for the novella, it is important to consider its source and quote it in full. First, Davydov was a Russian nobleman who fought in the Napoleonic Wars, where he was captured and met Napoleon, becoming notorious in the Napoleonic era as a heroic Hussar distinguished by his exploits, bravado, and poetry. Second, the epigram is taken from the *Song of an Old Hussar* (*Pesnia starogo gusara*), a poem that mocks theoretical discussions about war (in this case, such discussions are centred on the French general Antoine-Henri Jomini (1779-1869)):

Where are friends of years gone by [...]?

[...]

Old fellows! Even I remember you

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<sup>239</sup> The title was changed following the suggestion of Nikolai Nekrasov (1821-1878) *PSS* 47, p. 68.

<sup>240</sup> *PSS* 3, p. 145.

Drinking buckets  
Sitting around the fire  
With red-gray noses!

A *shako* on the back of your head  
Dolmans to your knees  
Sabers and cavalry swords at your hip  
And your couch – a bale of hay.

Not a word – columns of smoke.  
Not a word – drunk to death  
Lowering their heads  
They slept like *molodtsy*.

[...]

The steed panting beneath the rider  
The sabre whistles, the enemy falls...  
[...]

And what do I see now? Fear!  
And modern, fashionable hussars  
In uniforms and slippers,  
Waltzing on the parquet!

They say they're smarter...  
But what do we hear from each?  
Jomini and Jomini,  
But of vodka – not a word.<sup>241</sup> (translation mine)

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<sup>241</sup> Denis Davydov, *Pesnia starogo gusara*, Culture.ru <<https://www.culture.ru/poems/25582/pesnya-starogo-gusara>> [accessed 11 April 2021]. Translation mine. See Appendix A.74 for original.

Before the narrative begins, its reference to Davydov's poem identifies the theme: historical regression, the notion that the men of the past were more valiant and vigorous than the fashion-conscious young men who succeeded them. The waltzing, fearful youth has only the advantage of intellect over their warlike, boisterous, hard-drinking predecessors.<sup>242</sup>

In brief, the novella follows the arrival of a famed hussar, Count Fëdor Turbin, in an unspecified Russian village. In the single night of his visit, Turbin rescues a youthful cornet from the machinations of a cheating card-player, saving the former from near-suicide by forcefully recovering his lost fortune. He then seduces a beautiful young widow, Anna Fëdorovna,<sup>243</sup> who reciprocates his affection. Twenty years later, after the count's death, his son, also a hussar, arrives in the same village. In an astonishing (and theatrical) coincidence, the young man is stationed in the home of the aging Anna Fedorovna, where she lives with her daughter, Liza. Raised on Anna Fedorovna's stories about dashing hussars like Turbin, Liza expects that the dead count's son will be a heroic suitor for her. Both Anna Fedorovna and Liza are disappointed in the young man, who is cowardly and dishonourable.

The text opens with a framing narrative alerting the reader that the following account concerns Russia's past:

[I]n those times, when there were neither railroads nor highways, neither gas nor paraffin candles, no low sofas with springs, no lacquered furniture, no disillusioned young men with spectacles, no liberal women philosophers [...] of which so many have spread in our time – in those naïve times [...] when our fathers were still young not only by the absence of wrinkles and grey hair, but fought duels for the sake of a woman [...] when our mothers

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<sup>242</sup> As John Gooding has observed, *Two Hussars* expresses 'a clear statement in favor of the old life. Here was the beginning of that idealization of the past, and of the early nineteenth century in particular, which would lead in time to *War and Peace*'. John Gooding, 'Toward War and Peace: Tolstoy's Nekhliudov in Lucerne', *The Russian Review*, 48 (1989), 383-402 (p. 386).

<sup>243</sup> Notice that Turbin's first name is the same as the name of the widow's father – fatherhood and origins are important themes in the text.

wore short-waisted dresses [...] in those naïve days [...] the days of Miloradoviches and Davydovs and Pushkins [...].<sup>244</sup>

First, I suggest that the framing narrative shares a functional similarity with the invocation to the Muses in Homeric epic by proclaiming privileged authorial access to past events. Second, the poet Davydov is brought into the frame, along with the General Mikhail Miloradovich (1771-1825) and Pushkin, signalling that the past to be recollected is national, historical, and of legendary proportions. The choice of figures is significant: the nation's greatest poet, one of the nation's most celebrated generals, and Davydov, who is both a military man and a poet. Third, Tolstoy is once again playing upon the tension between cultural and communicative memory: with phrases like 'our fathers' and 'our mothers', the reader is implicated in the narrative such that the account becomes their historical past, too. This past is described as *naïve* twice in one sentence and promotes a sense of cultural youthfulness representative of more adventurous and less reasonable ancestors, who are displaying the alleged qualities of the national character. The reader is participating in history and in cultural memory by becoming identified with the fathers and mothers of the Russians. Thus, in the first sentences, the reader is oriented to a national-ideological position regarding Russia's history. The narrator, whose past we now share, will show us – no longer 'the reader', but 'us' – exactly who our predecessors were, contrasting them painfully with our contemporaries.

We are introduced to Count Turbin as he strides into a hotel with his enormous dog,<sup>245</sup> tosses aside his cloak to reveal a traditional Cossack jacket, and orders vodka instead of the champagne the other gentlemen in the lobby are drinking. Turbin is thus immediately related to the hussars of Davydov's time as the narrator links Turbin's pet, his attitude, his clothing, and his preference for vodka to the vital, violent Cossacks who are, for Tolstoy, authentically Russian. Turbin is a shouting,

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<sup>244</sup> PSS 3, p. 145. See Appendix A.75 for original.

<sup>245</sup> The dog is named Blücher (*Bliukher*), possibly a reference to the Prussian field marshal Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher (1742-1819) who defeated Napoleon at the Battle of Katzbach in 1813. Blücher, like Laika in *Anna Karenina*, has a developed character and we are privy to his inner dialogue. Turbin is chided for preferring the dog to humans: PSS 3, p. 149. See also Chapter 4, footnote 107, for a discussion of warriors and their association with dogs in Homeric epic and in *War and Peace*.

aggressive nobleman, who tosses away his last roubles and is welcome everywhere despite his notoriety for duelling, killing, abducting women, dropping men from windows, and robbing princes of hundreds of thousands of roubles during card games. This character recalls both the lawless adventuring of the Cossacks and the epic heroism of both Achilles and Odysseus. Like that of Odysseus, Turbin's notoriety precedes him, and he knows how to manipulate and trick others (for example, he warns a young man against being duped during a card game: 'Another time I would have cheated you myself [...] I, brother, have trodden that path myself, so I know all the sharpers' tricks'<sup>246</sup>). When he arrives at the hotel, the guests are instantly taken by his 'beautiful and open appearance,'<sup>247</sup> the striking beauty of a warrior is characteristic of many Homeric heroes, but as one who is feared for his bad tempers, Turbin is reminiscent of Achilles. Turbin's willingness to take personal risks is evident also in Tolstoy's description of the Cossacks; importantly, it is partly what animates the Homeric conception of honour.

Paul Friedrich identifies nine honour-linked values in Homeric epic.<sup>248</sup> It is helpful for this chapter's discussion to become acquainted with all nine to show how they are evidenced in Turbin to a marked degree, much more so than other heroic personages in Tolstoy's early writing. The first of the traditional heroic values is power, and Friedrich specifies that the main implication of Iliadic power is 'the ability to take from others, especially property and women'<sup>249</sup> (Turbin is notorious for kidnapping women and stealing money). The second and third values are wealth and magnanimity – wealth ought to be shared generously among friends and kin, which relates to the fourth value of personal loyalty to friends and relatives; I will consider below how Turbin is distinguished by his openness with money and loyalty to those he loves. Friedrich adds the related virtues of

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<sup>246</sup> PSS 3, p. 156. See Appendix A.76 for original. This openness indicates the first stirrings of what will become Tolstoy's preference for direct, dialogical speech over writing. Speech is direct, immediate, unmediated, and revelatory, unlike writing, which Tolstoy often presents as a tool used cunningly and bureaucratically to misguide and conceal, as will be discussed at length in Chapter Six.

<sup>247</sup> PSS 3, p. 146. See Appendix A.77 for original.

<sup>248</sup> Paul Friedrich, 'Sanity and the Myth of Honor: The Problem of Achilles', *Ethos* 5 (1977), 281-305 (pp. 290-93).

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*

precedence and shame, which are regarded as virtues because they indicate genealogy, birth, and parentage, along with sensitivity to the opinion of others, particularly elders. I will show below how Tolstoy ironizes the value of precedence in Turbin's son, who is expected to be the equal of his father, but due in part to his indifference to heroic virtues, is an unworthy inheritor of his father's heroism. Finally, fame or reputation (*kudos*) and courage characterize the honourable epic hero, both of which Turbin has in excess, even going so far as salvaging the honour of others, while his son is mocked for having neither.

Turbin is a marked departure from the modest, nonchalant heroes praised in 'The Raid' and 'The Woodfelling'. I suggest that, more than any other hero in Tolstoy's early fiction, Turbin embodies Iliadic attributes, particularly those of power, magnanimity, loyalty, reputation, courage, and excellence. By virtue of what Tolstoy calls its 'naïvete', the epoch celebrated in *Two Hussars* saw heroes whose immodesty was not a fault. Turbin is contrasted with his contemptible son, who is precisely the type of disillusioned young man that the narrator describes as having become so unfortunately ubiquitous and whom Davydov's poem mocks. This contrast presents the reader's Russian predecessors as warlike; the narrator strongly implies that Count Turbin is typical of the reader's father or grandfather. With ancestors like Turbin, Russia can lay claim to an epic past that is national, taking up the valour and virtue of the ancient Greek heroes described by Homer and refiguring it within a Russian context, which, for the early Tolstoy, involves either the Cossacks or the Caucasus due to their 'wildness' and 'purity'. Homeric Greece, for Tolstoy, stands in contrast to 'civilized' Europe and its values; in this imagined geography, it is not Europe that inherited Homeric heroism, but rather 'primitive' cultures, like those of the mountaineers, which are reflected in Russia's past. Unlike Europe, Russia lacked cultural, historical, and linguistic links to antiquity. By casting the reader's predecessors as Turbins who are associated with both Cossacks and epic heroes, *Two Hussars* establishes cultural and historical links to an epic – and distinctively Russian – past.

Tolstoy was aware of this process of history-making, since it is self-reflexively mirrored within the narrative: Count Turbin functions as a myth for a cavalryman in the novella who dreams up a more glorious past for himself. The cavalryman inserts a larger-than-life encounter with the great count into his personal history and has such faith in it that it becomes memory: 'The cavalryman told his companion about such a spree in Lebedian with the count that not only never occurred but could not have occurred [...]. He first transformed the desire into a reality and then into a memory and eventually came to firmly believe in his past as a cavalry officer'.<sup>250</sup> What, Tolstoy's narrator seems to ask, is the difference between a real or constructed memory? The passage shows that the process of transformation – first desire for a glorious history, then desire's transformation into history, then memory of it – depends upon the malleability of the past. The cavalryman shares his constructed tale, making the myth a part of communicative memory about the count as it is added to the stock of rumours and oral tales that precede Turbin, implying that the other stories about him are, perhaps, also constructed. The count's intradiegetic oral history parallels his extradiegetic history insofar as he functions for the reader the same way he does for the cavalryman: as an instance of a glorious past.

Since the past – whether reconstructed or not – is shown to be superior to the present in *Two Hussars*, the narrative depicts Russian history as regressive. Twenty years after the first narrative ends, a second begins which notifies the reader that his or her predecessor, Count Turbin, is dead, killed by a foreigner, alluding to the destructive influence of Europeanization on Russia's authentic culture. Turbin's son is nothing like his father: 'The young Count Tourbin did not resemble his father morally at all. There was not even a shadow in him of those fierce, passionate, and to be honest, perverse tendencies of the previous epoch'.<sup>251</sup> The discovery of the young Count Turbin's inferiority to his father occurs in the home of Anna Fëdorovna, through whose eyes we are alerted to the

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<sup>250</sup> PSS 3, p. 148. See Appendix A.78 for original.

<sup>251</sup> PSS 3, p. 174. See Appendix A.79 for original.

country's spiritual degeneration, since she remembers the past generation and contrasts it with that of the present.

At this point in the novella, for the first time in his writing career, Tolstoy engages in a lengthy description of family and home that is not autobiographical. He shifts from the male-dominated settings of battlefields, military camps, taverns, and billiard halls of his early stories to the female-dominated setting of a country home. The domestic sphere he presents is idealized and representative of Russian national identity: Anna Fëdorovna leads a simple life in a *derevnia*, country village, with her elderly brother and daughter, Liza, a 'Russian country belle'<sup>252</sup> ('*rusaskaia derevenskaia krasavitsa*'), who is responsible for the 'household management' ('*domashnee khoziaistvo*'). Their home in the country, far from any urban centres, is described as old;<sup>253</sup> the household uses a samovar and tallow candles (not the gaslight the narrator identifies as belonging to the modern age) in a room that leads out to an 'ancient'<sup>254</sup> ('*starinnyi*') and 'star-shaped'<sup>255</sup> ('*zvezdoobraznyi*') garden. These elements of setting and character – the advanced age of Anna Fëdorovna and her brother, the old house, the ancient garden, the absence of electricity – convey a historically remote world.

While there is no direct evidence that Tolstoy was deliberately adapting elements from the *Odyssey* in *Two Hussars*, it is clear from his journals and other fiction that his writing at this time is generally informed by his reading and re-reading of Homeric epic. It is not solely his journals and fiction that indicate this interest, however. The Introduction addressed Tolstoy's 1891 list of authors that had the greatest impact on him throughout his career, identifying Homer as exerting a strong literary influence on Tolstoy.<sup>256</sup> Since Homer's epics were, according to the list, exerting their strongest influence on Tolstoy when he was between the ages of twenty and thirty-five, we can expect that the literature he composed at this time, between 1848 and 1863, will be responding to Homeric material. *Two Hussars*,

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<sup>252</sup> PSS 3, p. 175.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> PSS 66, p. 68.



written in 1856, falls exactly within this timeline. It is, therefore, not coincidental that the narrative's emphasis on household concerns resonates strongly with the *Odyssey*. The *Odyssey* dwells prominently on the *oikos*, household, and the women responsible for overseeing it, such as the Phaiakian queen Arete along with her daughter Nausikaa, and Odysseus' wife, Penelope.

We have already seen Tolstoy compare himself to Penelope in an 1852 letter, referenced in Chapter One;<sup>257</sup> this indicates not only his familiarity with her character, but his positive view of it, associating Penelope with labour and diligence of a creative, flourishing type. I show here that both Penelope and Nausikaa can be read as influences on Liza, both in terms of character and plot, and that it is by means of Liza's characterization that the narrative strategy of *Two Hussars* reverses and ironizes the device of the recognition type scene so prevalent in the *Odyssey*.<sup>258</sup> Thomas Van Nortwick has described the link between Nausikaa and Penelope:

Nausikaa must be seen as a paradigm for Penelope [...]. Both women are preoccupied with marriage, attracted to the stranger, and profess disdain for their local suitors. Yet in Nausikaa's case at least, this disdain must be considered within the context of a brief but subtle characterization which portrays in her a certain ambivalence toward male companionship.<sup>259</sup>

Nausikaa, the virginal princess who, subtly and briefly, is courted by Odysseus, and Penelope, the queen of Ithaca and Odysseus' wife, converge in the character of Liza. Liza did not receive 'any education' ('*nikakogo vospitaniia*') from her mother, but the narrator describes this as a boon to the young woman: 'In the country, parents rarely try to provide their children with an education, and so accidentally provide a mostly wonderful one'.<sup>260</sup> The industrious Liza was an

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<sup>257</sup> Chapter One, footnote 50.

<sup>258</sup> For a discussion of successful recognition scenes in *The Odyssey*, see Peter Gainsford, 'Formal Analysis of Recognition Scenes in the 'Odyssey'', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 123 (2003), 41-59.

<sup>259</sup> Thomas Van Nortwick, 'Penelope and Nausikaa', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-2014), 109 (1979), 269-276 (p. 270).

<sup>260</sup> *PSS* 3, p. 178. See Appendix A.80 for original.

'active housekeeper' ('*deiate'naia khoziaika*') as a girl, cared for the household dependents; as an adult, she is responsible for running the household in its entirety. The representation of an unmarried woman singlehandedly running a large household that includes agricultural land and the peasants who work it appears only once in Tolstoy's work, in *Two Hussars*. Liza is described as competent and in possession of 'a light, tranquil soul full of physical and moral beauty';<sup>261</sup> this beauty is 'not ruined by intellect'<sup>262</sup> ('*neisporchennoe umom*'), a quality consistent with the figures of a less intellectual era praised in the framing narrative.

Although Liza's uncle lives on the estate, he does not help to manage it. This circumstance, and her independence, link Liza to Penelope, who is wise, circumspect, and praised for her virtue, and who, despite the presence of men in her household, is responsible for keeping it going. In cleverly weaving and unweaving Laertes' death shroud, Penelope manages the monumental task of stalling her suitors long enough to keep her son alive and her kingdom intact. In character, however, Liza reflects the young Phaiakian princess, Nausikaa. Liza is 'pure' ('*chistaia*')<sup>263</sup> and 'good-naturedly cheerful' (*dobrodushno-veselaia*)<sup>264</sup>; she has a playfulness and vitality because 'life is good and happy for those who have someone to love and who have a clean conscience. [...] [T]he corners of her lips and [...] shining eyes, [were] used to smiling and finding joy in life'.<sup>265</sup> She dreams of marriage and secretly suffers from an 'unsatisfied need for love',<sup>266</sup> yet rejects the suitors she has. Compare this characterization to Nausikaa, who remains unwed despite 'being courted by all the best men' (*Od.* 6.34), and who, prompted by Athena in Book Six of the *Odyssey*, approaches her father about washing the household clothing in preparation for marriage, since the duty falls to her:

'Daddy dear, will you not have them harness me the wagon,

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<sup>261</sup> PSS 3, p. 179. See Appendix A.81 for original.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> PSS 3, p. 178.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid. See Appendix A.82 for original.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

[...] so that I can take the clothing  
to the river and wash it? [...]'

So she spoke, but she was ashamed to speak of her joyful  
Marriage to her dear father [...]

[...] she and her maids [...]

they all threw off their veils for a game of ball, and among them  
it was Nausikaa of the white arms who led in the dancing;  
and as Artemis [...]

so this one shone among her handmaidens, a virgin unwedded.

(*Od.* 6.57-109)

The association with Artemis, a virgin goddess, hints that Nausikaa may prefer to remain chaste, yet tossing aside her veil, a covering typically associated with modesty, suggests otherwise. This ambiguity is underscored in her response to Odysseus, who appears naked on shore. In this sexually loaded scene, Odysseus, who needs to persuade the princess to his cause,<sup>267</sup> compliments Nausikaa and compares her to the virgin goddess, Artemis. Although Liza is no warlike Artemis, she shares with Nausikaa an ambivalence about marriage. On the one hand, she laments that she is 'already' twenty-two and yet nobody worthwhile has fallen in love with her. When she hears that Turbin's son has arrived, Liza is enthusiastic to finally encounter a worthy suitor but is soon disillusioned: 'She did not hear from him the very intelligent speeches she had expected, nor did she see that elegance in everything which she vaguely expected to find in him [...]. [She] found that not only was there nothing special in him, but that he was in no way distinguished from the others that she had seen'.<sup>268</sup>

For Nausikaa, nobody short of Odysseus, the legendary sacker of cities, will do. As she admires him after his bath and compares him to a god, Nausikaa observes: 'If only the man to be called my husband could be like this one' (*Od.* 6.244).

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<sup>267</sup> For a discussion of Nausikaa's encounter with Odysseus, and its representation in ancient art, see H.A. Shapiro, 'Coming of Age in Phaiakia: The Meeting of Odysseus and Nausikaa', in *The Distaff Side: Representing the Female in Homer's Odyssey*, ed. by Beth Cohen (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 155-64.

<sup>268</sup> *PSS* 3, p. 188. See Appendix A.83 for original.

Unfortunately for the princess, Odysseus is married to the (much older) Penelope. In a refiguration of Nausikaa's desire for a hero of legend, Liza longs for a heroic ideal like the epic hero Turbin who had once consorted with her elderly mother. From the perspective of narrative strategy, *Two Hussars* reverses and ironizes the Odyssean recognition type scene. In the *Odyssey*, a successful recognition scene involves Odysseus revealing his identity – for example, to his son Telemachos, to his father Laertes, and to his wife Penelope – and the subsequent joyful reunion. In *Two Hussars*, when the young Count Turbin, whom everyone expects to be a stand-in for his famous father, reveals himself to Anna Federovna and Liza, the opposite of a successful recognition takes place. The women effectively reject his claim to being the superior, or even the equal, of the dead count. Comparing father and son, Anna Fedorovna thinks, 'No, something is not right today, people aren't the same. [Turbin] was ready to leap into fire for me. And I was worth it, too. And this one is probably sleeping like a fool'.<sup>269</sup>

The negative reaction of the women to the son of the famous count reverses the recognition scene in Book Four of the *Odyssey*, in which Telemachos, the young son of Odysseus, visits the kingdom of Sparta. It is Helen, not Menelaos, who notices that Telemachos resembles Odysseus: "[T]his man has a likeness to the son of great-hearted Odysseus" (143). Menelaos agrees:

'I also see it thus, my wife, the way you compare them

[...]

[T]his is the son of a man greatly beloved who has come now  
into my house' (*Od.* 4.148-170).

Helen, and later, Menelaos, both representatives of the legendary heroic age, recognize and accept Telemachos as the worthy son of his great father. In *Two Hussars*, however, Anna Fedorovna, the representative of the past glorious age, sees that the young count is no warrior, nor does he display the heroic virtues of loyalty and preoccupation with honour that enabled his father to symbolically leap

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<sup>269</sup> PSS 3, p. 195. See Appendix A.84 for original.

into fire for a woman he loved. For Tolstoy, as the narrator of *Sevastopol in May* remarked, epic heroes like Homer's were motivated by love, suffering, and glory.<sup>270</sup> Their sons, however, are motivated by the reason and vanity inherent in modernity. To put it another way, Anna Fëdorovna, who is Turbin's counterpart of the past, superior epoch, does not 'recognize' the young count and therefore the recognition scene fails, or is left incomplete.

In response to the claim that modern youth have surpassed their predecessors, Anna Fëdorovna retorts, 'It is known, of course, that people have become smarter',<sup>271</sup> reiterating the section of Davydov's poem that acknowledges the intellectual superiority of the modern generation – however, this is not intended as a compliment. Anna Fëdorovna's recollections confirm the narrator's description. Their mutual indictment of modern men resonates both in theme and language with a passage in Book One of the *Iliad*, when the elderly Nestor compares the much younger Achilles and Agamemnon harshly to men of the past:

'Yet be persuaded. Both of you are younger than I am.  
Yes, and in my time I have dealt with better men than  
you are, and never once did they disregard me. Never  
yet have I seen nor shall see again such men as these were [...]  
These were the strongest generation of earth-born mortals,  
the strongest, and they fought against the strongest [...]  
[A]gainst such men no one  
of the mortals now alive upon earth could do battle' (*Il.*1.259-72)

It is not only Turbin's son, however, who cannot 'do battle' with his predecessors. Liza, too, lacks the power of beauty evident in the previous generation; her mother reflects, "Time, time, how it flies! [...] Long ago, it seems? I look at him as if he were here now. Ah, what a rake he was!" and tears appeared in her eyes. "Now Lizan'ka... But she is not what I was at her age... A good girl, but no, she's not

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<sup>270</sup> See page 74.

<sup>271</sup> *PSS* 3, p. 186. See Appendix A.85 for original.

it...”.<sup>272</sup> Here, the passage of time is linked directly to the melancholy devolution of humanity, from fearless ‘rakes’ like Turbin and beautiful women like Anna Fëdorovna, to their descendants, who are ‘not it’ (*ne to*). For Tolstoy, the modern youth lacks vitality, and as the dead count and withered Anna Fëdorovna represent an irredeemable past, so the living sons and daughters are its unworthy inheritors. Even Liza, reflecting on Turbin’s son, is aware of his insufficiency in the same terms with which her mother had critiqued her own: “No, he’s not it,” she said to herself. Her ideal had been so beautiful!<sup>273</sup> The ideal, of course, had been the elder Turbin (note that the adjective ‘*prekrasen*’ describes both Liza’s ideal, and the elder Turbin’s appearance).

The judgments of the narrator and characters estrange the reader from the story to remind him or her that these inadequate people are ourselves, the readers, in the moment of reading or hearing. The framing narrative of *Two Hussars* stands at the reader’s side, wherever in time he or she may stand, facilitating a reading of the framed narrative from a vantage point of advanced knowledge: we know already the fate of men like Turbin. This forces us to confront ourselves as the heirs of an epic past. These strategies of estrangement and metaliterary self-awareness follow Homer’s. For instance, in Book Twelve of the *Iliad*, in a passage which describes the destruction of the Greek wall, an emblem of Greek strength, the future is referenced explicitly:

So long as Hektor was still alive, and Achilleus was angry,  
so long as the citadel of lord Priam was a city untaken,  
for this time the great wall of the Achaians stood firm. But afterward  
when all the bravest among the Trojans had died in the fighting,  
[...]  
then at last Poseidon and Apollo took counsel  
to wreck the wall, letting loose the strength of rivers upon it [...]  
where much ox-hide armour and helmets were tumbled

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid., p. 184. See Appendix A.86 for original.

<sup>273</sup> PSS 3, p. 195. See Appendix A.87 for original.

in the river mud, and many of the race of the half-god mortals. (*Il.* 12.10-23)

The demise of the wall and the heroic race is described by reflecting on the narrative, removing us from it thereby and collapsing the aesthetic distance between ourselves and the present moment, replacing it with a historical distance between ourselves and the heroic race. This transports the hearer beyond the immediate, here-and-now immanence of the text's temporal horizon and reverts them to their own here-and-now, forcing them to reflect upon the narrative as narrative. Compare the above passage to the transition back to the framing narrative in the second part of *Two Hussars*:

More than twenty years passed. Much water has flowed away since those times, many people have died, many have been born, much has grown up and grown old, even more ideas were born and died; much that is beautiful and young has grown and even more has appeared on God's earth that is immature, monstrous, and young.<sup>274</sup>

Both passages utilize the simile of rushing water, both an epic trope and a natural force symbolic of both fertility and destruction, sweeping away a past which, though imperfect, is nevertheless superior to the present in strength, virtue, and beauty. The concept of historical regression in the *Iliad* juxtaposes a heroic past with a weaker, more degenerate present. Consider the following instances:

Tydeus' son in his hand caught  
up a stone, a huge thing which no two men could carry  
such as men are now, but by himself he lightly hefted it. (*Il.* 5.302-04)

Also:

It was Sarpedon's companion [...]  
whom he struck with a great jagged stone [...]

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<sup>274</sup> PSS 3, p. 174. See Appendix A.88 for original.

[...] A man could not easily  
hold it, not even if he were very strong, in both hands,  
of men such as men are now. (*Il.* 12.379-83)

And:

Hektor snatched up a stone [...]  
[...] two men, the best in all a community,  
could not easily hoist it up from the ground to a wagon,  
of men such as men are now. (*Il.* 12.445-49)

It is significant that Homer does not merely tell us that Hektor or Diomedes are strong in relation to other men, or even that it would take two men to accomplish what they accomplish. Strength is not a static measurement but is relative to the epoch, so Homer contrasts epic heroes specifically with men 'now' who cannot compare even if they are the community's best. These remarks echo Nestor's remembrances but apply them to a span of centuries rather than just three generations, resulting in a three-part regression in excellence: the men of Nestor's youth were greater than the men who fought at Troy who were greater than the men of Homer's time.

Regression features also in Hesiod's chronicle of the successive generations of humanity in *Works and Days*, another archaic epic, which begins with a distant Golden Age, passes through the Silver Age to the Bronze Age, with the Age of Heroes preceding what the poet describes as his own cruel and brutish Iron Age: 'For now the race is indeed one of iron. And they will not cease from toil and distress by day, nor from being worn out by suffering at night [...]. But Zeus will destroy this race of speech-endowed human beings too'.<sup>275</sup> This regressive formulation is integral to the internal logic of the *Iliad's* universe, but it reaches beyond the realm of myth and epic to include those whom Hesiod deplures, the

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<sup>275</sup> Hesiod, *Works and Days*, trans. by Glenn W. Most (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 86-87.



unfortunate men of 'now'. When Homer's text refers to 'men now' the implication is that they are not men of some other nation, but the men in the audience listening to the bard. The effect of these prophetic repetitions is to estrange the audience from the narrative with a self-conscious critique which itself prompts self-consciousness; it fosters a cultural memory which is active and self-reflexive.<sup>276</sup>

While the contrast between generations in *Two Hussars* may have been inspired by Davydov's poem, its articulation employs the device of the recognition scene and the Iliadic and Hesiodic formulation of regression in excellence which implicates the reader: the men and women of Anna Fëdorovna's youth were superior to the men and women of her old age, and the men and women of her old age exist in the epoch introduced in the framing narrative, which includes Tolstoy's reader. Where the *Sevastopol' Sketches* enjoined the reader to celebrate communicative memories of heroic predecessors, *Two Hussars* takes the extra step of turning these memories against the reader. If readers accept these memories as their own, which they cannot help doing in the act of reading the novel, they are thrust into a position of moral responsibility. Tolstoy informs his audience of how they stand in relation to the past to prompt a perspective on the future. In this early work, historical regression functions strategically by fostering a sense of national pride facilitated by reading epic history, alongside national shame facilitated by not living up to its achievement, such that readers will be motivated to question, critique, and even reject European values.

While Tolstoy's disdain for values he considered to be borrowed from Europe is already in evidence in *Two Hussars*, it becomes explicit in his 1862 article, *Progress and the Definition of Education (Progress i opredelenie obrazovaniia)*. I will devote the final part of this section to discussing this short text. Between 1857 and 1861, Tolstoy travelled extensively in Europe, visiting cities such as Paris, Brussels, Lucerne, Rome, Florence, and London. While he found much that

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<sup>276</sup> For a detailed analysis of how ancient singers deployed meta-narrational strategies to affect their listeners in the moment, and of how memory facilitated the composition and performance of epic song more generally, see Elizabeth Minchin, *Homer and the Resources of Memory: Some Applications of the Cognitive Theory to the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

interested and pleased him – the Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum) in London and the Parisian universities were particular favourites – his travels left Tolstoy primarily critical of European attitudes, values, and technologies. For example, he returned from Paris with a sense of horror after witnessing an execution by guillotine. More than two decades later, in *A Confession (Isповed'*, 1882), Tolstoy reflected that the very existence of such an efficient technology as the guillotine undermined the validity of arguments made on behalf of European moral and intellectual progress: 'When I saw how the head separated from the body, how one after the other thumped into the box, I understood – not with my reason but with my entire being – that no theories of progress or the rationality of what was occurring could justify this action'.<sup>277</sup> Similarly, after his 1861 return from London, Tolstoy notes in his journal that the city produced in him 'a disgust with civilization' ('*otvrashenie k tsivilizatsii*').<sup>278</sup> The 1862 article followed and drew upon these travels and reflections.

The 1862 article comprises Tolstoy's response to critics of his approach to education, specifically, the literary critic Evgenii Markov (1835-1903). He opens the piece by articulating the inadequacy of historicism to explain significant cultural developments. The three phenomena Tolstoy selects as examples to support his argument and which, he argues, cannot be understood solely or primarily by means of investigating their historical context, are: the pursuit of freedom, belief in God, and the beauty of the *Iliad*. Put differently, Tolstoy argues against historicism by advancing the ahistorical and absolute values of political justice, religion, and art. He offers the *Iliad* as his sole example of the final category, thereby equating it with human freedom and faith in God as examples of essential human needs ('*vnutrenniaia potrebnost'*):

You say, for example, that a human being has a right to be free, to be judged only on the basis of those laws which he himself accepts as just, and the historical view responds that history develops a certain historical

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<sup>277</sup> PSS 23, p. 8. See Appendix A.89 for original.

<sup>278</sup> PSS 48, p. 32.

moment that determines a certain historical legislation and the people's historical attitude toward it. You say that you believe in God – the historical view responds that history develops certain religious views and humanity's attitudes toward them. You say, the *Iliad* is a great epic production – the historical view responds that the *Iliad* is only an expression of a historical view at a certain historical moment. [...] [T]he historical view not only does not argue with you about whether freedom is necessary for humans, or whether God does or does not exist, or whether the *Iliad* is beautiful or not; it not only does nothing to achieve the freedom that you seek, or persuade or dissuade you about whether there is a God, or about whether the *Iliad* is beautiful or not; it only points to you that place which your inner requirement – love of truth or beauty – occupies in history.<sup>279</sup>

In this passage, we find not only confirmation that, for Tolstoy, the *Iliad* is both 'great' ('*velikoe*') and specifically epic, but we also see what will remain true throughout Tolstoy's career: the *Iliad* is absolutely and essentially great, and its value is related to political and religious concerns. This helps explain why Tolstoy's privileging of Homeric epic does not alter when his attitude toward other ancient Greek writers shifts along with his religious views throughout the 1870s and 1880s; Homeric poetry is subsumed and recategorized as an instance of religious faith, as we shall see in subsequent chapters.

In rejecting historicism, Tolstoy rejects also faith in historical progress, consistent with the attitude toward the past exemplified in *Two Hussars*. He both quotes and argues against Markov in the 1862 *Progress* article:

'Progress is good!' No, very bad, that is all I was saying. I do not hold to the religion of progress, and faith aside, there is nothing to prove the necessity of progress. 'Can it be that the world is getting worse and worse?' That is all I endeavoured to prove, only with the distinction that it is not all of

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<sup>279</sup> PSS 8, p. 326. See Appendix A.90 for original.

humanity that is getting worse, but that section of it that is subject to the education which Markov is defending.<sup>280</sup>

We are justified in applying Tolstoy's above reasoning to *Two Hussars*, the framing narrative of which, as we saw, asserts that with each passing generation, most people are deteriorating.<sup>281</sup> Liza, presumably, represents the subsection of humanity that is spared from 'getting worse and worse' (*hilel da hilel*). It is significant that the article in which Tolstoy declares explicitly that human society has, in many ways, degraded both ethically and spiritually, invokes Homeric epic as a stable social need. If a portion of humanity has degraded, in other words, then Homer's time must have been superior to the modern era in many ways, which explains why the poetry it produced is unrivalled, and why Tolstoy sought to align his ideal heroes – the alleged grandmothers and grandfathers of the Russian people – with the heroes of Homeric epic. While submitting that, in some ways, humanity has improved, for Tolstoy, the categories of both justice and art were both superior in antiquity than they are in his own day, again linking Homeric poetry with ethics.<sup>282</sup>

The brief article's third invocation of Homer is used to support Tolstoy's attack on modern technology, specifically, the printing press: 'I ask the reader to take notice that Homer, Socrates, Aristotle, German folk tales and songs, the Russian epic genre, and finally, the Bible and the Gospels, did not require the printing press to remain eternal'.<sup>283</sup> I will examine this important remark in much greater detail in subsequent chapters. For now, it is sufficient to observe that Homeric epic is yet

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<sup>280</sup> PSS 8, pp. 328-29. See Appendix A.91 for original.

<sup>281</sup> '[M]any people have died, many have been born, much has grown up and grown old, even more ideas were born and died; much that is beautiful and young has grown and even more has appeared on God's earth than is immature, monstrous and young'. PSS 3, p. 174. See Appendix A.92 for original.

<sup>282</sup> Recall, for example, how Tolstoy had posed the rhetorical questions regarding the superiority of antiquity in terms of social progress, already discussed in the Introduction: 'Have not the most conscientious political actors, who believe in the progress of equality and freedom, been persuaded yet and are they not persuaded every day, that in ancient Greece and Rome there was more freedom and equality than in the new England with its Chinese and Indian wars, or in the new France with its two Bonapartes, and the new America with its fierce war for the right of slavery? Have not the most conscientious, trusting in the progress of art, been persuaded that in our day there are no Phidiases, Raphaels, and Homers?' PSS 8, pp. 334-35. See Appendix A.13 for original.

<sup>283</sup> PSS 8, p. 342. See Appendix A.93 for original.

again linked with religious productions the value of which, for Tolstoy, is 'eternal' ('vechnye') and therefore not subject to historical analysis.

## **Homeric Love in the Caucasus: *The Cossacks***

### *Tolstoy's Homer Knew Love*

As Tolstoy matures, his characters become more complex. What is ethically sufficient for Turbin and Captain Khlopov is insufficient for Olenin, the protagonist of *The Cossacks*. The celebration of military heroism becomes its problematization in the text. Having begun his first novel in 1853, Tolstoy reworked it entirely after re-reading the *Iliad* into the version we have today, which was published in 1863. Tolstoy's relationship to Cossack culture was shaped dramatically by his reception of the war epic, which, perhaps paradoxically, turned his thoughts to Christianity.

In 1857, while working industriously on *The Cossacks*, at this time still titled *The Runaway (Beglets)*, Tolstoy was reading and re-reading the *Iliad*. As briefly remarked in Chapter One, that the novel was a direct response to Tolstoy's appropriation and refiguration of Homer's epic is evident from an August, 1857 journal entry in which, after exclaiming that the *Iliad* is a 'miracle'<sup>284</sup> ('chudo') Tolstoy reflects, 'I need to rework the entire Caucasus story'.<sup>285</sup> Two days later, Tolstoy records the following: '[Today,] I only read the *Iliad* [...]. The *Iliad* is forcing me to completely rethink *beglets*'.<sup>286</sup> As we have already seen, the most obvious result of Homeric influence on Tolstoy's early work is that Tolstoy's Cossack society is characterized by multiple Iliadic elements: a warrior ethic, obligations of hospitality, a ritualistic sense of brotherhood, guest-friendship, kinship loyalty and kinship vengeance, drinking, music, song, and dance. In a draft for the novel, the old Cossack Eroshka narrates his exploits in a bardic manner: 'In all his eloquent words, in all his sing-song, self-confident intonations'.<sup>287</sup> The following line,

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<sup>284</sup> PSS 47, p. 152.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid. See Appendix A.94 for original.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> PSS 6, p. 189. See Appendix A.95 for original.

expressing the effect of Eroshka's singing tales on Olenin includes a direct reference to their Homeric precedent: 'Whether he was telling about his mountain raids, about stealing cattle in the steppes, about *Homeric* binges, about the girls whom he drove out of their minds, some inner voice was telling the young man: you can, you can do all of this'.<sup>288</sup> The protagonist of Tolstoy's first novel longs to be a Homeric figure, who can be found in the wild region of the Caucasus. As Homer's poem 'forces' ('*zastavliaet*') Tolstoy to rethink his novel, so a Homeric figure is compelling his protagonist to rethink his entire life.

In brief, the novel follows its aristocratic protagonist, Olenin, who travels to the Caucasus with his infantry regiment to escape the hypocrisy and vice of his Moscow life. Crucially, the novel is set during Russian expansion into the Caucasus during the Caucasian War, when the Cossacks fought mountaineer tribes on behalf of tsarist Russia. Stationed in a Cossack *stanitsa*, or village, Olenin expects what the young Tolstoy had expected to find in the mountains: untouched wildness, adventure, and exotic women. He befriends an aging Cossack, Eroshka, a young Cossack warrior, Luka, and Luka's future bride, Mar'iana, with whom Olenin promptly falls in love. As he questions the ethics of the Cossacks' ability to battle and kill their Chechen neighbours, Olenin gradually realises that the true meaning of happiness is found in self-sacrifice. After Mar'iana rejects his offer of marriage, Olenin returns to Moscow, disillusioned. Tolstoy continues in the novel his representation of the ideal social structure that exists in nature, encompassing both violent combat and the peaceful domestic sphere, which he had inaugurated in his writing for the first time in *Two Hussars*. It is made clear that the preservation of the Cossack *stanitsa*, with its huts, farmland, livestock, marriage rituals, and festivities, is dependent on the daring of its warriors, exemplified in Luka, a dependence that underwrites the interrelationship of war and community.

The ethical discomfort these allegedly lawless, violent Cossack freedoms to steal and kill seem to produce in Olenin has been remarked by critics as evidence of

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<sup>288</sup> Ibid. See Appendix A.96 for original.

Tolstoy's indictment of Cossack culture. For example, John Hagan points to Eroshka's and Luka's horse stealing, Luka's thoughtless ability to kill, and their tendency to drunkenness and promiscuity, as evidence of a flawed moral sense.<sup>289</sup> Tolstoy's condemnation of these flaws becomes apparent, Hagan argues, in the deliberate contradictions in character and narrative: Eroshka chastises the young Cossack Luka for killing, then drinks with him in celebration; Eroshka tries to save moths from a flame, but is a successful hunter; the Cossacks are indifferent to chastity, but the unwed Cossack girl Mar'iana remains strictly chaste. However, Hagan's examples do not acknowledge the novel's debt to Homer. The Cossacks steal horses from their enemies in the same unselfconscious manner, and for the same reason, that Odysseus and Diomedes steal chariots and horses from the Trojan camp in Book Ten of the *Iliad*: because, for Homeric warriors, 'the background condition of life is a condition of war [...]'.<sup>290</sup> Luka's killing is motivated by the same martial spirit of self-preservation. As for Mar'iana's chastity – it echoes Nausikaa's virginity and Penelope's alleged fidelity, both unrelated to religious concerns with purity.

The ethical contradictions identical to those Hagan highlights permeate the *Iliad*. Consider, for example, that, for Homeric heroes, honour derives from violent victory in battle.<sup>291</sup> Nevertheless, the heroes themselves often lament this very fact. For example, Sarpedon's famous speech in Book Twelve of the *Iliad* (which we already considered in the preceding chapter) recognizes both the tragedy of killing and the validity of the enemy's motivations, as heroes on both sides seek to obtain honour at the other's expense: '[L]et us go on and win glory for ourselves, or yield it to others' (328). The proximity of enemy to enemy is attested in battle scenes which end with a shared death:

So in the dust these two lay sprawled beside one another,

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<sup>289</sup> John Hagan, 'Ambivalence in Tolstoy's "The Cossacks"', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 3 (1969), 28-47.

<sup>290</sup> Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, p. 99.

<sup>291</sup> Donna Wilson, *Ransom, Revenge, and Heroic Identity in the Iliad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 19. Consider, also, Redfield's succinct definition of archaic Greek heroism: 'The hero is pre-eminently the warrior, one capable of inflicting harm', James Redfield, 'Foreword' in Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), pp. vii-xiii (p. ix).

lords, the one of the Thracians, the other of the bronze-armoured  
Epaians; and many others beside were killed all about them. (*Il.* 4.536-38)

An ethic of reciprocity, in which the recipient of harm (or benefit) repays in equal measure the harm (or benefit) is characteristic of Iliadic sociality.<sup>292</sup> Tolstoy's fictional Cossacks reflect this compensatory ethic. After killing a Chechen, for example, Luka gazes at the dead body and muses, "He was a person, too!"<sup>293</sup> ("*Tozhe chelovek byl!*") to which one of the Cossacks replies: "Yes, if he'd gotten you, he wouldn't have let you off".<sup>294</sup> This brief exchange is evidence of a mutual acknowledgment of the validity of the enemy's violence, which makes the Cossacks' killing in the novel both poignant and reciprocal, in some sense even overcoming Otherness.<sup>295</sup> The 'Yes' of Luka's Cossack interlocutor implies that the enemy Chechen's personhood is confirmed by his ability to kill Luka, had the circumstances been different.

Laura Jepsen follows Hagan regarding the contradictions of Eroshka's behaviour: 'Although Eroshka expresses reservations about Lukashka's joy in killing his first abrek, at the same time he exults in the youth's achievement [...]. In [Eroshka] are embodied most clearly the opposing moral values of Christian and heathen culture'.<sup>296</sup> By pitting Christian against 'heathen' values, this conclusion fails to consider the moral tension already very much present in Homeric culture – and that of Tolstoy's Caucasus – which struggles with, and yet accepts, the injunction to kill. For example, when hunting with Eroshka, Olenin expresses surprise at the notion of a pig warning her brood against the hunters. Eroshka asks, "And what did you think? Did you think an animal's a fool? [...] You want to kill her and she wants to walk around the forest alive. You have your law and she has her law".<sup>297</sup> The Homeric Cossack's observation reflects what Tolstoy considers to be a

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<sup>292</sup> Wilson, *Ransom*, p. 13.

<sup>293</sup> *PSS* 6, p. 38.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.* See Appendix A.97 for original.

<sup>295</sup> For a discussion of the ethics of Otherness, see Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991).

<sup>296</sup> Laura Jepsen, 'To Kill Like a Cossack', *South Atlantic Bulletin*, 1 (1978), 86-94 (p. 90).

<sup>297</sup> *PSS* 6, p. 58. See Appendix A.98 for original.



sophisticated respect for even the inhuman Other (a respect the Europeanized Olenin does not share) that is related to the ability to kill that Other.

Jepsen describes Luka as killing without compunction: 'Whether to destroy bird, beast, or man, he exults in his unflinching "courage."' <sup>298</sup> However, when Olenin asks why Luka is happy to have killed the Chechen, he encounters the reiteration of the reciprocity ethic: 'The Cossack's eyes were laughing looking at Olenin. It seemed he understood everything that he wanted to say to him but stood above such considerations. "And what? We can't do without it! Our brother gets killed, too, doesn't he?"' <sup>299</sup> Consider that when Olenin attempts to explain his romantic feelings to Mar'iana, her response is nearly identical to Luka's response above to Olenin's critique of violence: 'It seemed to him that she understood how vulgar was everything he was saying to her, but stood above such considerations: it seemed to him that she had long known everything that he wanted but could not tell her'. First, these similar passages are significant because, just as we saw in the case of *Two Hussars*, they show a link between violence and sexual love, or combat and domesticity. Both the mountain warrior and the young and beloved Cossack woman grasp a truth that the Europeanized Olenin does not; crucially, they grasp it and convey their understanding of it without words. Second, the linked passages do not specify what the two Cossacks understand, leaving the reader to share Olenin's bewilderment.

Nevertheless, let us try to make something of Luka's remark and wordless understanding. Let us consider it in light of his earlier observation that the dead Chechen was a human being. This sentiment is reiterated in the narrator's description of the dead Chechens in the novel's final battle scene: 'Each of these red-haired Chechens was a person, each had his own unique expression'. <sup>300</sup> The narrator recognizes the humanity of the enemy in Luka's terms. Luka's comment to Olenin is not, I submit, an instance of callousness but a reflection of Eroshka's Homeric wisdom that the killer is simultaneously the victim, and that nature or

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<sup>298</sup> Jepsen, 'Kill Like a Cossack', p. 88

<sup>299</sup> *PSS* 6, p. 83. See Appendix A.99 for original.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145. See Appendix A.100 for original.

Providence is both indulgent and cruel. Steiner describes this phenomenon, and its implication for Homeric and Tolstoyan literature, thus:

The creator is at once omniscient and everywhere present, but at the same time he is detached, impassive, and relentlessly objective in his vision. The Homeric Zeus presides over the battle from his mountain fastness, holding the scales of destiny but not intervening. Or, rather, intervening solely to restore equilibrium, to safeguard the mutability of man's life against miraculous aid or the excessive achievements of heroism. As in the detachment of the god, so there is in the clear-sightedness of Homer and Tolstoy both cruelty and compassion.<sup>301</sup>

While, in Steiner's formulation, it is the divinity who calmly weighs the cost of war, the attitude is reflected in Sarpedon's speech, as well (consider that Sarpedon is the son of Zeus). Reiterated in Luka's unsentimental acknowledgment of the facts, it echoes also Captain Khlopov, Captain Trosenko, and Count Turbin in their acquiescence to danger. If the Cossacks are Homeric, they accept and reflect an ethical ambivalence deriving from reciprocity. Of course, even if Homeric heroes and Cossacks cannot be judged as heartless killers, neither should they be simply celebrated. Orwin's nuanced conclusion is that, despite the Cossacks' obvious advantages, they ultimately cannot be an ethical role model for Olenin because of 'the seeming absence in savage man of love of others'.<sup>302</sup> According to Orwin's model, the Homeric hero, and his Cossack counterpart, is incapable of self-sacrifice.

The argument that Tolstoy found no instance of self-sacrificing love in Homeric epic is seemingly supported by a passage from Tolstoy's 1857 journal, which Hagan, Jepsen, Robert Jackson, and Orwin point to: 'How could Homer not know that goodness is love!'.<sup>303</sup> Scholars tend to rely on the end of the journal entry, summarizing Tolstoy's view of Homer, as Robert Jackson does, thus: '[A]fter

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<sup>301</sup> Steiner, *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky*, p. 75.

<sup>302</sup> Orwin, *Art and Thought*, p. 85.

<sup>303</sup> ('Kak mog Gomer ne znat', *chto dobro – liubov'!*) *PSS* 47, p. 154.

reading the gospel, [Tolstoy] is deeply pained like a man who has learned a very disagreeable fact about a friend'.<sup>304</sup> If accurate, this conclusion has far-reaching implications for the study of Tolstoy's reception of Homer, since it indicates that Tolstoy regarded Homeric ethics as inferior to the Christian values endorsed in *The Cossacks*. Considered in its entirety, however, I argue that Tolstoy's journal entry affords a different meaning:

I read to the end the *unimaginably exquisite* conclusion of the Iliad [*sic*]. All thoughts of writing are scattered, the Cos[sack] and The H[unting] G[round] and Y[outh] and Lov[e]. I want the last, absurd. For these three, there is some serious material. [...] I read the Gospels, which I haven't done in a long time. After the Iliad [*sic*]. How could Homer not know that goodness is love! Revelation. There is no better explanation.<sup>305</sup> (italics in original)

First, notice that Tolstoy is yet again rethinking *The Cossacks* (along with other writing) in light of the *Iliad*. Second, Tolstoy is reflecting specifically on the *conclusion* of the epic. The *Iliad* ends with Achilles not only accepting death to avenge Patroklos, but his wrath has given way to a consuming pity for the elderly Trojan king, Priam. When Priam begs Achilles to recognize his own father, Peleus, in Priam's aged face, a transcendent humanity overwhelms Achilles, and instead of the grim acceptance of violence, both Trojan and Greek leave aside their separate selves to see the human in the Other:

So [Priam] spoke, and stirred in the other a passion of grieving  
for his own father [...]  
[A]nd the two remembered, as Priam sad huddled  
at the feet of Achilleus and wept close for manslaughtering Hektor  
And Achilleus wept now for his own father, now again  
for Patroclus. The sound of their mourning moved in the house. (*Il.* 23.515)

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<sup>304</sup> Robert L. Jackson, 'The Archetypal Journey: Aesthetic and Ethical Imperatives in the Art of Tolstoj', *Russian Literature*, 11 (1982), 389-410 (p. 390).

<sup>305</sup> *PSS* 47, p. 154. See Appendix A.101 for original.

When interpreting Tolstoy's journal entry about Homer's attitude to love, we must keep in mind the above passage from Book Twenty-Three of the *Iliad*, because it is this thoroughly self-denying ending that moves Tolstoy, as he specifies, and which he describes it as *prelestnyi*. I translated this word as 'exquisite', but it can also be translated as *charming, lovely, or delightful*. The ending of the *Iliad* struck Tolstoy *not* as unethical, but as charming or lovely. This loveliness was powerful enough to prompt the writer to completely rethink his own writing, from *The Cossacks* to something he titled only *Love* and, indeed, to re-write *The Cossacks* accordingly. Moreover, after finishing the *Iliad*, Tolstoy finds himself wishing for love (and chastising himself for being 'absurd'). We are entitled to ask: why would a work which, as several critics have insisted, was viewed by Tolstoy as ethically flawed, inspire self-conscious aesthetic revising along with such a delicate longing? Finally, Tolstoy confesses that for the first time in a long time, after reading the *Iliad*, he has re-read the gospels.

In place of the vision of Tolstoy critiquing the bloodlust of Homer's heroes and fussily turning from the *Iliad* to the gospels for moral consolation, I submit instead the vision of a charmed, delighted Tolstoy who is sufficiently inspired by the ending of the epic (an ending which can only be regarded as deeply humane) to yearn for personal love while finding both the creative energy to write and a newfound spiritual hunger. The *Iliad* did not frighten Tolstoy toward the gospels. Rather, it ennobled and inspired him to re-read the gospels, while simultaneously prompting him to reconsider and re-write his first novel. In short, it was the *Iliad's* ending which brought Tolstoy to revelation. Tolstoy's exclamation, 'How could Homer not know that goodness is love!' I take to mean, not 'Homer did not know, it is too bad', but instead: '*how could I have thought that Homer did not know?*' Or, perhaps, 'how was Homer unlucky enough not to be privy to the revelation of the gospels, and yet still know intuitively that love was the key to resolving his epic?'. The ultimate and penultimate lines of Tolstoy's journal entry – that there is 'no better explanation' ('*net luchshego ob'iasneniia*') for the *Iliad's* exquisite ending, and that this is a 'revelation' ('*otkrovenie*') – indicate that, for Tolstoy, Homer *did* know that goodness is love. This reading is supported by Tolstoy's complaint at the

beginning of *Sevastopol in May* that, unlike his own literary peers, Homer had written about love and suffering. It is further supported by the link Tolstoy made in his 1862 article on education, which we considered above, between Homer and the Bible. We shall see in my final chapters how this link between Homeric and Biblical texts becomes particularly strong for Tolstoy in later decades.

From Tolstoy's own account of Homeric ethics, it is evident that Tolstoy found in the *Iliad* both enlightenment and moral goodness. In the simplest terms, Tolstoy's 1857 reading of the *Iliad* made Homeric epic into a model of ethical and literary inspiration for his subsequent work. This is precisely what the Homeric Cossacks become for Olenin, in which sense he is Tolstoy's surrogate. Eroshka's compassion, like Turbin's reckless devotion, demonstrate the depth and power of love Tolstoy found in Homeric characters. It is true that they are not, as Orwin posits, an ethical model to be imitated; the Cossacks' role is to illuminate Olenin's faults and acts as a moral instruction and impetus toward his own revelation. It is for this reason that Luka's and Mariana's silent apprehension of Olenin is so significant. Their somatically performed (rather than written) comprehension undermines Olenin's tendency to intellectualize his experience and thereby misunderstand it.

### *Writing Is Suspect in Non-Literate Culture*

Consistent with Tolstoy's privileging of dialogue over written text in *Two Hussars*, the flaw in Olenin's intellectualization of experience is made most clear when Eroshka interrupts his writing. For Orwin, this scene is evidence of Olenin's moral superiority to the Cossacks. Orwin argues that Olenin's ability to express an ethical position via writing is incomprehensible to Eroshka because the latter lacks moral reason: 'Eroshka [...] has no knowledge of this higher reason. When, in chapter 27, he finds Olenin at work on his diary, he assumes he is writing 'slanders' [...]. Eroshka obviously takes a dim view of writing [...]. [A]t the very moment Eroshka is making fun of him Olenin is penning an affirmation of his love

of others'.<sup>306</sup> In Orwin's view, Olenin's setting to paper a theory about self-sacrifice legitimizes the act of writing and elevates Olenin's spiritual insights in a way that Eroshka cannot understand.

However, I suggest that what is in evidence in this passage is the clash of oral and literary culture, particularly for Tolstoy, whose ethical ideals (such as Platon Karataev, to be discussed in Chapter Four, and Hadji Murat, whom I will discuss in Chapter Six) are both illiterate. As I showed in Chapter One, Tolstoy associated non-literacy with Homer, and privileged its straightforward intuitiveness while trying to approximate it in his own life by long periods of foregoing writing and instead becoming 'stupid'. Moreover, we saw how Tolstoy admired and imitated the songs of oral culture, incorporating them into *The Cossacks*. There is a self-reflexive irony in a narrative that has an illiterate Cossack, whom Tolstoy explicitly identified in a draft as a Homeric character, say, "So, you write and write! What's the point?"<sup>307</sup>

When Eroshka sees that Olenin is writing, he seems to assume 'that some sort of spirit sits between him and the paper'.<sup>308</sup> Eroshka interrupts Olenin for a simple and pro-social motive that contrasts starkly with Olenin's intellectually complex one: 'he wanted to talk'<sup>309</sup> (*emu khotelos' pogovorit'*). The old Cossack prevents Olenin from writing more by playing the balalaika and singing. He advises Olenin: "It's better to make merry, be a *molodets!*" and "What's there to write, good fellow! Much better to listen while I sing you a song. You'll die, then you won't hear any songs. Make merry!"<sup>310</sup> Eroshka's invocation of the *molodets* as superior to the writer contrasts with literary culture the Cossack oral culture of both violence and performance. The Cossacks express themselves with song rather than writing. In contrast to the solitary act of writing, a performed song, like direct speech, is

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<sup>306</sup> Orwin, *Art and Thought*, p. 96.

<sup>307</sup> PSS 6, p. 107. See Appendix A.102 for original.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., p. 106. See Appendix A.103 for original.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> PSS, 107. See Appendix A.104 for original.

spontaneous, immediate, and inherently social because it presupposes others.<sup>311</sup> It cannot be recorded, only experienced with and by means of others. This passage, I suggest, is intended to show not Eroshka's deficiency, but Olenin's. By interrupting Olenin, Eroshka pulls him out of his intellectual solitariness into sociality. The spirit Eroshka sees between Olenin and the paper is symbolic of the mediation always implicit in writing, the process of transforming spontaneous action into bloodless theory, which robs it of vitality; it is in this sense that Olenin is writing 'slanders' ('*kliauzy*'). In thus privileging the Cossack performance culture to Olenin's private reflections expressed in writing, the passage reminds us why Turbin and Anna Fedorovna were superior to their sons and daughters: their vigour, passion, and anti-intellectualism made them better able to practice the authentic goodness of the past. Just as Turbin devoted his life to fighting, drinking, and carousing rather than to the abstract theory Davydov mocks in his poem, so Tolstoy's idealised Cossacks fight, drink, and make merry rather than write tracts on ethical behaviour.

### *Conclusion*

Here I have argued that, during the 1850s, Tolstoy's writing shifted from using Homeric material to celebrate predominantly martial, national virtues to using it to develop a nuanced juxtaposition of combat and domesticity. For Tolstoy, this harmonious relation existed in Russia's mythologized past, populated by 'our' grandfathers, and in the mountains of the Caucasus, where true and uncorrupted goodness still exists. The juxtaposition between past and present is created to celebrate the former and the critique the latter from a position of what I have termed historical regression. The idealised 'grandfathers', just like the idealised hussars, Cossacks, and Chechens, are portrayed by Tolstoy as a challenge to the Europeanized Russia of his own time, whose printing presses disseminate the lie of progress and whose young men cannot fight. After the publication of *The*

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<sup>311</sup> For a discussion of how Achilles' song in Book Nine of the *Iliad* about the 'glories of men', or '*klea andrōn*', is related both to heroic others in terms of content and, in terms of form, is a social performance that presupposes a listener (in this case, Patroklos) who will continue the song when the singer is ready to complete his 'turn', see Nagy, 'Achilles as Epic Hero and the Idea of Total Recall in Song', p. 57.

*Cossacks* in 1862, Tolstoy began work on *War and Peace*, which extends and deepens the association between violence and the domestic sphere within the context of a historical – and therefore both national and recoverable – past. We will turn to this text in the following chapter.



## Chapter Three

### War and Historical Nihilism

‘Whatever the poet or thinker creates, he should know that even as he writes, hundreds of people sit on all sides, incapable of existing in that space that the poet or thinker chose, with quills tipped in their own bitterness, ready to tear apart everything that thinker will create’. Tolstoy, journal entry, 1870<sup>312</sup>

The first part of this chapter will examine the theoretical relationship of *War and Peace* to epic literature and to Greek antiquity, as Tolstoy understood these categories. I will consider selected passages from *War and Peace*, including unpublished drafts; didactic articles that Tolstoy published in the 1860s, with particular emphasis on the 1868 commentary, *A Few Words About the Book ‘War and Peace’* (*Neskol’ko slov o knige ‘Voina i Mir’*); and a series of Tolstoy’s notebook entries from 1870. Relying on these materials, I will investigate the historiographic method Tolstoy developed in the decades of 1860 and 1870, which he termed *istoriia-iskusstvo*, or history-art, and demonstrate how it is associated with Homeric epic. I show that, by means of *istoriia-iskusstvo*, Tolstoy advanced his particular version of the Napoleonic war specifically, and of historical processes generally.

Subsequently, this chapter addresses Tolstoy’s choice to model his text on the *Iliad*. I answer, first, why it was important for Tolstoy to forge a connection between *War and Peace* and the *Iliad*, and second, in what theoretical ways the two texts correspond. It will then consider the no less important way in which Tolstoy’s text deliberately and self-consciously deviates from Homeric material, focusing on what Tolstoy regarded as problematic in antiquity’s approach to history, namely, its heroizing tendency, preserved in poetry such as Homer’s. For Tolstoy, the heroizing tendency advanced a misguided historiography that, in the

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<sup>312</sup> PSS 48, p. 121. See Appendix A.105 for original.

nineteenth century, was no longer valid.<sup>313</sup> Tolstoy's simultaneous adaptation of Homeric material and critique of its privileging of heroes leads to a tension between form and content. As I endeavour to show, Tolstoy's intradiegetic narration remains indebted to Homeric influence, particularly the *Iliad*, while the text's extradiegetic narration explicitly rejects the very Homeric inheritance it relies on.

The final section of this chapter will examine the philosophical foundation of the *istoriia-iskusstvo* method, suggesting that Tolstoy can be read as a historical nihilist. Applying the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), German philosopher and Tolstoy's contemporary, I explore the concept of historical nihilism. Nietzsche's views about Homeric reception in the nineteenth century are, I suggest, helpful in understanding both Tolstoy's aesthetic approach to history and his adaptation of Homeric material. This is due to their being more fully and articulately developed than the coherent, but incomplete, reflections on *istoriia-iskusstvo* in Tolstoy's notebooks. In reading Tolstoy's and Nietzsche's reflections on the philosophy of history side by side, it will become clear on what theoretical grounds Tolstoy was justified both in his departure from 'traditional' historical methods, and in his unique (mis)interpretation of what can be termed 'Homeric' historiography. After introducing a Nietzschean interpretation of Tolstoy's thought in this chapter, the following chapter will apply the insights of that interpretation to a close comparative reading of passages from *War and Peace* and the *Iliad*.

## **The Aesthetics of History**

### *Why Tolstoy Wrote Neither History, Nor Poetry, Nor Novels*

In 1852, the twenty-four-year-old Tolstoy remarked in his journal: 'To compile a true, faithful history of Europe in this century. Now there is the aim of a lifetime'.<sup>314</sup> More than a decade before he began *War and Peace*, Tolstoy dreamed of being the first writer to put together a history of the nineteenth century in Europe that would be both 'true' and 'faithful' (*'istinnaia'*, *'pravdivaia'*) to the past. In the first

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<sup>313</sup> The Russian historians that Tolstoy himself read included Nikolai Karamzin (1766-1826), Aleksandr Mikhailovskii-Danilevskii (1789-1848), Nikolai Ustrialov (1805-1870), and Sergey Solovyov (1820-1879).

<sup>314</sup> *PSS* 46, p. 304. See Appendix A.106 for original.

days of January 1863, as he began *War and Peace*, Tolstoy's first journal entry observes: 'The epic mode is becoming the only natural one for me'.<sup>315</sup> Ten days later, he reflects that a visit to the Kremlin palace stirred a memory of battles past: 'In the Kremlin [...] memory of war and youth and strength. A General: Roman nose, stiff, thinks only of success in battle and has no other considerations'.<sup>316</sup>

These reflections indicate two things: first, by 1863, the epic genre had, in his words, become so 'natural' ('*estestvenen*') for Tolstoy, that it was the 'only' way he sought to write. Second, combat and its associated youthful vitality occupies him as he visits the residence of the Russian Tsar, prompting a literary sketch of a battle-hardened general. The appearance of these observations directly before Tolstoy began writing *War and Peace* is significant. They show that description of war in 1863 was not a mere intellectual activity for Tolstoy but was suffused with personal memories and even nostalgia. Additionally, these war memories are closely linked in time with what Tolstoy believed to be his mastery of the epic writing mode. Simply put, he decided that the time had come for him to describe war by means of literature. Despite his aspirations at twenty-four, the elder Tolstoy did not produce a 'true, faithful' history; instead, he produced an epic. If Tolstoy sought 'true history' in the sense that we understand fidelity to historical events (for example, as representing historical rather than fictional personages), then why did he write a literary instead of a historical account? In answering this question, I hope to provide some insight into the philosophical grounds of *War and Peace*.

The text was originally serialized in the popular literary journal, *The Russian Herald* (*Russkiĭ vestnik*), which was founded by Mikhail Katkov (1818-1887) in 1856, and which included Turgenev, Goncharov, and Dostoevsky on its list of long-standing contributors.<sup>317</sup> Corresponding with Katkov prior to the publication of the first instalment of *War and Peace* (titled *1805* at the time), Tolstoy was adamant on one point: *War and Peace* is not a novel. In an 1865 letter to Katkov, Tolstoy

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<sup>315</sup> PSS 48, p. 48. See Appendix A.107 for original.

<sup>316</sup> PSS 48, p. 50. See Appendix A.108 for original.

<sup>317</sup> For a detailed history of *Russkiĭ vestnik*, see Catharine Theimer Nepomnyashchy, 'Katkov and the Emergence of the "Russian Messenger"', in *Ubandus Review*, 1 (1977), 59-89.

stipulates: '[T]his composition is not a novel and it is not a story and it does not have that plot form which, once unravelled, [destroys] interest. I write this to you to ask that, in the heading, and, maybe, in the announcement, to *not call my composition a novel*. This is very important for me, and this is why I ask you for this' (italics in original).<sup>318</sup> While, for readers and critics today, *War and Peace* is certainly a novel, Tolstoy was clearly conscious of the text as participating in – or perhaps inaugurating – a new genre altogether for which there was no established category. In this chapter, I will comply with Tolstoy's wishes by refraining from calling *War and Peace* a novel.

One of the possible translations for '*sochinenie*', which is what Tolstoy consistently terms his work, is 'composition', from the Latin *compono*, to put together. If Tolstoy has 'put together' disparate elements into a work which must not be regarded as a novel, it is partly because it must not be regarded as *merely* a novel – after all, novels are fictional. Fiction is full of frivolous things like plots and their denouements. From the text's early drafts in the 1860s, it is evident that Tolstoy has not dispensed with the desire for authenticity. One such draft begins with the reiteration of his uncertainty about the category of the future work, but ends with a return to his youthful commitment to truth ('*istina*'):

I was afraid of not writing in the language in which everyone else writes; afraid that my writing will not fit in any category, neither novel, nor short story, nor *poema*, nor history; afraid that the necessity of describing significant personages of 1812 will force me to be guided by historical documents instead of truth.<sup>319</sup>

If the work is neither fiction, nor poetry, nor history, we can tentatively surmise that it is an irreducible combination of all three. However, the rejection of the last category – history – is significant for our purposes. As we shall see in the remainder of this chapter, for Tolstoy, historical documents cannot relate truth.

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<sup>318</sup> PSS 61, p. 67. See Appendix A.109 for original.

<sup>319</sup> PSS 13, p. 53. See Appendix A.110 for original.

They are beholden to individual memories and are therefore relative, myopic, contradictory, or altogether mistaken. The simplest answer to the question ‘Why did Tolstoy not write a history?’ is: because, for Tolstoy, histories are no less fictional than novels. Tolstoy was after something truer than fiction and greater than history.<sup>320</sup> In a lengthy but cryptic 1870 notebook entry, penned just after the publication of the final instalment of *War and Peace*, Tolstoy finally articulated an intellectual category in which, I suggest, he would have been comfortable with classifying his composition: *istoriia-iskusstvo*, or history-art. Tolstoy created the portmanteau term to describe a ‘genre’ that is altogether different from *istoriia-nauka*, or history-science, which is another term Tolstoy conjured in the same 1870 entry. The following section will examine selections from this notebook passage in chronological order, closely following the development of Tolstoy’s thinking as he composed the entry: I will first investigate his analysis of historical writing’s flaws, then his search for alternative modes of conveying history, before finally arriving at Tolstoy’s definition of *istoriia-iskusstvo*.

Prior to defining history-art and history-science as contrasting categories, Tolstoy spends some pages in his journal reflecting on the nature of historical writing. Capturing the dynamic and nuanced multiplicity of life is beyond the ability of traditional history, Tolstoy observes, dedicated as it is to lifeless facts:

History seeks to describe the life of the *narod* – millions of people. But he who has not only described the life of even one person, but has also understood by means of that description the era of not only the *narod*, but that single person, he knows how much is required for this task.<sup>321</sup>

According to this view, the complexity of life and especially of humanity – the *narod* – cannot be adequately communicated by means of historical methods alone.

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<sup>320</sup> For a discussion of the nineteenth-century origins of the distinction between academic history and historical fiction, beginning with Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), with whom Tolstoy was familiar (*PSS* 60, p. 234), see Dale H. Porter, ‘The Gold in Fort Knox: Historical Fiction in the Context of Historiography’, *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 76 (1993), 315-50. For a discussion of rhetorical and theoretical strategies in historical writing during antiquity, see François Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus*, trans. by Janet Lloyd (California: University of California Press, 1988).

<sup>321</sup> *PSS* 48, p. 125. See Appendix A.111 for original.

Perhaps surprisingly, Tolstoy suggests that, to grasp the historical essence of humanity, what is more necessary than knowledge or intellectual critique is love (*‘liubov’*), understood as being a strong emotional connection to the past. The past must not be critiqued from a place of complacent presentism, privileging the current historical moment. The past must be experienced, it must be *felt*.

What is necessary is a knowledge of *all* the details of life, art is necessary – the gift of artistry, love is necessary...

There is no art and it is not needed, they say, what is needed is science... There is no love and it is not needed, they say. On the contrary, what is necessary is to prove that there has been progress, that in the past everything was worse.

What should we do here? But history must be written. Such histories have been and will be written, and they are called: *science*.

What should we do here?!<sup>322</sup> (*italics and ellipses in original*)

For Tolstoy, the past, as an instance of humanity, must be not judged but loved. This love is occasioned by admiration for the achievements of the people as a whole. Just before the 1870 entry with which we are here concerned, Tolstoy reports in his journal that he has been reading Sergei Solov’ëv’s *History of Russia from the Earliest Times (Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen, 1851-1879)*. This work expressed a teleological view of Russian history. If the past was so terrible, full of government oppression and cruelty, Tolstoy reasons, then any alleged improvement must be directed not by powerful historical figures, but by the ordinary mass of humanity. The reason for loving the past rather than critiquing it, on this view, stems from awe for the Russian *narod*. In an impassioned appeal, Tolstoy argues in his journal that mass humanity produces history because it alone is responsible not only for the mundane activities of husbandry and agriculture, but also the more dramatic achievements of remaining undefeated in war, developing religious sentiment and, crucial for our purposes, folk poetry:

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<sup>322</sup> PSS 48, p. 125. See Appendix A.112 for original.

You read this [teleological - SY] history and unwillingly come to the conclusion that Russian history was nothing but a series of outrages.

But how can such a series of outrages produce a great, unified government?

This alone proves that it was not the government that generated history.

But besides this, while reading about looting, ruling, warring, pillaging (this is all history talks about), you are unwillingly led to the question: what was looted and pillaged?

And from this question to another: who produced that which was pillaged? Who and by what means fed this entire population with bread? Who made the brocades, cloths, dresses, the damask which the tsars and boyars flaunted? Who caught the black foxes and sables that were gifted to the ambassadors, who obtained gold and iron, who bred horses, oxen, goats, who built the houses, the palaces, the churches, who transported goods? Who educated and gave birth to these people of one race? Who defended the religious shrine, the poetry of the *narod*, who made sure that Bohdan Khmelnytsky made allegiance with Russia and not with Turkey or Poland?

The *narod* lives on.<sup>323</sup>

Deeply troubled by the inability of historical writing to communicate the vital humanity that is truly responsible for historical events, Tolstoy proposes art and love as methods. This is no bohemian dismissal of rigour, however, since art must be tempered by commitment to truth, as shown in *A Few Words on the Book War and Peace (Neskol'ko slov po povodu knigi 'Voina i mir')*,<sup>324</sup> a commentary Tolstoy published in 1867, soon after completing *War and Peace*. In this brief work, Tolstoy responds to the critics who disparaged, among other things, his use of (untranslated) French in the novel, as well as the text's overall representation of

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<sup>323</sup>PSS 48, p. 124. See Appendix A.113 for original.

<sup>324</sup>Notice that Tolstoy refers to *War and Peace* simply as a book ('*kniga*') rather than using a more literary term, such as novel or narrative ('*roman*' or '*povest'*'), again underscoring that, for him, *War and Peace* does not fall into traditional literary categories.

the early nineteenth century. Tolstoy also articulates the artist's relationship to historical data, anticipating his 1870 journal entry:

[T]he artist must not forget that the understanding of historical personages and events, developed among the *narod*, is based not on fantasy, but on historical documents, insofar as historians could group them together; therefore, while understanding and imagining these personages and events differently, the artist must be guided, just like an historian, by historical materials.<sup>325</sup>

Perhaps the formulation is something like this: love of humanity attaches us to a historically verifiable past, and art empowers that past to speak. Historians prepare the ground by gathering and categorizing primary sources, but the artist is responsible for carrying this process forward into a true representation of humanity. In the 1870 journal entry we have been considering, Tolstoy goes on to outline how, in his view, traditional history proceeds by discussing monumental figures and events while leaving out everything that links them. What is most important to observe here is Tolstoy's specific objection to the *language* of historical writing:

The only option: on the vast, immeasurable crags of past life phenomena, to notice nothing, but to instead connect those occasional monuments, standing far apart in an immense space, those milestones, with airy, imaginary lines by means of an *artificial language that expresses nothing* [...]

But this art consists only of appearance: in the use of a *colourless language* and the smoothing out of those contradictions which exist between living monuments and their fiction. [...] So that everything is even and smooth and so that nobody notices that, beneath this smoothness, there is nothing. (italics mine)<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> PSS 26, p. 13. See Appendix A.114 for original.

<sup>326</sup> PSS 48, p. 125. See Appendix A.115 for original.



Tolstoy claims that the academic, colourless language of historical writing strips the past of vitality and, therefore, of truthfulness. First, this is because an insular, jargon-filled, carefully unenthusiastic language is artificial (*'iskusstvenyi'*): no living person talks like that. Second, such language does not express anything (*'nichego ne virazhaiushi'*), least of all the contradictions, discontinuities, and deformations which constitute the vitality (*'zhivost'*) of historical personalities. Academic history, in other words, dehumanizes the past.

For these reasons, poetic language is crucial to historical work. For Tolstoy, it is not enough to recollect the past in facts; the past must be resurrected in language. This is an epistemic position, in which *istoriia-iskusstvo* is how humanity comes to know its own past. Indeed, *istoriia-iskusstvo* can be regarded as a unique way of knowing, or grasping, history. Tolstoy introduces the notion of *istoriia-iskusstvo* as a solution to the problem of historical writing that he has identified:

What should history do?

[...]

To describe what it can, and anything it knows, it knows by means of art.

For history, tasked with communicating immensity, is the highest art.

As all art, the first condition of history must be clarity, simplicity, certainty and not speculation. But *istoriia-iskusstvo* does not have that

connectedness and unachievable aim which *istoriia-nauka* has. *Istoriia-iskusstvo*, as all art, is not wide, but deep, and its object can be the life of all of Europe or one month in the life of a 16<sup>th</sup>-century peasant. (italics in original)<sup>327</sup>

In this passage, Tolstoy explicitly advocates what history 'should' do to overcome its limitations: associate itself closely with art such that it becomes the loftiest artform of all. Notice that *istoriia-iskusstvo* is described here as capable of achieving the enormous aim which Tolstoy had first articulated at the age of twenty-four: to compile an accurate history of all of Europe: 'To compile a true,

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<sup>327</sup>PSS 48, p. 125. See Appendix A.116 for original.

faithful history of Europe in this century. Now there is the aim of a lifetime'.<sup>328</sup> The critical point is that history is unsayable (it is tasked with 'communicating immensity', '*dolzhenstvuiushchaia govorit' neob'iatnoe*') because of the unimaginable number of incidents it contains. However, according to Tolstoy, history can come to know the unsayable and nevertheless express it by means of art, or by ceasing to be solely history and becoming history-art. Within the *istoriia-iskusstvo* framework, history and art are no longer juxtaposed. For Tolstoy, a work like *War and Peace* is not an example of poetry as opposed to history but is an intellectual category in its own right that can represent the past in its humanity.

That this quite radical intellectual position was not a fleeting notion merely jotted in Tolstoy's journals is evidenced in the 1867 article, *A Few Words on the Book War and Peace*, introduced above. In this text, Tolstoy anticipates the concept of *istoriia-iskusstvo* when he defends himself against his critics by drawing on the distinction between history and art: '[To address] [t]he discord between my description of historical elements with the narratives of historians. It is not incidental, but inevitable. The historian and the artist, in describing a historical epoch, are faced with two completely different subjects'.<sup>329</sup> He goes on to qualify his position: 'Sometimes, the historian is obliged, by bending the truth, to unite all the activities of a historical personage under one idea [...]. The artist, on the other hand, sees in the very isolation of that idea an incongruity with his task and tries only to understand and show not a famous figure, but a human being'.<sup>330</sup> On this reading, *War and Peace* participates in the category of *istoriia-iskusstvo*, beholden as it is to the aesthetic representation of the *narod*.

It is clear from this description that Tolstoy considers the historian's account to be less faithful to reality than the artist's because the historian is guided by theory or method that privileges independent, individual actors, resulting in a narrative that is 'false, but clear'<sup>331</sup> (*lzhivoe, no iasnoe*). Tolstoy specifies that the historian and

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<sup>328</sup> 46, p. 304. See Appendix A.117 for original.

<sup>329</sup> PSS 16, p. 9. See Appendix A.118 for original.

<sup>330</sup> PSS 16, p. 10. See Appendix A.119 for original.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

the artist treat 'two completely different subjects' ('*dva sovershenno razlichnye predmeta*'); I suggest that these opposite subjects are, respectively, historical figures and human beings, or heroes and the *narod*. It is solely by representing the latter that art achieves historical validity: 'For the historian [...] there are heroes; for the artist [...] there cannot and must not be heroes, but human beings'.<sup>332</sup> The aesthetic reproduction of historical events is, for Tolstoy, not only truer than an academic investigation of the past, but is truer in a very specific sense: by being closer to human beings than to concepts, it may not be more factual, but it is more humane and, therefore, more real.

*Istoriia-Iskusstvo and its Discontents: What Antiquity Got Right About History and What Russian Historians Got Wrong*

We established in the first chapter that, for Tolstoy, epic poetry produces intense affect through aestheticization of historical events. Furthermore, we know that Tolstoy was interested in producing epic writing in the 1860s from his observation, introduced at the beginning of this chapter, that epic had become for him the only 'natural' mode. Finally, we know that *War and Peace* was regarded by Tolstoy as a specifically Homeric epic from his confession to the writer Maksim Gorky that, 'without false modesty, it is like the *Iliad*;<sup>333</sup> crucially, as suggested in the sections above, *istoriia-iskusstvo* is the intellectual category in which Tolstoy implicitly included *War and Peace*. It follows, then, that Tolstoy located Homeric epic within the category of *istoriia-iskusstvo*. In 1868, Tolstoy wrote in his journal:

The ancients were stronger and more intelligent than us because everything that we call philosophy, history, jurisprudence, theology, they called oratorical art. The first admits to the possibility of objective conclusions, and the second – that there is only the subjective view.

Only the form is objective.

Everything is subjective, and only the subjective has substance.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> Ibid., p. 10. See Appendix A.120 for original.

<sup>333</sup> Gorky, *Reminiscences*, p.57.

<sup>334</sup> PSS 48, p. 111. See Appendix A.121 for original.

Ancient authors, according to Tolstoy, had understood the importance of oratory – rhetorical, emotive language – to teaching what we term history (among other disciplines). Presumably, this is because they knew that disinterested historians, who use *istoriia-nauka* to draw neutral conclusions couched in colourless language, do not exist. For Tolstoy’s ancients (*‘drevnie’*), the only possible history is one elevated to oratorical magnificence through the ‘subjective view’ (*‘sub’ektivnyi vzgliad’*). Here, Tolstoy interprets ancient authors to anticipate his position that history must be humanized and grounded in a particular subject, such as the poet and the poet’s audience, in whom it acquires substance and meaning. In an 1865 journal entry, Tolstoy temporarily breaks with his rejection of novelistic writing to create four categories of literature:

A novelist’s prose is contained: 1) in the interest of the combination of events – Braddon, my Cossacks, my future writing; 2) in the representation of customs, based on a historical event – the Odyssey, the Iliad, 1805 [*sic*]; 3) in the beauty and cheerfulness of situations – Pickwick, the Hunting Ground [*sic*], and 4) in the characterization of people – Hamlet [*sic*], my future works.<sup>335</sup>

This passage is consistent with Tolstoy’s tendency to make in his journals and notebooks brief remarks, both personal and literary-critical, upon the literature he reads. It references the works of English novelist Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1835-1915) as representative of ‘interesting’ events; the writings of Charles Dickens and Egor Prokudin-Gor’skii<sup>336</sup> as representative of ‘cheerful’ or ‘gay’ plots; Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* as representative of complex characterization; and, most relevant for us, both Homeric epics as works dedicated to portraying social customs, or mores, drawn from historical events.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> PSS 48, p. 64. See Appendix A.122 for original.

<sup>336</sup> Gor’skii was born in 1820 (his date of death is unknown) and was the writer of *The Hunting Ground for Bears: Hunting Stories (Ot’ezzhee pole na medvedei: okhotnich’i rasskazi)*, published in 1865, the same year that Tolstoy makes this notation.

<sup>337</sup> It seems that, in this passage, Tolstoy has acquiesced to being a novelist, after all, since he refers to his work as an instance of ‘novelistic prose’ (*‘poezia romanista’*). However, given his consistent rejection of the genre in his journals, notebooks, and letters, along with the inclusion of Homer in the passage we are

Tolstoy includes *1805* (the original title for *War and Peace*) in the same category as Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*. Consistent with his admission to Gorky, Tolstoy explicitly thought of his composition as Homeric. We see from this passage that Homeric epic is, for Tolstoy, inherently historical. It is not focused on character, as is, for example, *Hamlet*, but on reproducing an instance of the past. There is an almost anthropological quality to Tolstoy's description here: works such as Homer's are not only historically faithful, but they are also a picture of the customs or mores ('*nray*') of a particular time. He intends for *War and Peace* to function as an evocative 'representation' ('*kartina*') of history which does not derive its substance primarily from plot, pleasure, or character (recall Tolstoy's contempt for 'knots and their unravelling', '*zaviazki i razviazki*', discussed above). While its allegiance is to a historical event, its evocation of that event is aesthetic, which means that it nevertheless includes plot, character, and pleasure. Based on this assessment of Homeric epics as both historical and aesthetic, I suggest we can locate Homer among the ancients ('*drevnie*') whom Tolstoy praises for recognizing that history must proceed by means of oratory and subjectivity.

Since, for Tolstoy, the events represented in works like the *Iliad* and *War and Peace* are historical, the text may become a subject of critique and ridicule; this will arise not from literary critics, but from the representatives of *istoriia-nauka* and from those who lived through the events the composition describes. Both approach a work like *War and Peace* from the perspective of *istoriia-nauka*, reading it the way one might read a newspaper, objecting to inconsistency with available data and personal memory. Consider, for instance, the assessments of Tolstoy's composition when it was first serialized: military reviewers were deeply critical of

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considering, who, on this analysis, would also be a novelist, I conclude that 'novelistic poetry' is being used in an ambivalent way. After all, as we saw in Chapter One, Tolstoy was aware of the oral nature of Homeric poetry (we will see more explicit evidence of that in this chapter). Furthermore, Tolstoy specifies that Homeric texts are drawn from historical events – a category which, as we also saw in Chapter One, Tolstoy identifies with epic writing. CJG Turner observes that this literary-critical passage is not quite a categorisation of the novelistic genre, but rather a reflection on narrative as a whole, whether oral or written: 'What [Tolstoy] intends by these categories is reasonably self-evident and the examples that he gives are, for the most part, both well-known and apt, although they also show that he was thinking not in terms of the novel as a specific genre but of story-telling in general'. CJG Turner, 'The First Kind of "Novelist's Poetry,"' *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 21 (1979), 380-87 (p. 380).

Tolstoy's view of history in *War and Peace*.<sup>338</sup> Modest Bogdanovich (1805-1882) and Aleksandr Vitmer (1839-1916), both professional military historians, objected to the methods, theories, and, crucially, the version of events in Tolstoy's text. General Mikhail Dragomirov (1830-1905), a military writer and strategist, went so far as to remark that Tolstoy did not understand basic history.<sup>339</sup> Modern scholars agree with these assessments. Alexander Martin has shown that Tolstoy's representation of Moscow in 1812 contradicts historical data<sup>340</sup> and that Tolstoy did not consult any eyewitness accounts of the occupation of Moscow;<sup>341</sup> Dominic Lieven argues that Tolstoy's version of the War of 1812 greatly undermines the significance of Russia's achievement: 'The popular or "Tolstoyan" Russian interpretation of the war fits rather well with foreign accounts that play down the role of Russia's army and government in the victory over Napoleon'.<sup>342</sup>

While de-emphasizing the power of Russia's government and military leaders may have been inconsistent with historical data, it was consistent with Tolstoy's historiographical views. *War and Peace* advanced a patriotism that privileged, at the expense of the conventional warrior types Tolstoy had praised in his early fiction,<sup>343</sup> the ordinary Russian soldier and peasant as embodiments of the artless, populist ethos of the *narod*. Indeed, pluralistic artlessness, for Tolstoy, indicates true heroism. In a reiteration of his critique of *istoriia-nauka*, Tolstoy responded to his critics by arguing that it is the historian, not the artist, who works from manipulated, inaccurate material. This is because primary sources, Tolstoy insists, are subject to emotionally and politically motivated revision, such that the narration

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<sup>338</sup> Donna Orwin, 'War and Peace from the Military Point of View' in *Tolstoy on War: Narrative Art and Historical Truth in 'War and Peace'* ed. by Rick McPeak and Donna Tussing Orwin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), pp. 98-110 (pp. 99-100).

<sup>339</sup> Dominic Lieven, 'Tolstoy on War, Russia, and Empire' in *Tolstoy on War: Narrative Art and Historical Truth in 'War and Peace'* ed. by Rick McPeak and Donna Tussing Orwin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), pp. 12-25, (p. 12). For Dragomirov's assessment of *War and Peace*, see M.I. Dragomirov, *Razbor romana 'Voina i Mir'* (Kiev: Izdanie knigoprodavtsa N. Ia. Ogloblina, 1895).

<sup>340</sup> Alexander Martin, 'Moscow in 1812: Myths and Realities', in *Tolstoy on War: Narrative Art and Historical Truth in "War and Peace,"* ed. by Rick McPeak and Donna Tussing Orwin (New York: Cornell University Press, 2012), pp. 42-58 (p.43).

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>342</sup> Dominic Lieven, *Russia Against Napoleon: The Battle for Europe, 1807-1814* (London, Penguin Books, 2010), p. 10.

<sup>343</sup> Such as Captain Kornilov in *Sevastopol' in December*, Count Turbin in *Two Hussars*, and the Cossack Luka in *The Cossacks*, all discussed in Chapters One and Two.

of an event takes the place of the event itself in the historical record: wartime heroes are often simply those who happened to be praised for being heroic. Drawing again on historical battles, which seems to be Tolstoy's preferred historical material (and is a preference he appears to be aware of, as evident below), Tolstoy argues in *A Few Words on the Book War and Peace*:

For the historian (we continue with the example of battle) the main source is reports from private superiors and the commander-in-chief. The artist can draw nothing from these sources, they say nothing to him, and explain nothing. The artist turns from them, finding in them a necessary lie. [...] [I]n any battle, both sides almost always describe the battle by completely contradicting one another; in every battle description there is the obligation to lie, stemming from the need to describe in a few words the actions of thousands of people scattered over several versts and finding themselves in the strongest moral agitation influenced by fear, shame, and death.<sup>344</sup>

Due not only to inevitable fabrications that accompany eyewitness reports but also to the frailty of the human ego, official history privileges with agency those who are, for Tolstoy, least capable of it – people in power – and neglecting the more substantial contribution of common soldiers. Solely by the activity of the latter are battles won or lost, Tolstoy argues in the third volume of *War and Peace*:

[F]or in order that the will of Napoleon and Alexander (on whom the whole decision appeared to rest) should be effective, a combination of innumerable circumstances was essential [...]. It was essential that the millions of men in whose hands the real power lay – the soldiers who fired guns and transported provisions and cannons – should consent to carry out the will of these feeble and isolated persons.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> PSS 16, p. 10. See Appendix A.123 for original.

<sup>345</sup> Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, trans. by Constance Garnett (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), p. 689.

Since, for Tolstoy, the official history of war depends entirely not on what took place but on how it was recorded, his own narration aims to transfer the focus from Napoleon to common soldiers. It is not, however, any particular soldier that Tolstoy emphasizes, but the entire mass of humanity that has claim to power and, therefore, heroism. Simply put, Tolstoy's hero is the entire nation. Heroism is a process that contains multitudes, functioning as a dynamic collection of individuals and circumstances that, by its very complexity, becomes more than the sum of its parts. It achieves thereby certainly not self-awareness, but active power that can be understood as a sort of agency.

The falsification Tolstoy's *istoriia-iskusstvo* imposed differs from the inevitable falsification of personal testimony in that it recognizes that its task is to articulate the mass of small things which, when taken together, constitute human life. In its commitment to mass humanity (or *narodnost'*) rather than individual figures, *istoriia-iskusstvo* differs also from historical fiction. In *A Few Words on the Book War and Peace*, Tolstoy's response to his critics demonstrates that the practice of *istoriia-iskusstvo* was meant to reveal the authentic existence that traditional history obscures. Consider his defence of untranslated French language in the text:

The reproach that persons speak and write in French in a Russian book is like the reproach that a person might make who looks at a painting and notices black stains (shadows) in it, which do not exist in reality. The painter is not to blame if, to some, the shadow he made on the face of the painting appears as a black stain [...]. [T]hose to whom it seems very funny that Napoleon speaks first Russian, then French, [should] know that it seems this way to them because they, like a person looking at a portrait, see not a face with light and shadow, but a black stain beneath a nose.<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> PSS 16, pp. 8-9. See Appendix A.17 for original.



By comparing himself to an artist painting directly from life, Tolstoy not only reemphasizes the connection between authenticity and art so relevant to our discussion, but also strongly implies that, by criticizing his aesthetic representation of the past, one criticizes nature itself. His characters speak French because people in 1805 spoke French, and Tolstoy can no more ‘translate’ them than he can erase shadows from a human face. He has summoned real people, he says, not convenient concepts. Critics who desire translations or the subsuming of messy praxis into coherent theory do not desire authenticity and cannot recognize reality. In some sense, for Tolstoy, the perception of reality is inherently aesthetic, not literal (one either sees natural shadows or boorishly recognizes only ‘stains’ (*‘piatna’*)). In working directly from life, the Tolstoyan artist apprehends the infinite, chaotic living power that is the sole driver of historical events. Paradoxically, it is Tolstoy’s emphasis on unindividuated humanity – best captured in the abstraction that is ‘the Russian *narod*’ – that motivates his invocation of Homer as aesthetic model.

### *Strategies of Legitimacy: Vox Populi*

Tolstoy chose to associate his composition with Homer’s *Iliad* for three reasons: first, for Tolstoy, Homeric material was an authentic, unmediated expression of the people, as I will endeavour to show in what follows. Second, Tolstoy regarded the *Iliad* as one of the greatest literary productions in history.<sup>347</sup> Finally, as I argued in the first chapter, Tolstoy classed Homer’s poetry in the epic genre, which resurrects the past in its vividness.<sup>348</sup> The second and third reasons – admiring the aesthetic power of Homeric poetry and categorizing it as epic – have much to do with the authority, both historical and literary, which canonical antiquity tended to supply in nineteenth-century Russia, as discussed in the Introduction. Yet it is an

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<sup>347</sup> See letter 88 to A.A. Tolstaya on August 18, 1857, *PSS* 60, p. 222; the first paragraphs of ‘*Progress i opredelenie obrazovaniia*’, *PSS* 8, p. 326; the journal entry for 23 August, 1857, *PSS* 48, p. 153; the journal entry for 21 July 1870, *PSS* 48, p. 128; letter 321 to Fet in January 1871, *PSS* 56, p. 247; letter 17 to P.D. Golokhvastov in April 1873, *PSS* 62, p. 22; the quote attributed to Rousseau in *Krug Chtenia* for February 1 1905, *PSS* 40, p. 76. Note that when one of the epics is mentioned, it is nearly always the *Iliad* given as literary example, not the *Odyssey*. This tendency to privilege the *Iliad*, however, will shift in the 1890s and 1900s, when Tolstoy begins to prefer the *Odyssey*, as we will see in Chapter Six.

<sup>348</sup> See Chapter One, pages 54 to 55.

association of Homer with the *narod* that is (misleadingly) removed from notions of authority which made Homer's poems and not, for example, Vergil's, the precursor to *War and Peace*.

In the three years immediately preceding work on *War and Peace*, from 1860 to 1863, Tolstoy composed and published a series of pedagogical articles as part of his growing interest in children's education.<sup>349</sup> Critiquing the notion of historical progress, he contrasts elite scholars with ordinary people, articulating in an 1862 article the power and independence of the common population as he did in the 1870 journal entry we have been considering:

[I] must take the side of the *narod* on the basis that, 1<sup>st</sup>, there is more of the *narod* than of high society, and therefore it must be assumed that there is more truth on the side of the *narod*; 2<sup>nd</sup> and most important – because the *narod* can, without the society of progressives, live and satisfy all its human needs somehow: to labour, to make merry, to love, to think and create artistic productions. (*Iliads*, Russian songs.)<sup>350</sup>

We see in this crucial passage that Tolstoy associates the *Iliad* not with elite culture but with the sort of practical, everyday wisdom which ordinary people have always had. Moreover, this is the same sentiment that prompts him, in the 1870 notebook entry, to declare that it is the *narod*, not individual figures, that produce both history and Russian folk art. Tolstoy is certain that Homer's epic, here equated to Russian folk songs, is the sort of artistic expression that springs from 'below' and has no need of educational institutions or patronage. The *Iliad*, like a national folk song, is the voice of that mass humanity that drives history. In a variant to this article, Tolstoy added a handwritten addition to the above passage, immediately after 'artistic productions' (*'khudozhestvennyye proizvedeniia'*), wherein Tolstoy relates the *Iliad* not only to folk music, but also to Greek sculpture and the

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<sup>349</sup> To articulate his educational theories to the public, Tolstoy published twelve issues of the pedagogical journal, *Yasnaya Polyana*, throughout 1862. For a discussion of Tolstoy's singular approach to education, see Adir Cohen, 'The Educational Philosophy of Tolstoy', *Oxford Review of Education*, 7 (1981) 241-51.

<sup>350</sup> PSS 8, p. 346. See Appendix A.125 for original.

Bible: '(Venus de Milo, the Bible, the Iliad, Russian songs...)'.<sup>351</sup> This latter connection recurs in another pedagogical article published in 1862, which describes Tolstoy's efforts to establish a school for peasant children on his estate: 'Without the Bible our society is unimaginable, just as it was impossible to imagine the development of children and humanity in Greek society without Homer'.<sup>352</sup> Of course, Tolstoy was not the first to remark Homer's importance for Greek culture and education. In antiquity, Plato's *Republic* refers to Homer as having 'educated Greece'<sup>353</sup>; Book Two of Herodotus' *Histories* describes Homer (along with Hesiod) as having 'taught the Greeks'<sup>354</sup> about the forms, functions, and descent of the gods; the ancient Greek system of education involved exercises in reading, writing, and memorization based on Homeric texts.<sup>355</sup> Tolstoy inherited the view that Homeric epic constituted the essential moral education of ancient society, but what Tolstoy found distinctive about this education was the allegedly spontaneous nature of its resources. Tolstoy's perception of the *Iliad* as unmediated and authentic cannot be overemphasized. Scholars have remarked that the production of *War and Peace* owes something to writers like Dickens, Hugo, and perhaps most particularly, Stendhal's *Charterhouse of Parma*.<sup>356</sup> However, none of these works offered to Tolstoy what the *Iliad* did in terms of its

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid., p. 453. See Appendix A.126 for original.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., p. 89. See Appendix A.127 for original.

<sup>353</sup> Plato, *Republic*, ed. and trans. by Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 606e3-4. Recall that Tolstoy listed Plato as one of the 'great' influences on his writing between the ages of 20 and 35, along with Homer and four others (see Chapter Two, footnote 68).

<sup>354</sup> Herodotus, *Histories* 2.53, trans. by A.G. Dodley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920). Recall that Tolstoy read Herodotus in the original Greek in 1870s (See Chapter One, footnote 22).

<sup>355</sup> W.J. Verdenius, 'Homer, the Educator of the Greeks', *Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie Van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde*, 33 (1969), 207-31 (p. 6).

<sup>356</sup> See Victor O. Buyniak, 'Leo Tolstoy and Charles Dickens', *Slavic and East-European Studies*, 9 (1965), 100-31; see also Victor O. Buyniak, 'Stendhal as young Tolstoy's Literary Model', *Slavic and East-European Studies*, 5 (1960), 16-27. Furthermore, see Tolstoy's own list of writers that influenced him, where he lists Dickens and Hugo, *PSS* 66, pp. 67-68. See also the French critic's Paul Buaie's description of a discussion with Tolstoy, whom he quotes as follows: "'As for myself, I know, what I owe to others [...]. Stendhal? [...] I am more indebted to him than anyone else; I am indebted to him for understanding war. Re-read in *Charterhouse of Parma* his narration of the Waterloo battle. Who before him described war like this, in other words, the way that war is in actuality? [...] Soon after, in Crimea, I had the opportunity to make certain of all this with my own eyes. Well, I repeat, in everything that I know about war, my first teacher is Stendhal.'" Paul Buaie, '*Tri dnia v Iasnoi Poliane*' in *L. N. Tolstoi v vospominaniakh sovremnikov v dvukh tomakh*, ed. by V. E. Vatsuro and others, vol 2 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia Literatura, 1978), pp. 266-70 (p. 269). See Appendix A.128 for original.

immediacy and authenticity, reflecting what was, in his estimation, not the mind of a single, educated aristocrat, but the consciousness of the common people.

While the *Iliad*, as Tolstoy observes, was for Greek education, he intended *War and Peace* to be for Russians. This exclusionary intention is made apparent in the first few lines of the text, when Prince Vassilii, the patriarch of the Kuragin family, speaks: 'He spoke in that exquisite French language in which our grandfathers not only spoke, but also thought'.<sup>357</sup> This specification immediately identifies the intended readers of the text and makes them complicit in the narrative and with the narrator – *our* grandfathers, the narrator's and the reader's. Of course, only a tiny percentage of the population spoke exquisite, or any sort of, French, thereby alerting the reader that although the narrative is about Russians, they are the elite kind of Russian. In the second draft for the first volume of *War and Peace*, Tolstoy tries to justify why his narrative focuses on aristocrats. He finds there are three reasons: the first circumstantial, the second personal, the final literary. Tolstoy explains that the only primary accounts of the Napoleonic Wars are contained in the letters, journals, and memoirs of educated elites.<sup>358</sup> This poverty of data, of course, can only serve to strengthen suspicion of *istoriia-nauka* and trust in *istoriia-isskustvo*. Personally speaking, Tolstoy does not find the middle strata of society – merchants and clergy – either interesting or beautiful.<sup>359</sup> Snobbery aside, this shows that Tolstoy's priorities are dedicated to what he considers aesthetically engaging, not only to what is accurate.

While his reasons for focusing on aristocrats seem to contradict Tolstoy's aim of recreating true life, this is not the case. In explaining his lack of emphasis on the lower classes in his fiction, the draft version of the text's first volume reflects that Tolstoy is proud to be an aristocrat: 'I am an aristocrat because I have been brought up from childhood to love and respect the upper classes and to love what is graceful, reflected not only in Homer, Bach, and Raphael, but in all the trifles of

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<sup>357</sup> PSS 9, p. 4. See Appendix A.129 for original. Garnett renders '*dedy*' as 'forefathers'. Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 1.

<sup>358</sup> PSS 13, p. 239.

<sup>359</sup> 'The life of merchants, coachmen, seminarians, convicts, and peasants seems to me monotonous, dull... The life of these people is not beautiful'. PSS 13, p. 239. See Appendix A.130 for original.

life'.<sup>360</sup> Referencing Homer while justifying his literary choices explains much – associating Homer with the aristocracy illuminates at least some of the reason for focusing on the latter social class. We have seen that Homer is, for Tolstoy, the unmediated expression of the *narod*, spontaneous and authentic, yet it is evident that, for Tolstoy, Homeric epic also stands at the height of refinement and sophistication, representative of art forms associated with the likes of Bach and Raphael. Finally, as established earlier, Homeric epic is *also* historical, functioning as a reflection on past events.

From these comments, I deduce that, in Tolstoy's view, while the *Iliad* focuses on an elite class of warriors rather than merchants or craftsmen, it is crucial that the story flows organically from the *narod* by means of traditional song. The stories of Achilles and Agamemnon, with whom everyone is familiar, are exciting for the public to hear and to share. This is a unique juxtaposition of form and content, wherein accessible form conveys elite content, while remaining faithful to history by means of sophisticated art. We can conclude that, for Tolstoy, to compose *istoriia-isskustvo* is to compose as Homer did. This is what enables Tolstoy to focus on elites without guilt: Homeric epic and, therefore, *War and Peace*, is a narrative of aristocrats, this is true, but that is what renders it pleasing and accessible to the common people. It is pleasing because kings and generals are typically more exciting to hear about than merchants and because kings and generals are recognizable – everyone has heard the names of Kutuzov and the particularly beloved Russian tsar, Alexander I.<sup>361</sup> Accessible writing that is historical and aesthetically powerful achieves the scope, truth-value, and authentic immediacy of Homer – or the Bible.

There is another important nuance to the text's exclusionary reference to 'our grandfathers:' it did not start out only referencing French speakers. In the second

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<sup>360</sup> PSS 13, p. 239. See Appendix A.131 for original.

<sup>361</sup> See, for example, Lieven's description of Alexander I's visit to Moscow in July 1812: 'When Alexander emerged [...] outside his Kremlin palace [...] he was greeted by an immense crowd [...]. The emperor was greeted with the ringing of the bells of all the Kremlin churches and wave after wave of cheers from the crowd. The ordinary people pressed forward to touch him and implored him to lead them against the enemy'. *Russia Against Napoleon*, p. 237.

draft for the introduction, insisting yet again that *War and Peace* is not a novel, Tolstoy reflects: 'We Russians are not capable of writing novels in the sense that this mode of composition is understood in Europe'.<sup>362</sup> Consistent with this sentiment, the seventh draft of *War and Peace* begins with the following: 'I write about that time which, by a chain of living memory is linked to ours, the scent and sound of which are still accessible to us'.<sup>363</sup> These varied beginnings signify solely the Russian reader as the intended audience – 'we Russians', ('*my, russkie*') – who will partake in memories of a shared history and who may not be the aristocratic descendants of French-speaking grandfathers. These earlier versions of the introduction signify that the purpose of the exclusion is to distance from the text not the lower classes, but foreigners. Tolstoy sought for the text to facilitate the development and historical education of Russians, just as the *Iliad* had been relevant for Greeks.

Recall that Tolstoy's Homeric *istoriia-iskusstvo* emerged after the Napoleonic War, the Crimean War, and the Caucasian War, at a time when the country's need for a uniquely Russian literature was paramount. The need for national literature – for epic – is not very much different from the need for national myth. If *War and Peace* is part of this myth in Russia, it developed not in the organic, spontaneous fashion that Tolstoy imagines Homeric epic to have done. It is, instead, a deliberate and contrived narrative reflecting the unique historical vision of a single, well-educated, aristocratic man. Thus, the history Tolstoy produced was a distortion. It was aligned less with what the country, still suffering from Napoleon's invasion, may or may not have required, and more with what Tolstoy himself needed Russian history to have been. However, to achieve legitimacy for his work, Tolstoy had to present the material as *if it were* the unmediated expression of the *narod*, emanating from an authentically Russian consciousness.

## Disenchanted Heroism

### *Homer's Problem: Historiography*

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<sup>362</sup> PSS 8, p. 54. See Appendix A.132 for original.

<sup>363</sup> PSS 13, p. 70. See Appendix A.133 for original.

Whereas Tolstoy's early work presented national heroism as reflective of epic heroism as I showed in Chapter Two, *War and Peace* reverses this identification. The text champions an authentic Russian spirit that contradicts the grand heroics Tolstoy locates in Homeric epic, but it does so from within a text that possesses many of the formal features traditionally associated with Homeric epic. This results in tension between form and content. What is so compellingly presented in the intradiegetic narrative is constantly shown by the extradiegetic narration to be a sham. The reader is estranged from the world of the narrative in order to survey it and become undeceived by it. If the content, or parts of the content, of *War and Peace* can be regarded as Homeric, the form of that content is disenchantment: the narrator of *War and Peace* disenchant the *Iliad*, an attitude paralleled in Tolstoy's own writing career.

In 1867, in a complete reversal of his earlier sentiments, a much more critical Tolstoy writes in *A Few Words on the Book War and Peace*:

After the loss of Sevastopol' the artillery leader K[...] sent to me reports from artillery officers from all the bastions and asked me to make up from these more than 20 reports just one [report]. I regret that I did not make notes on these reports. This was the best example of that naïve, necessary, military lie, from which all [historical] descriptions are made. [...] Anyone who has experienced war knows how capable Russians are of doing their job in war and how incapable they are of describing it [war] with that boastful lie that is necessary in this case. Everyone knows that in our armies, this responsibility of making up communications and reports is carried out primarily by our foreigners.<sup>364</sup>

This passage is laden with a multiplicity of assumptions. First, it is a clear example of Tolstoy's dramatically altered attitude – from his early period writing – to historical narrative. This older, wiser Tolstoy regrets that he failed to take notes on military reports; such a reflective activity is something the narrator of the *Sevastopol' Sketches* would not have considered because he was consumed with

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<sup>364</sup> PSS 15, p. 12. See Appendix A.134 for original.

precisely those heroic values that the author of *War and Peace* works to disenchant. Recall Tolstoy's praise for Russian heroics in what he saw as one of the most significant sieges in human history, subtly inviting comparison of the Siege of Sevastopol' to that of Troy: 'In the time of ancient Greece there was not this much heroism'<sup>365</sup> and a related description of Captain Kornilov in *Sevastopol' in December*. '[T]hat hero, worthy of ancient Greece, Kornilov, riding around the troops [...]'.<sup>366</sup> By the 1860s, such comments are a shameful and boastful error, as evident in Nikolai Rostov's response when he hears his companions exult in battle heroics by using the exact terms Tolstoy had used in 1854:

The officer [...] described the dike at Saltanov as the Russian Thermopylae, and the heroic deed of General Raevsky on that dike as worthy of antiquity. [...] Rostov listened to the tale and said nothing [...]. He looked, indeed, as though ashamed of what he was told [...]. [...] Rostov knew from his own experience that men always lie when they describe the deeds of battle [and that] everything in battle happens utterly differently from our imagination and description of it.<sup>367</sup>

This passage reiterates Tolstoy's argument about the unreliability of both historical accounts and the heroizing tendency by means of Rostov's internalization of it. The extradiegetic and intradiegetic narration are brought together here in a way that has the effect of disenchanting the heroic tendency that had characterized Tolstoy's earlier writing, underscoring that comparing Russian heroics to that of ancient Greece, as Tolstoy had done before, is misleading.

Second, we see from the passages above that, for the middle-period Tolstoy, Russians remain as militarily superior as they were in his early period, with one crucial difference: the descriptions of their achievements that rely on wartime narratives are necessarily fabrications. The primary sources which are the raw material of *istoriia-nauka* are, for Tolstoy, exaggerations and lies by their very nature as primary sources. Furthermore, it is almost exclusively foreigners – not modest Russians – who take such material seriously. Contrast this position with

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<sup>365</sup> PSS 59, p. 281. See Appendix A.135 for original.

<sup>366</sup> PSS 4, p. 16.

<sup>367</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 737.



how, as we saw in Chapter Two, *Sevastopol' in December* advanced the view that an accurate account of battle is possible by means of direct participation, and to this end, the text implicates the reader in the narrative, enabling her to 'experience' the war directly. Yet *A Few Words* dismisses this possibility altogether: 'From no one, and especially not from the commander-in-chief, will you learn how everything happened'.<sup>368</sup>

Finally, the superiority of Russians is emphasized by asserting that they are not guilty of lies and that, if official Russian history about the Napoleonic war is misleading, it is the fault of foreign interference. With exclusionary language ('Everyone knows', '[O]ur armies', 'My friends'), Tolstoy strongly implies that any war history that relies on primary sources – such as those endorsed by Tolstoy's critics – is disloyal to the nation. As a variation on the 'our grandfathers' that introduce *War and Peace*, this critique of 'our foreigners' ('*nashy inorodtsy*') not only excludes non-Russians in its content, but the very form of the phrase presumes that the reader is Russian and that foreign interference is a mutual problem, afflicting both narrator and reader. Considering Tolstoy's privileging of Russians and his conviction that while historians prefer heroes, writers populate their fiction with flawed human beings,<sup>369</sup> I suggest that the author of the *Sevastopol' Sketches*, for whom there were heroes, was (despite his failure to take notes) acting as a historian who practices *istoriia-nauka*. The author of *War and Peace*, however, for whom there are no heroes, is acting as an artist because he praises ordinary Russian soldiers – the *narod*. He is, moreover, acting patriotically, since he does not rely on bragging foreign reports.

Importantly, Tolstoy seems to trace back to Homer the erroneous historical tendency to privilege heroes to Homer. For example, examining the Battle of Borodino in the third volume of *War and Peace*, Tolstoy concludes that there were neither individual actors nor heroes involved. He contrasts this with the view of those he terms simply, 'the ancients' ('*drevnie*'): 'The ancients left us examples of heroic poems in which heroes make up the entire focus of history, and we still cannot get used to the fact that, for our time, a history of this type makes no

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<sup>368</sup> PSS 11, p. 16

<sup>369</sup> PSS 16, p. 12.

sense'.<sup>370</sup> This idea is repeated in the second epilogue to *War and Peace*, where Tolstoy targets for critique 'the views of the ancients', the 'faiths of the ancients', and the 'fate of the ancients':<sup>371</sup>

The question, In what way individual persons made nations act in accordance with their will [...] the ancients answered, By the will of God [...]. For the ancients these questions were solved by faith in the immediate participation of the Deity in the affairs of mankind.<sup>372</sup>

In a draft for the second epilogue, Tolstoy restates the formulation articulated above: 'Ancient historians said that heroes alone by God's will rule the actions of the masses'.<sup>373</sup> In another draft of the second epilogue, Tolstoy reiterates almost verbatim the observation in the final, published version of *War and Peace* (quoted above) that unconstrained heroes form the centre of epic poetry: 'The ancients decide unconsciously on the free will of historical personages [...]. [F]or ancient [historians], all the interest of history is concentrated on the actions of historical actors'.<sup>374</sup>

We are entitled to ask: who are these ancient historians that approached history so naively? The narrator does not say. We can only surmise whom Tolstoy has in mind when he speaks of 'the ancients' ('*drevnie*') or 'ancient historians' ('*drevnie istoriki*'). Jeff Love remarks that 'it is not clear on what basis Tolstoy makes these generalizations about ancient historiography; they in fact seem to apply better to Homeric epic than they do either to Herodotus and Thucydides or Sallust and Tacitus'.<sup>375</sup> Indeed, not even Herodotus, who occasionally invokes gods as influencing events, offers divinity as an exclusive cause for human power or behaviour. It is likely that the heroes of history whom the narrator questions in the second epilogue are the same as those of heroic poetry mentioned during the earlier explication of Borodino. Since Tolstoy regarded Homeric epic as historical, I

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<sup>370</sup> PSS 11, p. 185. See Appendix A.136 for original. Garnett renders '*geroicheskikh poem*' as 'epic poems'. Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 862.

<sup>371</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 1344.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

<sup>373</sup> PSS 15, p. 215. See Appendix A.137 for original.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid., p. 187. See Appendix A.138 for original.

<sup>375</sup> Jeff Love, *The Overcoming of History in War and Peace* (New York, NY: Rodopi, 2004), p. 125.

tentatively conclude that the ‘ancient historians’ are Homer and, possibly, Vergil. However, Tolstoy’s failure to name whom he means indicates a deliberate ambiguity.

The first of the erroneous tendencies Tolstoy associates with the misguided historiography of ‘the ancients’ is recollecting the past in terms of heroic achievement. Let us examine in greater detail the narrator’s reflection on the Battle of Borodino in the third volume of *War and Peace*:

In giving and accepting battle at Borodino, Kutuzov and Napoleon acted involuntarily and irrationally. Later, to fit the facts, historians provided cleverly devised proofs of the foresight and genius of the generals who, of all the involuntary instruments of world events, are the most slavish and involuntary actors. The ancients left us examples of heroic poems in which heroes make up the entire focus of history, and we still cannot get used to the fact that, for our time, a history of this type makes no sense.<sup>376</sup>

Here, the narrator critiques the battle the way it is generally written and understood, as the clash of powerful individuals who have the will and resources to shape events. Repeating the word ‘involuntary’ (*‘neproizvol’no’*) three times in two sentences, the narrator compels the reader to take his view – that traditionally heroic actors lack both agency and foresight – more seriously than the views of historians who revise the past. That Tolstoy is referring to an epic history of heroic figures is evidenced in the immediate reference to ‘the ancients’ (*‘drevnie’*) who approached history in terms of ‘heroic poetry’ (*‘geroicheskikh poem’*). Tolstoy faults modern history for inheriting this poetic way of understanding battle. I agree with Love that, for Tolstoy, the misguided epic approach to history is Homeric,<sup>377</sup> a reading supported by Tolstoy’s emphasis specifically on ‘ancient’, ‘heroic poetry’. Such a history, Tolstoy purports, proceeds by presenting events freely shaped by the will of powerful personages, who are themselves supported by divine power. For Tolstoy, this approach is naïve and leads to historical inaccuracy. I suggest

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<sup>376</sup> PSS 11, p. 185. See Appendix A.139 for original.

<sup>377</sup> It may also include Vergil, but Tolstoy’s references to Vergil, whether in his published work or his diaries, are extremely infrequent. His references to Homer, however, are both frequent and specific. He has, in other words, Homer ‘in mind’ demonstrably more often.

that Tolstoy distinguished himself from Homer in the 1860s by means of historiographic disagreement; it is possible that, by hiding Homer behind the vague phrases 'ancients', 'ancient historians', and 'heroic poetry', Tolstoy intended to preserve him as a model for *War and Peace*.

Whether modernity has or has not dispensed with heroic views of history is not what is at issue since what Tolstoy rejects in Homeric historiography is the foil for his own version of history. Out of Homeric epic, Tolstoy constructs a straw man he terms 'the ancients' or 'ancient historians' for the purpose of refuting it and advancing a historiography of his own. His attempt to do so occupies the rest of the second epilogue of *War and Peace* and concludes with his inability to find historical legitimacy of any kind. The cause of historical events is shown to be inherently unknowable, and narrative cannot explain the workings of a universe which are, in their infinity, unintelligible. In this very unintelligibility there is a rupture and discontinuity in the deterministic movement of history:

However we increase our knowledge of the conditions of space in which a man is placed, that knowledge can never be complete since the number of these conditions is infinitely great, seeing that space is infinite. And so long as not all the conditions that may influence a man are defined, the circle of necessity is not complete, and there is still a loophole for free will.<sup>378</sup>

We are free inasmuch as we are indeterminable. Yet indetermination gives us no peace because it unmoors us, concretizing the impossibility of knowing and making certain nothing except death. Jeff Love writes about *War and Peace*:

The first seven chapters of the Second Part of the Epilogue end inconclusively; they thus reveal a grave metaphysical problem but do not explicitly provide an answer. On the one hand, it is clear that to provide a historical narrative which explains why an event took place in the way it did is impossible without a grounding in a divine power, one not subject to time and space. On the other hand, it is equally clear that this divine power is no

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<sup>378</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 1380.

longer accepted and that no successful substitute has emerged to take its place [...]. [U]ltimately, all explanations become tautologies; they assert that a thing is because it is.<sup>379</sup>

I suggest that, for Tolstoy in the 1860s, epic history, with its clearly identifiable, straightforwardly superior heroes, is no longer a model to be celebrated as his early writing did, but a framework to incorporate for the purpose of exposing its philosophically wobbly foundation. Tolstoy writes in epic terms to show their inadequacy, thereby disenchanting the epic mode. The process of disenchantment is enacted throughout *War and Peace* in characters such as Rostov, considered above, and perhaps most explicitly in the changing representation of the traditional heroes themselves.

At the outset of the novel, Napoleon is shown through the eyes of Andrei Bolkonskii and Pierre Bezukhov, who are the text's principal main heroes. They regard Napoleon as a monumental, epic figure. Andrei weaves grandiloquent quotations from Napoleon into his conversation<sup>380</sup> and praises him for being "the greatest man in the world";<sup>381</sup> Pierre repeatedly describes the French general as 'great'<sup>382</sup> ('*velik*') and fantasizes that he himself is Napoleon conquering London.<sup>383</sup> The composition's tension between form and content is most evident during Napoleon's advance into Poland, the ironic narration of which is juxtaposed with how all classes of people fetishize Napoleon:

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of May Napoleon left Dresden, where he had been spending three weeks surrounded by a court that included princes, dukes, kings, and even one emperor. Before his departure, Napoleon [...] tenderly embraced the Empress Marie Louise [...] and left her, so his historian relates, deeply distressed [...] He drove [...] along the route by Posen, Thorn, Danzig, and

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<sup>379</sup> Love, *Overcoming of History*, p. 131

<sup>380</sup> "'I showed them the path of glory; they would not take it,'" he said after a brief pause, again quoting Napoleon's words.' Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 17.

<sup>381</sup> "'[T]he greatest man in the world'". Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 24.

<sup>382</sup> *PSS* 9, p. 24.

<sup>383</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 55.

Königsberg. In each of these towns he was welcomed with enthusiasm and trepidation by thousands of people.<sup>384</sup>

Everyone – nobility, commoners, soldiers, and the text's main characters – is certain of Napoleon's supreme importance. Everyone, that is, except Tolstoy's narrator, who derides both Napoleon and the will to invest him with historical significance. The narrator mocks Napoleon's historians ('[A]s his historian says', '*[K]ak govorit ego istorik*') for participating in this fetishization, highlighting Tolstoy's main argument that official histories are thoroughly misleading. Since the reader is privy to the thoughts of Napoleon and his awareness of himself as making choices, she is likely to trust (along with Pierre, Andrei, European princes, soldiers, commoners, and traditional historians) in what Tolstoy regards as a conviction originating in 'the ancients' that the heroic individual has a unique and unconstrained power. Gradually, the narrator reveals to the reader what Andrei and Pierre come to realize, namely, that epic figures such as Napoleon are inherently unfree:

[Napoleon] passed back again into his old artificial world, peopled by the phantoms of some unreal greatness, and again (as a horse running in a rolling wheel may imagine it is acting on its own account) he fell back into submissively performing the cruel, gloomy, irksome, and inhuman part destined for him. [...] He, predestined by Providence to the gloomy, slavish part of executioner of the peoples [...] imagined that the war with Russia was entirely due to his will'.<sup>385</sup>

Napoleon's ability to act is negative: he can act, or not act, but either way, he will be defeated, and Moscow will burn.

It is, however, disingenuous of Tolstoy to approach Homeric poetry as the source of historical heroization when the tension between agency and divinely determined

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<sup>384</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 691.

<sup>385</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, pp. 931-33.

fate already exists in the *Iliad*. In the final paragraphs of this section, I will consider the role of fate in the *Iliad* and then present passages of the *Iliad* and *War and Peace* side by side to demonstrate that Tolstoy was, despite his claims to the contrary, aware of Homer's nuanced attitude to human agency. For example, Achilles seems to believe himself free to decide whether he will fight Hektor or not, yet on a less tangible but still substantial level, these are not choices at all because both Hektor and Achilles will die, which means that Troy will be destroyed.

In Book Nine, Achilles tells his companions that he can either die at Troy or return to Phthia (*Il.* 9.410-15), clearly indicating that, as far as he is concerned, the decision is his own. However, his freedom is contradicted in other sections of the *Iliad* concerned with the workings of fate. When Thetis pleads with Zeus to aid Achilles, she describes her son as 'short-lived beyond all other mortals' (*Il.* 1.505-6) even though Achilles has yet to make his decision; in Book Six, Hektor remarks '[A]s for fate, I think no man yet has escaped it/ once it has taken its first form' (*Il.* 6.488-89); in Book Eight, long before Achilles articulates to his companions what he believes to be his choices, Zeus tells Hera that Achilles is destined to return to battle and fight Hektor after Patroklos dies:

'For Hektor the huge will not sooner be stayed from his fighting  
until there stirs by the ships the swift-footed son of Peleus  
on that day when they shall fight by the sterns of the beached ships  
in the narrow place of necessity over fallen Patroklos.

This is the way it is fated to be' (*Il.* 8.473-77).

In other words, Achilles is free to decide, but his decision is known to the gods before he makes it because he is fated to die at Troy. It is, therefore, not correct to suggest, as Tolstoy does, that the heroes of Homeric epic are unconstrained and free actors. If anything, they are free only in the sense that Tolstoy considers

Napoleon to be 'free': he makes choices while simultaneously acting out a destiny that has already been decided.<sup>386</sup>

Reflecting on what seems to be Achilles' choice, Kalliopi Nikolopoulou writes: '[I]n living and agonizing over his destiny, he shows the other warriors, and the readers as well, how we all participate in mortal destiny'.<sup>387</sup> Peter Jones describes Homer's conception of agency and fate as one of balance: 'Broadly, [Homeric epic represents] a world which maintains a balance between free human activity and all-powerful divinities imposing their will [...] a world in which there is some sense of balance of forces between man, fate and the gods'.<sup>388</sup> In other words, Achilles, like the rest of Homer's heroes, is both free and unfree. A poetic expression of the limitations on Homeric heroes is famously articulated by the Trojan ally Glaucus in Book Six of the *Iliad* in response to a question from the Greek hero Diomedes about the former's ancestry:

'High-hearted son of Tydeus, why ask of my generation?  
As is the generation of leaves, so is that of humanity.  
The wind scatters the leaves on the ground, but the live timber  
burgeons with leaves again in the season of spring returning.  
So one generation of men will grow while another  
dies' (6.145-50)

This simile does not express the monumental, unconstrained individualism for which Tolstoy critiques Homeric heroes, but rather a limited and humble

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<sup>386</sup> It is important to add that, in Homeric epic, fate, or *moira*, is related primarily to the time of death and not to other human activities, so while Achilles (and other heroes) may have no choice regarding when or how he will die, he likely does have agency in other matters. It is unclear, however, to what extent, if at all, Tolstoy was familiar with the distinction between the Christianized concept of 'fate' and the more limited Homeric *moira*. Furthermore, the link between the death of Homeric heroes and fate is inextricable from the poetic tradition of which Homer was a part; the tradition itself, then, acted as a sort of constraining 'fate'. For a discussion of death, fate, and poetic tradition in Homer, see Joe Wilson, 'Homer and the Will of Zeus', *College Literature*, 34 (2007), 150-73.

<sup>387</sup> Kalliopi Nikolopoulou, 'Feet, Fate, and Finitude: On Standing and Inertia in the "Iliad,"' in *College Literature: Reading Homer in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007) pp. 174-93 (p. 176).

<sup>388</sup> P.V. Jones, 'The Independent Heroes of the Iliad', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 116 (1996), 108-18 (p. 117).



dependence. Glaucus is not an 'ordinary' example of humanity: he is the grandson of Bellerophon, the legendary hero, and fights alongside the great warrior and son of Zeus, Sarpedon, to help Hektor break through the Greek wall. Yet Glaucus describes himself as equal to any other member of humanity. The seasonality of leaves recalls not only the ephemeral fragility of human life, but also its multiplicity: Glaucus is a leaf just like all the other leaves. This simile denies, or at least puts into question, both the importance and the agency of Homeric heroes in relation to everyone else. If all humans are like leaves bursting from the same tree, it is inaccurate to think of some leaves as 'better' or 'freer' than others.

That Tolstoy was profoundly affected by this simile is evidenced in its incorporation in *War and Peace*. In awakening to his own 'spring', Prince Andrei observes that an oak in the forest produced new foliage: 'Through the tough, centuries-old bark, even where there were no twigs, lush, young leaves had broken through, and it was impossible to believe that this old man had generated them. "Yes, it is the same oak," Prince Andrei thought, and suddenly, a causeless, springlike feeling of happiness and renewal overtook him'.<sup>389</sup> This passage reiterates the Homeric metaphor of regeneration symbolized by the cyclical budding of leaves each spring, which marks human life as fleeting and beholden to the cycle of life and death, yet generative.

The similar passages in Tolstoy and Homer above show that it is unlikely that the destiny that constrains Iliadic heroes could have escaped Tolstoy, especially when both Napoleon and Andrei are shown to participate in the same mortal destiny as Homer's heroes, on similar terms. In other words, even as the humanity of *War and Peace* exists in a framework of fated agency that reflects Homer's, Tolstoy insists that his historical approach is opposed to that of 'the ancients'. Tolstoy understands ancient historiography generally, and Homeric poetry specifically, as emphasizing unconstrained agency. However, Homeric poetry is much more nuanced, presenting an inescapable tension between human freedom and determinism. Tolstoy's simplification indicates that he is deliberately misreading

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<sup>389</sup> PSS 10, p. 158. See Appendix A.140 for original.

Homeric historiography, insofar as he thinks there is one. The purpose of this misreading is to create a foil for his own version of history. He rejects the heroizing historiographical tendency by, first, 'blaming' it on epic poetry and, second, disproving it throughout the course of *War and Peace*.

## Nietzsche and Tolstoy's Nihilism

### *The Homeric Question and its Metaphysical Ground: A Nietzschean Alternative*

For Tolstoy, the historiographic errors allegedly inherited from 'the ancients' generally and Homeric poetry specifically, are grounded in an outdated metaphysics that relies upon reason to discover true facts about the world. An explication of the metaphysical ground that enables Tolstoy's *istoriia-isskustvo* to avoid these errors will return us to the question that opened this chapter: why did Tolstoy write fiction instead of history? Above, we considered that Tolstoy wrote fiction because fiction is truer to life than history. To investigate this singular conception of truth, I will advance a metaphysical explanation for Tolstoy's privileging of art over history.

Tolstoy's belief in the existence of infinite explanations for historical events results from, I suggest, the nihilism that is implicit in his thought. Scholars have commented on the nihilistic strain in Tolstoy's writing:<sup>390</sup> Justin Weir writes that 'Tolstoy developed nihilism's psychological and aesthetic rather than philosophical and sociological implications' which resulted in an 'aesthetics that Tolstoy defined by plumbing the depths of nihilism'<sup>391</sup>; Morson observes Tolstoy's tendency to 'epistemic nihilism'.<sup>392</sup> Within this framework, the most privileged data in *istoriia-nauka*'s arsenal – first-hand perception, or primary sources, such as the military reports Tolstoy failed to take notes of at the Siege of Sevastopol' – are unreliable.

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<sup>390</sup> Note that, in Tolstoy's lifetime, literary figures were also making the case that Tolstoy was a nihilist; for example, Merezhkovskii blamed 'Tolstoyan nihilism' ('*tolstovskii nihilizm*') for the separation of the Russian cultural and *narodnie* spheres. Dmitry Merezhkovskii, *L. Tolstoi i Dostoevskii*, ed. by E.A. Andrushchenko (Nauka, 2000), p. 197.

<sup>391</sup> Justin Weir, *Leo Tolstoy and the Alibi of Narrative* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 39.

<sup>392</sup> Gary Saul Morson, *Hidden in Plain View: Narrative and Creative Potentials in 'War and Peace'* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987), p. 109.

The inherent falsity of perception is ahistorical in the sense that it is not something that can be overcome with rigorous methods, accurate facts, or advanced technology because it is an ontological feature of human existence: 'According to Tolstoy, our ignorance of how things happen is fundamental and without remedy'.<sup>393</sup> This leads to what Morson refers to as 'an impossibility of deriving the actual events [...]. In Tolstoy's view, there can be no reliable witnesses, because what witnesses miss is precisely what history needs to describe'.<sup>394</sup> However, I argue that historical unknowability does not lead to despair for Tolstoy, but rather to intellectual liberation.

We can regard *istoriia-isskustvo* as Tolstoy's answer to the unavoidable fallibility of human perception. If we must distort history, he seems to suggest, then we may as well do so deliberately, exercising full control over the past.<sup>395</sup> Given that such control is possible within the framework of *istoriia-iskusstvo*, the privileging of the *narod* in epic terms remains something of a paradox. After all, if it is possible to resurrect a national past in art, why erase its heroes and de-emphasize its victories, especially by means of an epic form which, on Tolstoy's deliberate misreading, derives its very essence from championing unconstrained heroism? This paradox can be resolved by first coming to terms with what I shall call Tolstoy's 'historical nihilism'.

I will propose a Nietzschean reading of Tolstoy's approach to history. Friedrich Nietzsche's assessment of monumental history as it relates to Homer specifically and ancient Greece more generally is a useful lens through which to examine Tolstoy's rejection of historical heroes. Nietzsche's thought articulates not only the 'nihilism' at the heart of that rejection, but also clarifies the metaphysical framework that renders *istoriia-isskustvo* a viable alternative to traditional history. Tolstoy's nihilism can be separated into two categories – the good kind, which informs the extradiegetic narrative of *War and Peace*, and the bad kind, which exists at the

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<sup>393</sup> Ibid, p. 86.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid, p. 110.

<sup>395</sup> Recall, for example, Tolstoy's reflection in the 1870 notebook, cited at the beginning of this chapter, that the thinkers of antiquity intentionally practiced an aesthetics of history and philosophy, drawing strength from subjectivity rather than trying to deny it.

level of intradiegetic narrative. Both will be examined in detail in the following sections of this chapter and in Chapter Four. Nietzsche's reflections on history and aesthetic theory will help us understand the theoretical distinctions between Tolstoy's nihilisms, and why these distinctions are so important. I hope to show that Tolstoy and Nietzsche share a surprisingly similar vision of historiography's metaphysical grounds. For both Tolstoy and Nietzsche, this vision began to stir in the 1860s in the form of a conscious reworking of Homeric material, a contextualizing detail which only serves to ground the philosophical affinity developed in a shared intellectual atmosphere.

Several scholars throughout the twentieth century have linked the disparate thought of Tolstoy and Nietzsche and the two men were certainly aware, and even resentful, of one another.<sup>396</sup> Arguably, we can regard their reciprocal mistrust as the product of both mutual misreading and mutual suspicion of theoretical similarity, particularly in light of Tolstoy's grudging remark about Nietzsche that 'some of his formulations seem as if taken directly from me'.<sup>397</sup> Tolstoy, appropriately enough, 'took' some formulations from Nietzsche, as well: the *Circle of Reading* (*Krug Chteniia*, 1906-1908, and 1910), a series of quotations and aphorisms Tolstoy collected from thinkers throughout history, includes citations from Nietzsche alongside those from luminaries such as Plato, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius.<sup>398</sup> For his part, Nietzsche read and made notes in his copy of

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<sup>396</sup> See Maurice Adams, 'The Ethics of Tolstoy and Nietzsche', *International Journal of Ethics*, 11 (1900) 82-105; Janko Lavrin, 'Tolstoy and Nietzsche', *The Slavonic Review* 4 (1925), 67-82; Lev Shestov, *Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, and Nietzsche* (Ohio: Ohio University Press: 1969); John Riser, 'Modes of Dissent: Nietzsche and Tolstoy', *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 23 (2006), 277-94.

<sup>397</sup> Irina Paperno, *Who, What am I?: Tolstoy Struggles to Narrate the Self* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), p. 98.

<sup>398</sup> Significantly, the quotations Tolstoy uses seem to be drawn exclusively from the *Will to Power* (1901), implying that this text was the only one of Nietzsche's with which Tolstoy was familiar. This is unfortunate, since it is now established that Nietzsche's sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche (1846-1935), altered and published this manuscript after her brother's death to make its contents align with proto-Fascist ideology in a way that was fundamentally opposed to Nietzsche's own thought. See Carol Diethe, *Nietzsche's Sister and the Will to Power: A Biography of Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

Tolstoy's religious text, *What I Believe* (in Russian, *V chem moia vera?*, 1884; in French, the language of Nietzsche's copy, *Ma religion*, 1885).<sup>399</sup>

At the outset of this discussion, it is essential to qualify that Nietzsche appears only in those chapters of this thesis that deal with *War and Peace* (chapters four and five) because interpreting Tolstoy's thought in Nietzschean terms is arguably only appropriate in the decade Tolstoy was writing *War and Peace*, and immediately after. This is because it is during this time that Tolstoy most articulately advances historical and philosophical concepts which can be regarded as nihilistic. Also, I do not wish to suggest that Tolstoy's conclusions about history and art are similar to Nietzsche's, or that Tolstoy was influenced by Nietzsche. What I do suggest is that reading Nietzsche alongside Tolstoy highlights Tolstoy's nihilism in a more clear and accessible way. What they have in common is how they reach their very different conclusions: with an emphasis on creative, affective thought as an alternative to reason, that is justified on grounds of historical antirealism. Nietzsche's writing on the subjects of historiography, academic language, and the necessity of art to historical work is more fully developed and articulate than Tolstoy's, which is why his writing is useful for elaborating Tolstoy's sometimes cryptic comments.

Before turning to the concept of historical nihilism, recall briefly the academic debates regarding the Homeric question in nineteenth-century Russia, particularly after Leon'tev's translation of Grote's *A History of Greece*, which introduced to Russia the implications of Wolf's influential conjecture that the Homeric epics were the product of many contributors over time (see Chapter One). It is not possible to ascertain whether Tolstoy read Wolf's *Prolegomena*, but it is almost certain that he was privy to the reaction it provoked among classicists and critics regarding Homer's identity. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore in depth whether the Homeric discussion of Tolstoy's time influenced the author's development of his theories, it is nevertheless worth considering that, in the 1860s,

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<sup>399</sup> Thomas H. Brobjer, 'Nietzsche's Reading and Private Library, 1885-1889', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 58 (1997), 663-93 (p. 689).

when intense debates among scholars and critics about the dissolution of Homer as a unique genius were common, Tolstoy developed his strongest argument against the existence of great figures who are the fetishized objects of myths and monuments. We can suppose with more certainty that Tolstoy's conception of the epics as the representation of the many-voiced, ordinary *narod*, equivalent to Russian folk songs which had no known composer, may owe something to the context of the Homeric question during the nineteenth century. After all, Tolstoy was interested primarily in the collective expression of the *narod*, rather than monumental figures. While my concern in this section is partly to understand and interpret Tolstoy's approach to history as a response to its sociohistorical context, the primary aim is to determine how it derives from Tolstoy's unique and autonomous philosophical position.

One of the most insightful analyses of the *reactions* to Wolf's publication was voiced by Nietzsche in his inaugural address to the University of Basel, delivered in 1869, the year *War and Peace* was first published in its entirety. At the same age as Tolstoy had been when he first jotted down his dream of a 'true, faithful' history of Europe, the twenty-four-year-old Nietzsche chose the question of Homer's identity as the subject of his address. Trained as a classical philologist who went on to lecture publicly on Homeric epic, Greek music, and lyric poetry, Nietzsche was certainly qualified to speak on the subject.<sup>400</sup> Rather than taking the side of the Analysts or the Unitarians – he himself seemed to think that the epics were the product of oral stories accrued over generations – Nietzsche utilized the debate to illustrate the flaws of classical scholarship.

Like Tolstoy, who critiqued history's application of its allegedly Homeric inheritance in its establishment of monumental figures who can be reliably shown to control historical events, Nietzsche argued that the way classicists approached the Homeric question in the first place is misguided. In Nietzsche's view, the

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<sup>400</sup> Jerry Jennings, 'From Philology to Existential Psychology: The Significance of Nietzsche's Early Work', *The Journal of Mind and Behavior*, 9 (1988) 57-76 (p. 57).

Unitarians 'are looking for a mere phantom'<sup>401</sup> while the Analysts honour nameless contributors too much: 'The masses have never experienced more flattering treatment than in thus having the laurel of genius set upon their empty heads'.<sup>402</sup> Mockingly, Nietzsche dismisses both camps because, in his view, it should not matter whether there was a Homer or not, and in pursuing the question, scholarship strips itself of relevance, relinquishing precisely what makes Greek antiquity precious.<sup>403</sup> Nietzsche separates classical scholarship into science and art, with the former regarded as a lifeless category, and the latter serving the interests of human life. Art resurrects antiquity with passion and love, and this renders it truer to life than a purely academic approach – truer not in terms of correspondence to facts, but in terms of faithfulness to the interests of living beings. This dichotomy is parallel in time and substance to Tolstoy's, who described in 1870, just one year after Nietzsche's address, the ability of *istoriia-iskusstvo* to humanize and make relevant *istoriia-nauka*.

Nietzsche concludes that how one approaches the Homeric question is really a matter of taste: 'Homer as the composer of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is not a historical tradition, but an *aesthetic judgment*'.<sup>404</sup> An aesthetic judgment passed on history is inseparable from the agenda of the one who judges, and Nietzsche implies that revealing this agenda tells us everything we need to know about the application of any historical method. Historiography, in this framework, is reflexive rather than reflective. The important thing for the historian is to be aware of this, and thereby handle the past in a way that aligns with sociohistorical commitments, whether these are the culture's or the historian's own. Examining this early speech

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<sup>401</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Homer and Classical Philology*, ed. Oscar Levy, trans. J.M. Kennedy (Auckland, New Zealand: The Floating Press, 2013), p. 20.

<sup>402</sup> Nietzsche, *Homer*, p. 15.

<sup>403</sup> 'Life is worth living, says art, the beautiful temptress; life is worth knowing, says science. With this contrast the so heartrending and dogmatic tradition follows in a theory [...] We may consider antiquity from a scientific point of view; we may try to look at what has happened with the eye of a historian, or to arrange and compare the linguistic forms of ancient masterpieces, to bring them at all events under a morphological law; but we always lose the wonderful creative force, the real fragrance, of the atmosphere of antiquity'. Nietzsche, *Homer*, p. 6.

<sup>404</sup> Nietzsche, *Homer*, p. 18.

of Nietzsche's, scholars have remarked that Nietzsche used Homeric scholarship to demonstrate the sterility and triviality of intellectualism and academic inquiry.<sup>405</sup>

What Nietzsche achieved in his criticism of Homeric scholarship is precisely what Tolstoy's historical essays achieve: they overturn what Tolstoy identifies as the *real* problem in how modern thought approaches antiquity (describing individual figures as powerful actors and imitating its historical methods). Tolstoy did this for the purpose of advancing a historiography that emphasizes the significance of the *narod*. *War and Peace* renders useful for modern problems what it deliberately misreads as Homeric inheritance by showing what is wrong with this alleged inheritance. Put differently, prioritizing the contribution of the common soldier and the *narod*, a priority that is consistent with Tolstoy's social commitments, becomes a valid way of approaching historical events when the reader of the novel is persuaded of the inadequacy of historical heroes. However, this is merely an ideological point. The judgment Tolstoy passes on history assumes something a good deal stranger than the championship of common humanity at the level of historical method (a position which, ironically, Nietzsche would have disdained).

#### *Tolstoy's Historical Nihilism: Another Nietzschean Alternative*

The following, final section of this chapter temporarily deviates from Homer to examine Tolstoy's development of *istoriia-iskusstvo* in metaphysical, specifically Nietzschean, terms. Once this groundwork has been established, we will turn in the next chapter to an examination of *War and Peace* in light of the *Iliad*. Our analysis will then be informed by the connections between Tolstoy's and Nietzsche's thought set forth in the following sections. My examination will rely substantially on Tolstoy's 1870 notebook entries, composed immediately after *War and Peace* was published in its entirety. These entries contain Tolstoy's most explicitly stated articulation of *istoriia-iskusstvo*, along with relevant historical and philosophical reflections.

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<sup>405</sup> See, for example, Jennings, 'From Philology to Existential Psychology', p. 61, and Jessica Berry, 'Nietzsche and the Greeks' in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, ed. by John Richardson and Ken Gemes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 83-107.



In dismissing heroes from their pedestals, along with the traditional historical methods they presuppose, Tolstoy finds himself without theoretical precedents or reference points. In other words, it is not only that the past is fundamentally unknowable, but also that all attempts to know it hitherto have failed. However, nihilism in Tolstoy is not merely epistemological: Tolstoy denies not just the capacity to know history, but the very existence of an objective order of historical events. In the 1860s, Tolstoy's metaphysical position dismissed the existence of truth altogether. Tolstoy observed in his notebook in 1868: 'Truth is only relative. Relations and correspondences may be accurate (geometry), but there is no truth'.<sup>406</sup> This position is much more radical than a merely epistemological scepticism. For Tolstoy, the instruments of human knowledge – geometry, history, science – may show us relationships between things, but no matter how thorough or modern they are, they will always fail to procure truth. By 1870, Tolstoy's notebook is even more specific on this point:

What does it mean when we say that the heavenly bodies move along ellipses (Kepler's law)? Does it really mean that that is how they move? It means only that I imagine them moving, and time, and space, and the ellipses are only forms of my mind, my imaginings. [...] Movement, space, time, materiality, forms of motion – the circle, the sphere, the line, points – it is all only in ourselves.<sup>407</sup>

That this is not a Kantian position regarding the *a priori* nature of time and space is evidenced first by Tolstoy's categorical denial of truth (for Kant, there is an objective, albeit inaccessible to the senses, dimension of existence). Second, it is evident in the subsequent entry, in which Tolstoy explicitly contradicts the idealism first of Descartes, then of Kant: 'Descartes rejects everything strongly, accurately, and then re-erects it again arbitrarily, dreamily. [...] Kant does the same. [...] But why erect it? Thought leads to the futility of thought'.<sup>408</sup> I argue here that Tolstoy's denial of truth and his related emphasis on lived experience rather than on 'futile' ('*tshchetnyi*') thought is, if anything, closer to a Nietzschean critique of objectivity.

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<sup>406</sup> PSS 48, p. 89. See Appendix A.141 for original.

<sup>407</sup> PSS 48, p. 117. See Appendix A.142 for original.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid., p. 118. See Appendix A.143 for original.

Tolstoy's views regarding the impossibility of a knowledge that is not mediated subjectively is echoed just three years later in Nietzsche's philosophical parable, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883), when the sage Zarathustra mockingly rejects 'immaculate perception' that attempts to 'desire nothing from things, except that I might lie there before them like a mirror with a hundred eyes'.<sup>409</sup> In regard to history, such efforts at disinterested 'mirroring' of the past are particularly misguided for Tolstoy, who observes in his 1870 journal entry: 'The objective world is only the unknown world [...]. [T]o ground on this, as people do, conclusions about life and history is the source of all human error'.<sup>410</sup> As we saw above, for Tolstoy, historical events are infinite, and a boundlessness that encompasses everything and which, moreover, does not exist in any absolute sense, effectively encompasses nothing. I term this intellectual position *historical nihilism*. For the historical nihilist, it will never be possible to establish whether Homer was one poet or many, nor will it be possible to conclusively resolve any historical mystery. Nietzsche argues that the very attempt to bridge this lacuna as the Unitarians and Analysts were doing betrays a method that is useless for life.

In relation to the usefulness of intellectual activity, let us return to Tolstoy's dismissal of thought. Remarkably, the 1870 notebook entry with which we have been concerned follows the development of the same theme, and with the same conclusion, as that reached by Zarathustra in his dismissal of immaculate perception. After pointing out the impossibility of objective thought, Tolstoy decides: 'It is not necessary to return to thought. There is another weapon – art [...] only art, always inimical to symmetry – to the circle – gives substance'.<sup>411</sup> Compare how, after noting the impossibility of immaculate perception, Zarathustra accuses the objective thinkers: 'Indeed, you do not love the earth as creators, begetters, and enjoyers of becoming! Where is innocence? Where there is will to beget. And whoever wants to create over and beyond himself, he has the purest will'.<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, ed. by Adrian Del Caro and Robert Pippin, trans. by Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 96.

<sup>410</sup> PSS 48, p. 111. See Appendix A.144 for original.

<sup>411</sup> PSS 48, p. 118. See Appendix A.145 for original.

<sup>412</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p. 96.

Both Tolstoy and Nietzsche's Zarathustra champion a creativity that will take the place of futile attempts at objectivity, and both associate this approach with potency. Zarathustra mocks the 'immaculate' scholars that they are always observers, never begetters.<sup>413</sup> Tolstoy makes the same thematically sexual association in a notebook entry two weeks after his rejection of objectivity: 'All that is reasonable, is powerless. All that is mad is aesthetically-productive [...] all that is reasonable is unproductive, and what is mad, is productive'.<sup>414</sup> Tolstoy hyphenates the phrase 'aesthetically productive' – '*tvorchesko-proizvoditel'no*' – to bring productivity and aesthetics together into a novel concept. The phrase can be also translated as 'generative' or 'procreative', and its meaning is clear: production as a creative act that begets something that is valuable, useful, and perhaps also beautiful, and which did not exist before. The aesthetically-productive method does not comment upon, investigate, or tinker with data; it actively begets it. In Russian, the word *mad* is appropriate in this context because it is made of the two words 'without' (*bez*) and 'mind' (*uma*), and literally means 'without mind' (*bez uma*), or non-intellectual. For Tolstoy and Nietzsche's Zarathustra, reason, or 'immaculate perception', is weak because it passively observes and comments upon history rather actively generating it. Indeed, the Wolfian achievement can be said to inaugurate in Russia and Europe precisely this attempt at 'immaculate', disinterested Homeric scholarship.<sup>415</sup>

The notion of generative thought is developed more fully in Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (1886). This work contrasts 'scientific labourers' – whom I suggest it is fruitful to compare to the practitioners of *istoriia-nauka* – with 'genuine philosophers'.<sup>416</sup> The true philosopher must be 'a critic and a skeptic and a dogmatist and historian and, moreover, a poet and

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<sup>413</sup> Ibid.

<sup>414</sup> PSS 48, p. 122. See Appendix A.146 for original.

<sup>415</sup> See Wolf's letter to Heyne, in which Wolf laments that 'genuinely historical research' has as its obstacle those views 'which attempt to adapt antiquity to our taste, our scholarly desires and artistic ideas'. This is precisely what Tolstoy and Nietzsche argue for – the adaptation of antiquity to our artistic ideas. F.A. Wolf, *Prolegomena to Homer* (1795) ed. and trans. by Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most and James E.G. Zetzel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 246.

<sup>416</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, ed. by Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman, trans. by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 105.

collector and traveller and guesser of riddles and moralist and seer'<sup>417</sup> because only this motley cacophony of affective selves can accomplish the most difficult task: 'to *create values*'.<sup>418</sup> Instead of participating in the discipline of history by carefully following established rules which are based on reason and avoiding inserting the historian's own agenda, the true philosopher creates (in the full and loose sense of the term 'creates:' designs, fabricates, generates, *imagines*) a new way of seeing. The ideal thinker, in other words, is one who functions in a 'aesthetically-productive' way.

Nietzsche declares:

*True philosophers are commanders and legislators: they say 'That is how it should be!' [...] which puts at their disposal the preliminary labor of all philosophical laborers [...]. True philosophers reach for the future with a creative hand and everything that is and was becomes a means, a tool, a hammer for them. Their 'knowing' is *creating*.*<sup>419</sup>

Two elements in this passage are relevant for a full understanding of *istoriia-iskusstvo*. First, the generative capacity Nietzsche and Tolstoy advocate is philosophically justified by historical nihilism – if we accept that the past is essentially undefinable, we are free to create it, and this process of creation itself becomes a means of knowing. In other words, if *istoriia-iskusstvo* is the method, it is because historical nihilism is the theory. Second, a creative approach to history is necessarily iconoclastic – it does not record or 'discover' a past: it uses it, sometimes by first pretending to 'discover' it.

To this end, Tolstoy does not engage with the Homeric question, and there is no evidence that he had any interest in Homer's 'true' identity. If the erasure of Homer's identity can be regarded symbolically, as the pulling down of pedestals, then what is symbolized by the wilful construction of Homer's historiographic commitments with no regard for whether there was a Homer who had such commitments in the first place? Tolstoy did not need academic interest in the 'real'

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<sup>417</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good*, p. 105.

<sup>418</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good*, p. 105.

<sup>419</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good*, p. 106.

Homer to appropriate his material. Instead, Tolstoy generated his own Homer whom he sometimes named directly and at other times coyly referred to as ‘the ancients’, and who was a figure to be scapegoated, revered, or imitated, as Tolstoy’s own literary, psychological, and philosophical needs demanded. I argue that Tolstoy approached Homer in a thoroughly Nietzschean manner, and his Homer, like the Napoleonic Wars or the Crimean war, was raw material rather than reality that could (or should) be corroborated factually. Tolstoy was able to use this raw material to rewrite the Napoleonic invasion without worrying about disrupting the military record. As a historical nihilist, he could have no esteem for the military record, and wrote according to the Nietzschean principle of aesthetic-production. Indeed, on a Nietzschean reading, Tolstoy’s literary critique of contemporary historiography by means of a deliberate misinterpretation of ancient historiography is the appropriate way to *make* history.

### *Conclusion: Love and Humanity in History*

Following his reflection of art as generative in 1870, Tolstoy advises: ‘Approach religion, Christianity, with reason, and there will be nothing left except reason, and religion will slip through with its irrational contradictions. The same with love, with poetry, with *history*<sup>420</sup> (italics mine). Here, Tolstoy again indicates that history must be approached similarly to the ‘irrational’ categories of poetry, religion, and love: madly, or ‘without mind’ (*bez uma*). To help us understand how this might work in practice, let us turn to Nietzsche’s rejection of an aloof *cogito* and related emphasis on engaged, generative thinking, which gestures toward irrational love: ‘When Zarathustra denies the existence of “immaculate perception” he denies the existence of disinterested perceptions unaffected by affects [...]. None of this has the slightest plausibility unless Nietzschean affects are something far more complicated than rudimentary feelings and urges’.<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> PSS 48, 122. See Appendix A.147 for original.

<sup>421</sup> Mark Fowler, ‘Nietzschean Perspectivism: “How Could Such a Philosophy – Dominate?”’, *Social Theory and Practice*, 16 (1990), 119-62 (p. 121).

Nietzschean affects are interrelated perception, valuation, and motivation which not only shape one's attitude to life but determine the assessment of reality. Since this affective orientation toward the world is unavoidable, it is essential to consciously select the right one – 'right' in terms of self-reflexive, not world-reflective, values. If we take this framework as a guide to Tolstoy's aesthetic-production, then what affective constellation does his suspicion of reason generate? In the 1870 notebook entry in which he urges approaching history and love without reason, Tolstoy writes:

But if I understand the inadequacy of reason to grasp substance, then with what do I understand that which is substance, and its laws? With what? Awareness of myself as part of an incomprehensible whole [...]. [L]ove yourself, love in yourself that which is God, in other words, all that is irrational in you (the rational is the sign of the devil).<sup>422</sup>

In replacing reason with love, Tolstoy blurs the boundary between self and other through an irrational consciousness of wholeness, which dissolves the particular into the universal. To apply this attitude to history, as Tolstoy wishes to do, we will see the communal whole as more fundamental than the heroic individual, and the debates about individual historical identities will cease to matter so much. The abstraction that is 'the *narod*' will cease to be a cold intellectual category and will instead be a felt, embodied, visceral, (and perhaps even spiritual) experience.

Tolstoy put into practice this emphasis on emotional and somatic experience over reason when he was generating *War and Peace*. In the spirit of actively and sensuously experiencing history, Tolstoy travelled to the field of Borodino in September of 1867 (the same year he composed the article *A Few Words About War and Peace*) to gather material. He selected for his visit the same days the historical Battle of Borodino took place, which began on September 7, 1812, presumably to experience for himself details such as the weather and lighting

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<sup>422</sup> PSS 48, pp. 122-23. See Appendix A.148 for original.

conditions. For two days, Tolstoy walked through the field, drawing maps and making notations:

25 versts distance visible.

Thick mists because of the cold.

Black shadows from forests. The sun rises in the left, at the back.<sup>423</sup>

On the first day of his fieldwork, he wrote triumphantly to his wife: 'I shall write such a Battle of Borodino that has never existed before'.<sup>424</sup> Indeed, Tolstoy did write it. In the second part of the third volume of *War and Peace*, the map of the battlefield Tolstoy provides to his readers was drawn during this visit to the site. In Chapter Twenty-One, Pierre arrives at Borodino: 'The sun stood slightly to the left and behind Pierre'.<sup>425</sup> The narrator places Pierre in the exact location Tolstoy had stood in during his visit to the historical battlefield; thus, the reader 'sees' the field by means of the hand-drawn map and 'feels' Tolstoy's own sensory experience of sunlight through the fictional Pierre. To use Nietzschean logic and Tolstoyan terminology, the body of the author engenders history by means of 'aesthetically-productive' fiction. Just as Tolstoy's visit to the Kremlin in the beginning of 1863 prompted a nostalgic memory of youth and war which led ultimately to *War and Peace*, in 1867, Tolstoy concluded *War and Peace* by embodying history. The sensation of wholeness informs the affective and somatic practice of Tolstoy's category of *istoriia-iskusstvo* and can be regarded as its litmus test. If a historical event is approached with the method of *istoriia-iskusstvo*, it ought to recreate that event with aesthetic and affective power so that history is felt, not merely thought.

I suggest that, for Tolstoy, as for Nietzsche, it is not exclusively the figure of Homer but the entire historical record that is a matter of aesthetic judgment. Accepting this and practicing history aesthetically in good conscience is justified by the theoretical ground of historical nihilism. Those who perform *istoriia-nauka* because they think they have a privileged epistemic position are merely engaging in hollow

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<sup>423</sup> PSS 13, p. 40. See Appendix A.149 for original.

<sup>424</sup> PSS 88, p. 153. See Appendix A.150 for original.

<sup>425</sup> PSS 11, p. 193. See Appendix A.151 for original.

scholasticism, which is so much the opposite of generativity, that it becomes destructive: '[*Istoriia-nauka*] needs to destroy the liveliness of rare monuments, leading them to the impersonality of its suppositions. So that everything is even and smooth, and so that nobody notices that beneath this smoothness, there is nothing'.<sup>426</sup> *Istoriia-nauka*'s lack of liveliness, personality, and rough edges – in short, its inhumanity – underwrite its uselessness for life. The truth of this uselessness is borne out in the admission of General Dragomirov (who, we will remember, had accused Tolstoy of misrepresenting historical data) that a common soldier would prefer Tolstoy's account of the war to a historian's, presumably because it is more relatable.<sup>427</sup>

In his 1874 essay *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, Nietzsche reiterates the notion that the historical method is a matter of psychology rather than facts, and that too much historical faithfulness is inimical to human flourishing:

The stronger the innermost roots of a man's nature, the more readily will he be able to assimilate and appropriate the things of the past [...]. That which such a nature cannot subdue it knows how to forget [...]. The good conscience, the joyful deed, confidence in the future – all of them depend, in the case of the individual as of a nation, on the [...] possession of a powerful instinct for sensing when it is necessary to feel historically and when unhistorically. This, precisely, is the proposition the reader is invited to meditate upon: *the unhistorical and the historical are necessary in equal measure for the health of an individual, of a people and of a culture.*<sup>428</sup>

Nietzsche would not be at all surprised to learn that, in the intensity of battle, the soldier prefers Tolstoy's fiction to Mikhailovsky-Danilevsky's history and would likewise prefer the *Iliad* to an essay on the Bronze Age. In simpler terms, an 'unhistorical' history is good for the soldier's soul in a way that makes it altogether unimportant whether such a history has a place in the scholar's library. Tolstoy's

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<sup>426</sup> PSS 48, p. 125. See Appendix A.152 for original.

<sup>427</sup> Orwin, 'Military Point of View', p. 100.

<sup>428</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life' in *Untimely Meditations*, ed. by Daniel Breazeale, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 57-123 (pp. 62-63).



own ability to forget, to be historical and unhistorical simultaneously, resonates with the soldier's psychological needs and contributes to what Nietzsche would call the soldier's *health*, in a way that the most accurate description of a battle is impotent to do: 'Insofar as it stands in the service of life, history stands in the service of an unhistorical power, and, thus subordinate, it can and should never become a pure science'.<sup>429</sup> The 'unhistorical power' that subordinates history and abstract reason is the soldier's – and general reader's – humanity. Humanity, or the *narod*, is served by *istoriia-iskusstvo* because it facilitates love in relation to its everyday life. Tolstoy's position vis-à-vis modern historiography is an aesthetic judgment passed on a lack of aesthetics, advancing instead Nietzschean affect justified by historical nihilism.

Although Tolstoy does not distinguish between good and bad nihilism – and certainly does not regard himself as any sort of nihilist – he makes explicit distinctions between rational thought, expressed in *istoriia-nauka*, and life, expressed in *istoriia-iskusstvo*. From this perspective, historical nihilism is good inasmuch as it legitimizes creative history-making. In a framework of historical antirealism, history is liberated from tradition, ushering in new modes of historical thinking which actively assert the human, interested self. In a surprising reversal, historical nihilism can be regarded as a reaction against the nihilism that Tolstoy and Nietzsche believe to be implicit in traditional history. This is because, as we have seen, the two thinkers associate systematic reason with an impotent renunciation of life. By invoking an objective position stripped of personality, *istoriia-nauka* dehumanizes the human past. We will see in the next chapter how Tolstoy warns against the dangers of nihilism in the development of Andrei Bolkonskii's narrative, modelled, as I hope to show, on the narrative of Homer's Achilles.

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<sup>429</sup> Ibid, p. 67.

## Chapter Four

### War and Psychological Nihilism

As we have seen, Tolstoy considered the *Iliad* to be based on historical events. Therefore, how the poem expresses those events is fundamental to our consideration of Tolstoy's appropriation, adaptation, and refiguration of Homeric epic in *War and Peace*. The poem is preoccupied with violence, death, and a meaningful life specifically during wartime; for Iliadic heroes, who find eternity only in song, the question of mortality is particularly poignant. Scholars have pointed out that, while celebrating heroism, the epic simultaneously critiques it: 'The *Iliad*, amid all its glory-mongering, also and oppositely denounces war as has never been done since'.<sup>430</sup> War and how it is remembered can be adapted to suit the needs of any epoch; this is especially true of mythologized wars, perhaps the most famous of which is the Trojan War.<sup>431</sup> Although Iliadic heroes would much rather not die, the pursuit of honour and glory necessitates brutality, suffering, and risk of destruction, for others as much as for the hero. The *Iliad*, then, is an epic which

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<sup>430</sup> F. T. Griffiths and Stanley J. Rabinowitz, *Epic and the Russian Novel: From Gogol to Pasternak* (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2011), p. 57. Consistent with this view, Katherine Harloe observes: 'Despite the popularity of the *Iliad* in military circles, as an exposition of the ethic of the warrior-hero, an equally prominent strand of contemporary interpretation sees the *Iliad* as an anti-war poem: Caroline Alexander has likened Achilles' refusal to continue to fight for Agamemnon and Menelaus to Muhammad Ali's refusal of the Vietnam draft on the basis that "No Viet Cong ever called me Nigger".'. Harloe, *Siege of Troy*, p. 27. One of the most eloquent of such readings is Simone Weil's controversial *The Iliad, or the Poem of Force*; see Mary McCarthy and Simone Weil, 'The Iliad, or the Poem of Force', *Chicago Review*, 18 (1965), 5-30. Weil's interpretation has usually been regarded as a misinterpretation, a refusal to acknowledge that the narrator of the *Iliad* finds battle thrilling just as much as he finds it sorrowful. While we may not quite locate Homer in Weil's analysis – 'The true hero, the true subject, the center of the *Iliad* is force' – we will certainly locate Weil's own concerns. Written in 1940, just after the fall of France, Weil's reception of Homer can be regarded as a brooding political commentary on the events of her time. Written more than half a century after Napoleon's invasion, Tolstoy's use of Homer is more epic, literary, or *aesthetic* rather than directly political, because it recalls a past that is not immediate and was already becoming memorialized. However, it is no less of a 'misreading' than Weil's in that Tolstoy's Homer reflects Homer much less than it reflects Tolstoy's preoccupations, themselves embedded into the latter half of the nineteenth century in Russia.

<sup>431</sup> Of course, in some sense, *all* wars are mythologised. Athena Leoussi observes: 'In commemorating their past battles [...] groups cement their collective identity and sense of community. Battlefields become places for reflection, veneration and myth making for groups, as sites of memory [...] where the story of self-sacrifice in defence of family and hearth, and, by extension, the community and homeland, is being told and retold from one generation to the next. [...] Thus, some battlefields [...] are seen, so to speak, as corners of a foreign field that is forever one's own country'. 'Introduction' in *Famous Battles and their After-Life: A Framework in Famous Battles and How They Shaped the Modern World c. 1200 BCE – 1302 CE: From Troy to Courtrai* (Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military, 2018) pp. 1-19 (p. 4).

troubles the traditional values of epic. For this reason, the poem became an appropriate reference point for Tolstoy's interrogation of warfare's validity in the context of epic history.

This chapter is broadly concerned with how Tolstoy used Homer's *Iliad* to re-think war from a theoretical perspective. Specifically, I will show how Tolstoy adapted the warlike ethos of the *Iliad* to his portrayal of the character Andrei Bolkonskii in *War and Peace*, thus simultaneously naturalizing and problematizing war. First, I will explore how *War and Peace* draws on the link between nature and war in the *Iliad* to naturalize violence as unavoidable; I will argue that Nietzsche's metaphysics sheds new light on the psychological impact of this naturalization both for the personages in, and readers of, the text. Subsequently, I will investigate how the contradiction inherent in the myth of war is concentrated in Andrei Bolkonskii, demonstrating how Andrei is modelled on Homer's Achilles, informed specifically by Achilles' fatal choice between a glorious death in battle and an obscure homecoming.

Finally, I show how Andrei represents the psychological implications of historical nihilism, identified with the 'bad' kind of nihilism as contrasted with the 'good', generative nihilism discussed in the previous chapter. Nietzsche's theory of psychological nihilism grounds the final sections of this analysis, serving as a diagnostic lens. Throughout the chapter, I rely on comparative readings of passages from Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Homer's *Iliad*, and supporting evidence from Nietzsche's texts and Tolstoy's drafts and letters. Some of this evidence is archival, in the form of the marks Tolstoy made in his own copy of Homer's *Iliad*, which I shall analyse and discuss at the end of this chapter.

## Hell on Earth in *War and Peace* and the *Iliad*

### *Tolstoyan and Homeric Naturalization of Violence*

Goethe reflected: 'The lesson of the *Iliad* is that on this earth we must enact hell'.<sup>432</sup> The total devastation of war is the closest analogy for hell that literature can conjure. It is helpful to keep Goethe's observation in mind when considering that, as shown in Chapter Three, Tolstoy associates *War and Peace* with the *Iliad*, a war narrative which critiques war. It is, therefore, significant and puzzling that Tolstoy presents descriptions of war side by side with descriptions of homes, families, agriculture, and romance. The following section will show how Tolstoy adapted the tension between peace and war, as developed in the *Iliad*, to convey their ontological interdependence.

The sustained juxtaposition of human life and hell is most obvious in the title Tolstoy selected for his work. However, Tolstoy develops pastoral themes with harvesting and grain imagery throughout the text, perhaps most explicitly in the third volume where we see a literal representation of how, as Orwin puts it, 'war interrupts the harvest'.<sup>433</sup> When the manager of the Bolkonskii estate journeys to Smolensk,<sup>434</sup> his appreciation for the particularly exceptional crops is halted by a disturbing vision: 'What struck him more than anything was that close to Smolensk he saw a splendid field of oats being mown down by some soldiers evidently for forage; there was a camp, too, pitched in the middle of it'.<sup>435</sup> In a powerful juxtaposition, the earth's natural bounty – described as 'singularly fine that season'<sup>436</sup> – becomes a source of sustenance for the very force which destroys it. This is not merely juxtaposition, however: it implies an interdependence that echoes the title of the work.

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<sup>432</sup> Quoted in C.S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2005), p. 30.

<sup>433</sup> Donna Orwin, 'The Awful Poetry of War: Tolstoy's Borodino' in *Tolstoy on War: Narrative Art and Historical Truth in 'War and Peace'* ed. by Rick McPeak and Donna Tussing Orwin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), pp. 123-49 (p. 135).

<sup>434</sup> Smolensk, one of the empire's oldest and holiest cities, would have been known to Russian readers as a scene of devastation when, in 1812, Napoleon took the city after a brutal battle that reduced it to ruins.

<sup>435</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, pp. 790-91.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*

I suggest that *War and Peace* adapts the interdependence of destruction and life developed in the panorama of war and harvest that contextualizes the *Iliad's* narrative. The harvest, and everything it represents – civilization, householding, family, the continuation and coexistence of natural and human life – is antithetical to war and is threatened by it. This is conveyed clearly in the tension between grain fields and battlefields in Book Twenty-One of the *Iliad*, when the goddess Athena removes a stone marking fertile cropland and throws it at the god of war, Ares:

Athene giving back caught up in her heavy hand a stone  
that lay in the plain, black and rugged and huge, one which men  
of a former time had set there as a boundary mark of the cornfield.  
With this she hit furious Ares in the neck (*Il.* 21.403-06)

War literally 'interrupts the harvest' in an ironic reversal: a boundary stone carefully placed to mark fertile land becomes an instrument of destruction. A similar transformation takes place when the Trojan prince Lykaon cuts a tree branch for a chariot, prompting Achilles to kill him:

[Lykaon] with the sharp bronze was cutting young branches  
from a fig tree, so that they could make him rails for a chariot [...]  
'He must be given a taste of our spearhead  
so that I may know [...]  
whether [...] the prospering  
earth will hold him, she who holds back even the strong man' (*Il.* 21.37-63)

Not only are fig trees (notably created by Demeter, the goddess of the harvest)<sup>437</sup> used to fashion battle instruments, but the 'prospering' earth is simultaneously a

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<sup>437</sup> In Book Twelve of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is saved from the monster Charybdis by holding on to the branches of a wild fig tree – in this case, the tree acts as an instrument of salvation. For a discussion of the significance of the fig tree as contrasted with the olive tree, which is associated with Athena, see Catalin

fertile source of growing life and a place for fallen bodies.<sup>438</sup> The origin and conclusion of life have the same source, yet there is not a straightforward opposition in Homer's epics between fertility and death: the stone, the fig tree, and the earth can be used, and are used, to facilitate both begetting and destruction.

The inseparable simultaneity of sustaining life and annihilating it is conveyed also in the ekphrastic passage describing the shield of Achilles in Book Eighteen of the *Iliad*. This magnificent piece of armour, wrought by the god Hephaestus, features nature and the cosmos alongside typical instances of human civilization: lawmaking, homemaking, marriage, harvesting, husbandry, revelry – and battle.<sup>439</sup> However, despite the serene beauty of many of its scenes, the shield is ultimately an instrument of violence.<sup>440</sup> Drawing on this interdependence in *War and Peace*, Tolstoy does not present fertility and order as the opposite of war; these antagonistic tendencies are shown to presuppose one another. For example, during the nation's preparation for war, romance and love consume the minds of many in the Rostov household: '[T]hey heard the rustle of starched skirts and girlish laughter [...] there was a glimpse of something blue, of ribbons, black hair, and merry faces'.<sup>441</sup> Indeed, the surrounding social world shares in the happy mood:

The Rostovs' house was at that time full of a sort of peculiar atmosphere of love-making [...]. In that whirl of eager bustle [...] and the inconsequent sound of singing and of music, any young man who came into the house felt

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Anghelina, 'Clinging to the Fig Tree: A note on Hom. Od. 12.432-6', *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, 158 (2015), 8-15.

<sup>438</sup> For a discussion of the physical act of falling and its relation to birth, time, and death in the *Iliad*, see Alex Purves, 'Falling into Time in Homer's *Iliad*', *Classical Antiquity*, 25 (2006), 179-209.

<sup>439</sup> For example, Donald Lateiner argues that the shield is representative of both the cosmic and worldly order, 'The *Iliad*: An Unpredictable Classic', in *Cambridge Companion to Homer*, ed. by Richard Fowler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 12; similarly, Seth Schein describes the shield as possessing a 'cosmic perspective': Seth L. Schein, *The Mortal Hero: An Introduction to Homer's Iliad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 93.

<sup>440</sup> Nathaniel Wallace remarks the irony in that 'so much pastoral discourse has found its way onto the surface of some of Achilles' defensive gear'. Nathaniel Wallace, 'Cultural Process in the *Iliad* 18:478-608, 19:373-80 ("Shield of Achilles") and Exodus 25:1-40:38 ("Ark of the Covenant")' *College Literature*, 35 (2008), 55-74 (p. 60). Compare, also, Aeneas' shield in Book Eight of Vergil's *Aeneid*.

<sup>441</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 332.

the same sensation of readiness to fall in love and expectation of happiness.<sup>442</sup>

Crucially, the young men anticipating happiness among pretty gowns and joyful music – Dolokhov, Denisov, Nikolai – are the same young men who are anticipating battle. This description of young women and men and their various ribbons, dresses, flirtations, and music resonates strongly with the articulation of a marriage scene on Achilles' shield:

Here young boys and girls, beauties courted  
[...] danced and danced,  
linking their arms, gripping each other's wrists.  
And the girls wore robes of linen light and flowing,  
the boys wore finespun tunics rubbed with a gloss of oil,  
the girls were crowned with a bloom of fresh garlands,  
the boys swung golden daggers hung on silver belts [...]  
A breathless crowd stood round them struck with joy. (*Il.* 18.693-99)

Daggers, instruments of violence, decorate the courting dancers who themselves decorate Achilles' shield, which is an instrument of violence; the scene elicits joy in the represented crowd. There is a moral ambivalence in this aesthetic arrangement of human affairs: Tolstoy's narrator has placed battle preparation alongside youthful love just as Homer's Hephaestus has placed a besieged city alongside a marriage celebration. The implication in both cases is that love is inseparable from violence. Developing the relationship between destruction and fertility, Tolstoy suggests that the horror of war is neither a deviation from nor a perversion of the proper order of things. Expressing the futility of locating the causes of the Napoleonic War – or any historical event –, the narrator of *War and Peace* relies on natural metaphors:

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<sup>442</sup> Ibid., p. 368.

The flood of nations begins to subside into its normal channels. [...] But the smooth sea again suddenly becomes disturbed. [...] The last backwash of the movement [...] occurs [...] and concludes the military movement of that period of history [...]. A bee settling on a flower has stung a child. And the child is afraid of bees and declares that bees exist to sting people.<sup>443</sup>

Associating oceanic swells with the movement of great human numbers occurs in Book Two of the *Iliad*, where ‘the whole assembly surged like big waves at sea’ (168) and ‘the armies gave a deep resounding roar like waves’, (469); relatedly, in Book Twelve, the Greeks are compared to ‘bees who build their hives on a rocky path’ (194).

The Homeric analogies between battle and nature as adapted by Tolstoy are striking because, first, they urge historical unintelligibility. Second, comparing a war to ocean waves implies that the irreducible incomprehensibility of causes for war is equivalent to the incomprehensibility of natural phenomena, such as bees settling on flowers or stinging children. The latter image especially is peaceful, harmless, and even life-affirming; it produces the same effect as the celebratory scenes on Achilles’ shield as Tolstoy shows the devastation of war to be continuous with the social order and with nature. In the above passage from *War and Peace*, Tolstoy adapts Homer’s devices to demonstrate the futility of searching for primary causes. Bees sting children and wars annihilate civilizations – understanding why either occurs is not possible and being afraid of either is childish. In associating historical with natural events, Tolstoy expresses that violence is both natural and inevitable.

### *Tragic Knowledge: A Nietzschean View of Violence*

If war is as natural as bees on flowers, every civilization must collapse. There is a deep pessimism in the view that the threat to peace is perpetual, woven into the very fabric of existence. As an ontological fact, it cannot be overcome with a more

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<sup>443</sup> PSS 12, pp. 244-45. See Appendix A.153 for original.



just social system, for example, or more advanced technology; this eliminates the possibility of historical progress. The conclusion is that peace and goodness presuppose the existence of violence and evil, and that humanity is doomed to perpetually re-enact hell. This fatalist position has weighty existential and psychological consequences. The shield of Achilles, emblematic of the eternal tension between war and peace, may also, I suggest, be regarded as conveying a sort of existential horror. In the rest of this chapter, I will show how existential pessimism, a hitherto unexplored facet of Tolstoy's Homeric inheritance, was adapted and refigured by Tolstoy in the narrative arc of Andrei Bolkonskii.

In his first, controversial<sup>444</sup> text, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (1872), Nietzsche argued that the ancient Greeks grasped the moral ambivalence of nature and its indifference to human suffering. Nietzsche recounts the myth of king Midas, who captured Silenus only to hear the old satyr laugh and say that the best thing for humans is to have never been born and, having had the bad luck to be born, the next best thing is to die as quickly as possible. Silenus's account, Nietzsche expresses, was a philosophical position that permeated Greek culture: 'The Greek knew and felt the terrors and horrors of existence'.<sup>445</sup> Nietzsche saw this view as philosophically sound since it accepted the absence of absolute values and grand narratives; for Nietzsche, concepts which impose order are always arbitrary since the individual self is an indistinguishable part of a primordial unity that pre-exists individuation. He argued that the ancient mystery cults of Dionysus were evidence of theory becoming praxis when ecstatic revellers experienced the dissolution of the self into a collective unity. This process of de-individuation, which Nietzsche terms *Dionysian*, has a dark side: in its rejection of order, it is chaotic and destructive. Its necessary counterpart Nietzsche calls the *Apollonian*, which functions as the organizing principle of humanity, imposing social order, value, and meaning. The salient point here is that Apollonian artifice and appearance conceals true Dionysian chaos:

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<sup>444</sup> Whether Nietzsche's description of Greek culture was accurate or inaccurate is irrelevant to this thesis; his interpretation is applied as a theoretical framework rather than a historical account.

<sup>445</sup> Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, p. 46.

The ecstatic tone of the Dionysian festival sounded in ever more luring and bewitching strains into this artificially confined world built on appearance and moderation [...] the wisdom of Silenus cried 'woe! woe!' [...] The individual, with all his boundaries and due proportions, went under in the self-oblivion of the Dionysian states and forgot the Apollonian precepts. The *Undueness* revealed itself as truth, contradiction, the bliss born of pain, declared itself but the heart of nature.<sup>446</sup>

Nietzsche contends that the 'true' world of violent disorder is more fundamental than systematizing and hierarchical thought, which is a mere epiphenomenon. For Tolstoy's narrator, I suggest, traditional history, or *istoriia-nauka*, functions precisely as does the Apollonian tendency: it imposes the arbitrary appearance of order upon a more 'true', chaotic, unintelligible state where all individuality is dissolved. I link Nietzsche's articulation of the Dionysian to what Tolstoy considers to be the natural destructiveness of war, for the purpose of exploring the existential effects of the latter. By emphasizing the unintelligibility and inevitability of destructiveness, the narrator of *War and Peace* fails to acknowledge the psychological implications of not only accepting such violence as natural, but also being unable to account for its causes. If it is true that human destructiveness is the natural companion of human love, as *War and Peace* strongly indicates, what impact does this truth have on those who recognize and, crucially, accept it?<sup>447</sup> Tolstoy's narrator is silent on this point. As I had turned to Nietzsche in the previous chapter to help explore Tolstoy's historical nihilism, I turn to Nietzsche again for an examination of historical nihilism's psychological counterpart in *War and Peace*. As we shall see, while Tolstoy's narrator portrays both historical and psychological nihilism, he does not acknowledge the risk or the danger of the latter.

Nietzsche's analysis is helpful for Tolstoy's readers precisely because it accounts for the existential effects of Dionysian destructiveness. Grasping tragic knowledge

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<sup>446</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>447</sup> The impact it had on Tolstoy himself is famously remembered as the 'Arzamas horror', when, while passing through the town of Arzamas on a business trip in 1869, Tolstoy had an attack of existential anxiety: 'Tolstoy lost the confidence, vital to all his actions, that his own life made sense [...] death loomed up [...]. The real problem for Tolstoy was [...] meaninglessness'. Donna Orwin, *Art and Thought*, p. 146.

can lead to psychological nihilism,<sup>448</sup> a condition Nietzsche warns is both disorienting and dangerous: 'He who has glanced with piercing eye into the very heart of the terrible destructive processes of so-called universal history, as also into the cruelty of nature [...] is in danger of longing for [...] negation of the will'.<sup>449</sup> For Nietzsche, as for Tolstoy, historical destructiveness is natural. However, unlike Tolstoy, Nietzsche is uninterested in investigating historical causes, focusing instead on the human implications of recognizing this destructiveness:

There is a *lethargic* element, wherein all personal experiences of the past are submerged [...] this everyday reality [...] nauseates us; an ascetic will-paralysing mood is the fruit of these states. In this sense the Dionysian man may be said to resemble Hamlet: both have for once seen into the true nature of things, – they have *perceived*, but they are loath to act; for their action cannot change the eternal nature of things; they regard it as shameful or ridiculous that one should require of them to set aright the time which is out of joint. Knowledge kills action [...].<sup>450</sup>

Applying Nietzsche's diagnosis to the inaction of both Achilles and Andrei Bolkonskii can shed light on how Tolstoy refigured in Andrei the existential side-effects of war initially articulated by Achilles. The two warriors display psychological nihilism, following strikingly similar narrative arcs as both withdraw from battle after realizing that heroism and glory are illusory and meaningless constructs. A Nietzschean study of this behaviour lets us read the heroes as cognizing the arbitrary nature of the Apollonian world of distinctions concealing a deeper Dionysian equivalence. However, before we arrive at the disillusion of psychological nihilism, I will endeavour to show how Tolstoy links Andrei to Achilles in terms of character and narrative structure. In the following sections, I will demonstrate how and why we can read Andrei as reminiscent of Achilles in terms

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<sup>448</sup> The term 'psychological nihilism', not uncommon in Nietzsche studies, was anticipated by Nietzsche himself, when he reflected in a private notebook that he is interested in nihilism as a 'psychological state'. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. by Walter Kaufman and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 12.

<sup>449</sup> Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, p. 66.

<sup>450</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

of character and narrative, and also in terms of the constellation of meanings, themes, and socio-ethical obligations associated with heroic epic poetry.

### **Tolstoy's Andrei and Homer's Achilles**

#### *Tough, Rude, and Strange: How Andrei's Epic Heroic Qualities Adapt Those of Achilles*

Andrei Bolkonskii is Tolstoy's most explicitly Homeric hero because, as I hope to show, he is a reiteration of the Iliadic Achilles.<sup>451</sup> Let us begin by considering Andrei's name and its associations with epic narrative. Although Tolstoy did not begin his study of Greek in earnest until the decade after the publication of *War and Peace*, due to his thoughtful approach to the semantics of names,<sup>452</sup> he was likely aware of the etymological roots of his character's name. The Greek *anēr* means 'man', 'adult male' or 'husband' and *andreia*, with its root *andr-*, means 'courage', 'bravery', and 'manliness':

[A]ndres [...] designated male persons who were grown men, of age, virile, and capable of participating in both politics and war [...]. Although the Greeks did develop a coherent and persistent image of virility, it should not be forgotten that *andreia* had a history of its own. It evolved from the individual and warrior ethos.<sup>453</sup>

The phrase '*klea andrōn*', which translates as 'the glories of men' or 'the deeds of men', constitutes the paradigmatic subject of ancient Greek epic song, and Nagy has shown that the phrase is used in epic diction to refer to the epic tradition

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<sup>451</sup> Consider that Gary Saul Morson describes Andrei as a refugee in the novelistic world because he is a 'character from another genre (the epic)'. Morson, *Hidden in Plain View*, p. 245.

<sup>452</sup> Lewis Bagby and Pavel Sigalov have written that names are important in Tolstoy's writing and often function as an iconographic sign. Lewis Bagby and Pavel Sigalov, 'The Semiotics of Names and Naming in Tolstoj's "The Cossacks"', *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 31 (1987), 473-89 (p. 474).

<sup>453</sup> Diego Paiaro, 'Eros and Politics in Democratic Athens: the Case of the Tyrannicides' in *Clio. Women, Gender, History*, 43 (2016) 139-51 (pp. 140-41).

itself.<sup>454</sup> The tradition includes the *Iliad*, a poem that ‘belongs to Achilles. It is to Achilles that the Iliadic tradition assigns the **kleos** [glory] that will never perish’ (bold in original).<sup>455</sup> The name of Andrei, then, signifies not only the heroic individual, but brings with it the association with the *Iliad*, which carries over into the characterization of Andrei; on this reading, Andrei is the central heroic figure of *War and Peace*.

The epic character is, firstly, heroic, and Andrei’s heroism manifests itself consistently throughout the novel: he runs with the standard at the Battle of Austerlitz, pushes into the most violent heart of battle, does not avoid cannon fire at the Battle of Borodino, and refuses to feel afraid.<sup>456</sup> Personages from the novel endorse this account of Andrei: his father calls him ‘warrior’<sup>457</sup> (*voïn*); Bilibin calls him *un héros*,<sup>458</sup> a hero; most tellingly for Tolstoy, the General Kutuzov, a paradigmatic Russian figure, describes Andrei as a hero in the letter he writes to Andrei’s father and later praises Andrei’s bravery in battle, linking it explicitly to honour: ‘I remember you at Austerlitz... I remember, I remember you with the standard [...]. I know that your path, is the path of honour’.<sup>459</sup> Achilles, on whom, as I will argue, Andrei is modelled, is the most powerful Greek warrior at Troy, but he is prone to dangerous moods and extravagant emotions. In Book Nine of the *Iliad*, Odysseus recollects how Achilles’ father advised his son before the latter departed for Troy:

“My child, for the matter of strength, Athene and Hera will give it

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<sup>454</sup> Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 97.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid. In Chapter One, I addressed how *klea andrōn* was defined in Book Nine of the *Iliad*, when Achilles is seen playing the lyre and singing the ‘glories of men’: see page 53. Tolstoy was familiar with both the Russian and Greek versions of the text.

<sup>456</sup> Although there are other brave characters in *War and Peace*, such as the battery captain Tushin and the officer Denisov, Andrei’s heroism is different from theirs. His valour is of a more excessive, almost grandiloquent type, closer to an epic hero than to a staff soldier in its mix of theatrical fearlessness and overwhelming passion. Consider Nagy’s characterization of Achilles: ‘He is a monolithic and fiercely uncompromising man who actively chooses violent death over life [...]. Here is a man of unbending principle [...]. Here is a man of constant sorrow [...]’. Gregory Nagy, ‘The Epic Hero’, *A Companion to Ancient Epic*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. by J.M. Foley (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 71-89, (p. 78).

<sup>457</sup> PSS 9, p. 121.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>459</sup> PSS 11, p. 173. See Appendix A.154 for original.

if it be their will, but be it yours to hold fast in your bosom  
the anger of the proud heart, for consideration is better” (252-56).

Achilles’ excessive reactions characterize his interactions with others.<sup>460</sup> When Agamemnon insults him in Book One, Achilles is instantly furious, and struggles to apply his father’s advice:

The anger came on Peleus’ son, and within  
his shaggy breast the heart was divided two ways, pondering  
whether to draw from beside his thigh the sharp sword [...]   
or else to check the spleen within and keep down his anger. (188-92)

After wrathfully lashing out, Achilles’ response to injury is to withdraw, to distance himself not only from the offender but from the entire community:

[...] Achilleus  
weeping went and sat in sorrow apart from his companions  
beside the beach of the grey sea looking out on the infinite water. (1.349-50)

Achilles finds solace in solitude, in a liminal space of earth and water. To reach him, his companions must journey ‘along the strand of the sea deep-thundering’ (9.182), which indicates a symbolic barrier between Achilles and the rest of the troops that is both wide and deep. While the community moves on to the practical matters of eating, drinking, and preparing ships in Book One, Achilles remains overcome by his emotion, vowing to ‘never [...] go to assemblies [...] never more into battle’ (1.488-92). Homer’s audiences likely knew that Achilles will go into assemblies again and most certainly into battle. At this point in the narrative, however, Achilles does not. In this version of free indirect speech, Achilles seeks complete isolation. He has forgotten, or chooses to ignore, his father’s injunctions, and has dismissed his mentor Phoenix and his friends, all of whom urge him to be

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<sup>460</sup> Consider, for example, Patroclus’ confession to Nestor about Achilles’ unjust and excessive judgments of others, adding that Nestor is already too familiar with this defect in their companion:

‘You know yourself, aged sir beloved of Zeus, how *he* is;  
a dangerous man; he might even be angry with one who is guiltless’. (//. 11.652-53)

more conciliatory. In his position of alienation, Achilles is demonstrating pride, but also otherness.

This chapter refers often to Achilles' speech in Book Nine. The well-known response is made to his close companions, Odysseus, Phoenix, and Ajax, who try to persuade Achilles to re-join the battle against the Trojans. Achilles qualifies the speech before giving it:

'Without consideration for you I must make my answer,  
the way I think, and the way it will be accomplished, that you may not  
come one after another, and sit by me, and speak softly. [...] [N]either  
do I think the son of Atreus, Agamemnon, will persuade me,  
nor the rest of the Danaans' (*Il.* 9.309-16)

At the outset, the hero qualifies his impending statement: his mind is made up, and yes, he is aware that the way he thinks is different from others. Achilles will not be persuaded by any of the Greeks because, he says, he is unlike them; Achilles is fundamentally other. Redfield writes that when Achilles makes his reply to his friends, 'the poem clearly opens out at this point into some previously unexplored territory. [...] [F]rom this point onward the other characters in the poem find [Achilles] baffling and speak to him in protest and incomprehension'.<sup>461</sup> Donald Lateiner, too, regards Achilles as observing 'a physical and spiritual isolation from his gung-ho, macho warrior community'.<sup>462</sup>

At the superficial level of comparison, Andrei is modelled on Achilles in his excess of strength and strangeness. He, too, is stronger and more emotionally intense than others, and is, therefore, alienated from others. Andrei's sister Mar'ia points out to Andrei, as Peleus had to Achilles, that he is generally excellent, but possesses the single flaw of pride: "You are good in every way, André, but you

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<sup>461</sup> Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, p. 7.

<sup>462</sup> Lateiner, 'Iliad: Unpredictable Classic', p. 16.

have a sort of intellectual pride [...] and this is a great sin.”<sup>463</sup> Others recognize Andrei’s superiority, and he is treated with deference by highly placed military men: ‘[The General] Kutuzov [...] had marked him out among the other adjutants [...] and given him the more serious commissions’;<sup>464</sup> ‘Knowing Bolkonskii to be a favourite and trusted adjutant, [General] Bagration received him with [...] distinction and indulgence’.<sup>465</sup> Andrei’s elevated position empowers him to condemn others, while his anger is always sudden and disproportionate. Consider, for example, how Andrei reacts to a provocative joke and friendly embrace of fellow officers:

Nesvitsky with a chuckle threw his arms round Prince Andrey, but Bolkonsky, turning even paler, pushed him away with a furious expression [...]. The nervous irritability [...] found a vent in anger at the misplaced jest.<sup>466</sup>

This ‘nervous irritation’ (*nervnoe razdrazhenie*) is typical for Andrei. Whether during combat or at dinner, he tends to express inexplicably excessive emotion. Before the battle of Austerlitz, for example, Andrei is described as ‘in a state of excitement, of nervous irritability (*vzvolnovannym, razdrazhennym*)’;<sup>467</sup> at home, lamenting the disappointments of marriage, he is similarly overcome by the same ‘nervous irritation:’ ‘[...] [H]e began speaking with a nervous irritation [...]. Every muscle of his dry face quivered with nervous energy; his eyes [...] shone with a radiant, bright brilliance’.<sup>468</sup>

If a Tolstoyan epithet is appropriate for Andrei, it would almost certainly refer to his feverish, glinting eyes. Nesvitskii, too, notices Andrei’s ‘pale face and shining

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<sup>463</sup> PSS 9, p. 129. See Appendix A.155 for original. Garnett renders ‘*gordost’ mysl’* as ‘pride of intellect’. Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 112. Scholars agree with Mar’ia’s assessment that Andrei is prideful, though they disagree about whether it is a defect. Orwin argues that ‘Andrei’s essential passion [...] is pride [...]. It manifests itself as love of glory’; see Donna Orwin, ‘Prince Andrei: The Education of a Rational Man’, *Slavic Review*, 42 (1983), 620-32, (p. 621). Morson remarks that Andrei ‘displays that best sort of pride, which is born of an irresistible desire to respect only what is worthy of respect’, *Hidden in Plain View*, p. 265.

<sup>464</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 132.

<sup>465</sup> PSS 9, p. 210. See Appendix A.156 for original.

<sup>466</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, pp. 134-35.

<sup>467</sup> PSS 9, p. 335.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34-35. See Appendix A.157 for original.



eyes'<sup>469</sup> (*'blednoe litso s blestiasnimi glazami'*), which emphasize his excessive energy. As for Achilles, this excessive energy manifests itself explicitly in moments of perceived insult. In a scene which recalls Achilles' wavering between instinctively reaching for his sword, and holding back his emotion, which is the socially correct response and is therefore much harder, Andrei loses his temper during a minor disagreement with an officer:

[Prince Andrei saw] that which he feared most in the world, what the French call *ridicule*, but his instinct urged otherwise. [...] Prince Andrei, with a face disfigured by fury, rode up to him and raised his riding whip.<sup>470</sup>

If we read him as modelled on Achilles, we see evidence that Andrei's heart is 'divided two ways' (*Il.* 1.189). Should he react violently, as his pride which fears humiliation urges him to do? Should he recognize that the situation is beyond his control and 'check his spleen?' (*Il.* 1.192). For both heroes, the question is decided in favour of what they assume will preserve what they treasure most: their sense of esteem in the eyes of others. As an Achillean figure, the youthful hero is limited by his own ego.

Despite its defects, however, excessive passion is the source of Andrei's particular heroism; reserves of nervous energy render him physically more powerful than even the strongest people. During the retreat along the Danube in the first volume of *War and Peace*, we see Andrei's superiority of strength and rank:

Prince Andrei at that battle had been attending on the Austrian General Schmidt, who was killed. His own horse had been wounded beneath him, and his arm had been slightly grazed by a bullet. As a mark of the commander in chief's special favor he was sent [...] to the Austrian court [...]. On the night of battle, excited but not tired (despite his delicate build, Prince Andrei could withstand physical exhaustion much better than the strongest people) [...] Prince Andrei was sent that very night as courier to

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<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>470</sup> *PSS* 9, p. 203. See Appendix A.158 for original.

Brunn. To be dispatched as courier meant not only reward, but also a significant step toward promotion.<sup>471</sup>

Andrei's physical superiority and preoccupation with promotion is an adaptation of Achillean qualities to Andrei and shows how Tolstoy distinguished him from other brave personages in the text. For Homer, physical prowess and success on the battlefield serve as evidence of heroic character. This is particularly true for the *Iliad*, the setting of which is claustrophobically confined to a battlefield where the primary social activity is making war. In this setting, almost supernatural strength and moral courage are prized above all other qualities.<sup>472</sup>

Andrei displays these specifically Iliadic virtues at the beginning of the text to the exclusion of all others – 'Prince Andrey was one of those rare staff-officers whose interests were concentrated on the general progress of the war'<sup>473</sup> – such that social life beyond war-making does not exist for him. In the passage quoted above, what the narrator does not say about Andrei is as important as what he says. Seeing a general upon whom one attends get killed, having one's horse shot while riding it, and being grazed by a bullet, is a disturbing series of events. Yet, despite being wounded and nearly killed, Andrei is dispatched immediately to a foreign court – because, we are explicitly told, he is special. Andrei gives no thought to the inconvenience of the 'scratch', or the death of the General, or the torment of the shot horse, and the reader learns none of the circumstances of these events. Instead, we see the situation as Andrei would tell it, since only courage and its reward are worthy of narration. What makes Andrei special is also what makes him an Achillean character of excess. His social status both reaffirms and rewards his physical courage, his strength, and his emotional equanimity in battle, which is a surprising trait in a man so prone to sudden rages and foul moods.

Andrei's ability to remain self-possessed amid extreme violence but not while speaking with his wife Lise, with Pierre, or with Nesvitskii, becomes more readily

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<sup>471</sup> Ibid., pp. 182-83. See Appendix A.159 for original.

<sup>472</sup> Seth L. Schein, *Homeric Epic and Its Reception: Interpretive Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) p. 5.

<sup>473</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 133.

comprehensible when we approach him as an Achillean figure: Achilles' uncontrollable temper prevents him from interacting fairly with others. Unlike Andrei, Achilles knows this about himself:

'I, who am such as no other of the bronze-armoured Achaians  
in battle, though there are others also better in council' (*Il.*18.105-6)

Achilles is an excellent warrior but has trouble containing his emotion in order to speak well and connect with people. His father recognizes this defect and sends Phoenix as mentor partly to teach Achilles the art of communication. Phoenix recalls:

'Peleus the aged horsemen sent me forth with you  
[...]  
a mere child, who knew nothing yet of the joining of battle  
nor of debate where men are made pre-eminent. Therefore  
he sent me along with you to teach you of all these matters,  
to make you a speaker of words and one who is accomplished in action'  
(*Il.* 9.438-44)

It seems that Achilles has still not mastered debate; unlike Nestor, Odysseus, or even Phoenix, he does not always communicate effectively or fairly: '[Achilles] is a man of unbending principle who cannot allow his values to be compromised – not even by the desperate need of his near and dear friends who are begging him to bend his will, bend it just enough to save his own people'.<sup>474</sup> Reading Andrei as Achillean offers a new perspective on why, despite his intelligence, Andrei is an insensitive husband, guest, friend, and comrade. He snaps cruelly at Lise, readily shows his irritation at being touched during Anna Pavlovna's party, becomes agitated when speaking with Pierre, shoves Nesvitskii, acts bored when he visits the Rostovs, churlishly describes the good-natured Count Rostov whom everyone likes as a 'stupid old man'<sup>475</sup> (*'glupyj starik'*), is visibly annoyed when Pierre visits

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<sup>474</sup> Nagy, *Epic Hero*, p. 78.

<sup>475</sup> *PSS* 10, p. 156.

him at Bogacharavo and before the battle of Borodino, and consistently demonstrates a bad temper without wondering how it affects others.

After Andrei's arrival in Brunn, we are reminded of his superior endurance and the excessive energy that sustains it: 'Despite the fast journey and sleepless night, Prince Andrei [...] felt himself even more vigorous than the day before. Only his eyes shone feverishly, and his thoughts followed one another with extreme speed and clarity'.<sup>476</sup> After galloping all night without sleep, Andrei experiences his own mind as sharper than ever; the narrator indicates that this energy has a negative, excessive quality, as reflected in Andrei's 'feverish' ('*likhoradochnye*') eyes. Arriving in what Achilles would term 'the council' among military equals, Andrei is overcome with an irrational bad mood: 'Prince Andrei's joyful feeling was significantly weakened when he approached the door of the Minister of War. He felt himself insulted, and the feeling of offense immediately and without his noticing it became a feeling of resentment, founded on nothing'.<sup>477</sup> The narrator tells us that Andrei's sudden hostility is unfounded ('*ni na chëm ne osnovannogo*'); his temper is easily and often needlessly roused. This resonates strongly with Patroklos' complaint about Achilles, when he describes the latter as 'a dangerous man [...] he might even be angry with one who is guiltless' (*Il.* 11.653). In a refiguration of Achilles' swift but one-sided intellect, Andrei sees through the bureaucratic posturing of the Minister of War, and immediately resents him:

His resourceful mind instantly suggested to him a point of view from which he had the right to despise the adjutant and Minister of War. [...] At the very moment that he turned to Prince Andrei, the intelligent and hard expression of the Minister of War, seemingly habitually and consciously changed: a smile stupid, artificial, without concealing its artificiality, stopped on his face [...].<sup>478</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> PSS 9, p. 183. See Appendix A.160 for original.

<sup>477</sup> PSS 9, p. 184. See Appendix A.161 for original.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185. See Appendix A.162 for original. Garnett renders '*nakhodchivyi um*' as 'subtle brain'. Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 164. Notice that Andrei's 'resourceful mind' enables him not to manipulate others, as does Odysseus, but to see the (limited) truth in people, as does Achilles, who intones 'I detest that man,

An inheritor of Achilles' keen perception that shows people exactly as they are, Andrei is correct that the Minister is preoccupied with administrative trivialities. However, in focusing on this defect, he first fails to recognize that the typically intelligent Minister is being deliberately false. Second, the Minister's immediate response highlights what Andrei has not bothered to consider and has forgotten all about: "My God! Schmidt!" [the Minister of War] said in German. "What a calamity!"<sup>479</sup> Whatever Andrei may have glimpsed of the inhuman bureaucracy which the Minister represents, the latter's humane response to the death of the General highlights Andrei's apathy to considerations of sociality. Andrei is successful in battle, but not in society. In reading Andrei as Achillean, however, we must allow that this defect is less serious when viewed from the perspective of Homeric epic, where virtue is a matter of mental and physical excellence.<sup>480</sup>

This mixture of military excellence and social foundering prompts Andrei to withdraw from others when he is hurt or confused. After returning from Austerlitz, Andrei seeks solitude at Bogucharovo, located forty *versts* from his family at Bald Hills. When Pierre visits Andrei, he traverses a physical barrier of a pond and forests.<sup>481</sup> This detail of setting situates and adapts to the Russian countryside the liminal space of sea and shore that Achilles occupies. In his solitude, Andrei is resolute about the end of his military career: 'Prince Andrey had grimly resolved never to serve again in the army'.<sup>482</sup> Tolstoy conveys Andrei's decision in the form of indirect or reported speech, which is how Homer articulated Achilles' promise to himself to go 'never more into battle' (*Il.* 1.492). Andrei responds to Pierre's query about whether he will return to the army in his characteristically extreme manner: "I swore to myself that I would never serve in the Russian army again. And I will not, if Bonaparte were stationed here at Smolensk, threatening Bald Hills! even then I

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who/ hides one thing in the depths of his heart, and speaks forth another' (*Il.* 9.312-13). For this reason, Achilles would presumably have despised the Minister of War, too.

<sup>479</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 165.

<sup>480</sup> For further discussion of the individual character traits valued in the *Iliad*, see Todd S. Frobish, 'An Origin of a Theory: A Comparison of Ethos in the Homeric "Iliad" with That Found in Aristotle's "Rhetoric"', *Rhetoric Review*, 22 (2003), 16-30.

<sup>481</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 426.

<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.*

wouldn't serve in the Russian army."<sup>483</sup> This threat rewords that of Achilles made in Book Nine:

‘I shall not think again of the bloody fighting  
until such time as [...] Hektor [...]  
comes all the way to the ships of the Myrmidons, and their shelters [...]  
and shall darken with fire our vessels’ (9.651-54)

Achilles' position is softer than Andrei's: he will return when his own people are threatened. Tolstoy underlines Andrei's psychosocial distance from others by radicalizing the words of Achilles, thereby emphasizing Andrei's otherness.

This otherness is made particularly apparent in his relations with the Rostovs, a flawed but deeply loving and functional family.<sup>484</sup> The cheerful Rostov household is introduced as well-known to all of Moscow with countless visitors streaming in and out.<sup>485</sup> Everyone feels at home with the Rostovs – except Andrei. On his first visit, he is bewildered by Natasha's happiness. On his second visit, when Count Rostov invites Andrei to dine, the narrator uses the word '*chuzhd*' – foreign, strange – three times in two consecutive sentences to describe Andrei's emotion: 'Prince Andrei felt a presence of a world utterly *strange* for him, filled with special joys unknown to him, that *strange* world which already [...] had so disconcerted him. Now this world no longer disconcerted him, was not a *strange* world anymore'<sup>486</sup> (italics mine).

Familial joy draws Andrei into the 'strange' world. Upon visiting Otradnoe<sup>487</sup> after the ball, Natasha is the first to greet him: 'She was in a blue house dress, in which

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<sup>483</sup> PSS 10, p. 113. See Appendix A.163 for original.

<sup>484</sup> Consider Anna Berman's observation: 'The Rostovs are Tolstoy's idealized image of warm, joyous, spontaneous living and loving in the family sphere'. Anna Berman, 'Tolstoy's Ideal Love: Erotic vs. Familial' in *Siblings in Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky: The Path to Brotherhood* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015), p. 31.

<sup>485</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 35.

<sup>486</sup> PSS 10, pp. 211-12. See Appendix A.164 for original.

<sup>487</sup> The name of the Rostov family home is symbolic, stemming from *ot radosti*, 'from joy'. Compare this aptly titled family home to the stark, joyless title of Andrei's family estate: Bald Hills. These titles create a striking juxtaposition between flourishing joyfulness ('from joy') and a loftiness, or height, that is infertile

she seemed to Andrei even prettier than in a ball gown. She and the Rostov family welcomed him as an old friend [...]. The entire family [...] seemed to him to consist of excellent, simple, and kind people'.<sup>488</sup> Andrei's preference for Natasha in a house dress rather than a ball gown demonstrates his interest in the Rostovs' home life – it is not only the charming girl Andrei is moved by, but the big, noisy, loving Rostov clan. Tolstoy repeats the phrase 'entire family' ('vse semeistvo') twice in two consecutive sentences, underscoring the togetherness and fullness of family life at the aptly named Otradnoe. In other words, it is not the case that Andrei is simply pursuing a pretty bride; rather, he is touched by the delight of domesticity and is seeking to join a family. Andrei's first thought upon leaving the Rostovs is that he must occupy himself with the education of his son,<sup>489</sup> and we can assume that being within a functional family reminds him of his own familial obligations.

However, Andrei's faith that the domestic world can cease to be strange for him is a melancholy illusion. During his proposal to Natasha, a ceremony by which Andrei is formally entering the Rostov family,<sup>490</sup> the narrator again employs the root '*chuzhd*' – strange, foreign – three times in the same section to describe the effect the suitor has on the bride and her mother:

[The countess] held out her hand to him and with a mixed feeling of *estrangement* and tenderness pressed her lips to his forehead [...]. She wished to love him as a son, but felt that he was a person who was *strange* and frightening to her [...]

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and even dead (the 'hills' are 'bald' because nothing grows there); Orwin observes that 'all the Bolkonskys are associated with death in the novel'. Orwin, *Art and Thought*, p. 129.

<sup>488</sup>PSS 10, p. 211. See Appendix A.165 for original.

<sup>489</sup>Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 528.

<sup>490</sup>It is perhaps not incidental that all the major families in *War and Peace* – the Bolkonskiis, Bezukhovs, and Kuragins – attempt to join the 'ideal' Rostov family with varying degrees of legitimacy and success. Among the Bolkonskiis, Mar'ia succeeds where Andrei had failed in uniting her family with the Rostovs; from the Bezukhov family, Pierre is united with Natasha after breaking from the corrupt Kuragins, whose Anatole tries to possess Natasha and whose Julie is temporarily engaged to Nikolai. Among the 'minor' families, too, there are (failed) efforts to unite with the Rostovs: Boris Drubetskoi, Vasily Denisov, and Fëdor Dolokhov all make the attempt. It is as though, symbolically, 'everyone' pursues the ideal family life that is represented by the Rostovs.

Natasha could not remember how she entered the drawing room [...] ‘Is it possible that this *stranger* has now become everything for me?’.<sup>491</sup> (italics mine)

It is significant that the countess – the matriarch of the ideal family – cannot see Andrei as kin and is afraid of him, echoing the very sentiment earlier expressed by Natasha; during Andrei’s absence, Natasha exclaims about Andrei, “‘I don’t want to be married at all. And I’m afraid of him’”.<sup>492</sup> This outburst is prescient when it is coupled with the same emotion in the countess and considered alongside the fact that both mother and daughter regard Andrei as a stranger at the precise moment when he is supposed to be formally accepted into the family as husband and son.

I argue that the women anticipate what the narrative will reveal: Andrei cannot join the ideal family, or any family, because family life involves intimacy and familiarity. Andrei, however, is fundamentally other, a perpetual stranger. The Rostov tribe is synonymous with domesticity, peace, and home, but Andrei can go home no more than Achilles can: ‘[The] picture of a peaceful Achilles is a fantasy’.<sup>493</sup> Andrei inspires fear in the women of the ideal family because he is an excellent warrior whose only true home is a battlefield, and whose nature is therefore ‘*chuzhd*’ to a happy home. If war interrupts the harvest, then the warrior, whether he wishes to or not, perpetually threatens domesticity, and cannot cross the boundary of war into peace.

### *Kleos or Nostos: Andrei and the Choice of Achilles*

For Homeric heroes, achieving honour and glory is preeminent.<sup>494</sup> One hero, however, has the option to reject this all-consuming pursuit in the most explicit and

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<sup>491</sup> PSS 10, pp. 226-27. See Appendix A.166 for original. Garnett renders ‘*otchuzhdennosti*’ as ‘aversion’ and ‘*chuzhoi*’ as ‘alien’. Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 541.

<sup>492</sup> “‘And I don’t want to be married at all. And I’m afraid of him [...]’” Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 539.

<sup>493</sup> Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, p. 105.

<sup>494</sup> See Seth Schein, ‘War, What is it Good For?’ in *Our Ancient Wars: Rethinking War Through the Classics*, ed. by Victor Caston and Silke-Maria Weineck (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2016) p. 212; see also Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, p. 101.



deliberate way possible. Achilles is fated to choose between *kleos*,<sup>495</sup> glory, and *nostos*, homecoming:

‘If I stay here and fight beside the city of the Trojans,  
my return home is gone, but my glory shall be everlasting’ (*Il.* 9.412-13)

Nagy translates the key passage with an emphasis on the loss *either* choice entails:

‘I have lost a **safe return home [nostos]**, but I will have unfailing **glory [kleos]**’.<sup>496</sup> (bold in original)

Presenting these possibilities side by side highlights the insufficiency for fulfilment of *kleos* alone and underscores its potentially antisocial qualities.

Achilles is the only character in the *Iliad* who has such a choice: ‘Unlike Achilles, who won *kleos* but lost *nostos*, Odysseus is a double winner. He has won both *kleos* and *nostos*’.<sup>497</sup> *War and Peace* is populated with such ‘double winners’: Pierre, Nikolai Rostov, Boris Drubetskoï, Dolokhov, and others return to their families after participating in battle. Reading Andrei as modelled on Achilles, it is obvious why the former cannot have this privilege. In Andrei, we see the interdependence of destruction and life severed into extremes, into violence *or* domesticity, war *or* peace, *kleos* *or* *nostos*. I intend to show in this section how the notion of the warrior figure as antithetical to domestic peace is deployed in *War and Peace* as a philosophical abstraction and a tool for investigating other concepts. Via the narrative of Andrei, the horrors of violence and the deceptive shallowness of heroism are revealed. Since it functions as a didactic tool, Andrei’s story is more straightforward than that of other characters in the novel, and therefore more tragic. If he is resonant with Achilles, Andrei must be either a heroic

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<sup>495</sup> For a discussion of the important and nuanced notion of *kleos* and its relationship to performed song in ancient Greece, see Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, pp. 15-25.

<sup>496</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, p. 29.

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*

figure who earns *kleos* or a family figure who achieves *nostos*, never both. This means that after he becomes a successful warrior, Andrei's wish to join Natasha's family becomes impossible by default: so long as he triumphs in battle, he remains other in the domestic sphere.

Achilles' mother, the sea nymph Thetis, laments to her son:

'Why did I raise you? [...]

Indeed your lifetime is to be short, of no length.

Now it has befallen that your life must be brief and bitter

beyond all men's. To a bad destiny I bore you' (*Il.* 1.414-18)

Achilles' 'bad destiny' is characterized by his awareness of his own temporality. It is significant that both the *Iliad's* audience and its composer(s) would have known that the narrative constraints are such that Achilles must die.<sup>498</sup> Andrei's 'bad destiny' begins at the level of meta-narrative when Tolstoy 'bore' him:

I will try to tell you who is my Andrei. In the battle of Austerlitz [...] I needed a brilliant young man to be killed [...]. Then he interested me [...] and I had mercy upon him, only greatly wounding him instead of killing him. So here you have a completely honest, albeit therefore unclear, description of who is Bolkonskii.<sup>499</sup>

Before Andrei appeared in the novel, he was destined to be killed in battle. By a miracle, he managed to get by with a wound, which did not change his fate: Andrei remained 'a brilliant young man to be killed'.

Resonant with the intuition displayed by Achilles, Andrei perceives early in the novel that the glory he seeks *will* arrive with death. On his way to the army, he recalls one of Napoleon's remarks which inspires in him 'astonishment at the

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<sup>498</sup> Schein, *Mortal Hero*, p. 90.

<sup>499</sup> *PSS* 61, pp. 80-81. See Appendix A.167 for original. This 1875 letter is addressed to Louisa Volkonskaia (1825-1890), Tolstoy's cousin by marriage.

genius hero, a feeling of wounded pride, and the hope for glory. “And what if there is nothing left, except to die?” he thought. “Well, if it’s necessary! I’ll do it no worse than others”<sup>500</sup> In a single sentence, we see the related themes of heroism (the cult of the ‘*geroi*’), wounded pride (‘*oskorblennaia gordost*’), and glory (‘*slava*’); Andrei is linked to Iliadic heroes generally and Achilles specifically not only by his faith in the ‘genius’ (‘*genii*’) of heroism and the motivation of a personal sense of injured honour, but also in his cognizance that glory means there will be ‘nothing left’ (‘*nichego ne ostaetsia*’) except death, and that death is something that can be ‘done well’. Before the Battle of Austerlitz, Andrei fantasizes about leading the Russian army to victory, and the Achillean choice between glory or homecoming is refigured in the juxtaposition of military success and family life, one of which Andrei must relinquish:

“I want this, I want glory, I want to be known to others, I want to be beloved by them, I am not to blame that I want this, that I want only this, that I only live for this. Yes, only for this! [...] I do not love anything except glory, the love of others. Death, wounds, the loss of my family, I don’t fear any of it [...]. Even though many people are precious to me – father, sister, wife – the most precious to me – [...] I will give them all up for a moment of glory.”<sup>501</sup>

This opposition between glory and family refigures the choice of Achilles: honours, violence, and power – *kleos* – or father, wife, and home – *nostos*. To choose *kleos* means to ‘give away’ (‘*otdam*’) his family, and to accept ‘death’ and ‘wounds’ (‘*smert’, rani*’). As an Achillean figure, even though Andrei is imagining *kleos*, he is not yet ready to sacrifice *nostos*. As death occurs to him, he immediately thinks of those he left behind: his father, his pregnant wife, and his sister.<sup>502</sup> Overwhelmed by tender emotions, Andrei is foundering in the chasm between *kleos* and *nostos*. As a refiguration of Achilles, however, Andrei does not have a choice. At the extradiegetic level of narration, he remains a ‘brilliant young man to be killed’; his position in the narrative is determined. In his Achillean pursuit of glory, Andrei

<sup>500</sup> PSS 9, p. 201. See Appendix A.168 for original.

<sup>501</sup> PSS 9, pp. 323-24. See Appendix A.169 for original.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid., p. 323.

becomes linked with self-destruction, a link made clearer when we consider Achilles' association with death.

In the opening of the *Iliad*, Achilles is implicated in death and suffering. The poem begins with Achilles' 'rage [...] and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the Achaians' (*Il.*1.2-3); although Achilles will bring suffering to others, the greatest suffering is reserved for himself. His very name, Nagy writes, stems from *áchos* – grief. Achilles' suffering is the root of his bad moods and rages, which distance him from others, in turn causing those others suffering. In Nagy's etymological formulation, which includes the *mēnis*, rage, of Achilles, the cruel circle is complete: 'The word *ákhos* signals *le transfert du mal*: the *ákhos* of Achilles leads to the *mēnis* of Achilles leads to the *ákhos* of the Achaeans'.<sup>503</sup> Although Achilles' suffering can be exacerbated by external events, such as the loss of Briseis, it cannot be resolved by those events. As Thetis remarks, Achilles was born to be unhappy (1.414-418), and is 'the man of constant sorrow'.<sup>504</sup> Great sorrow is linked with superiority: the greater the hero, the greater his suffering. Perhaps this is because the hero can endure more than others, and suffering is another confirmation of strength; however, sorrow is also the price the hero pays for his superior social position.

Nagy argues that the term *hērōs*, hero, is etymologically and conceptually nuanced. Related to the term *hōrā*, from which we derive the English word *hour*, it indicates the 'right time, the perfect time'.<sup>505</sup> It is also related to Hera, the goddess of seasons. The connection between hero, hour, and Hera underwrites the source of the hero's suffering:

The precise moment when everything comes together for the hero is the moment of death. The hero is 'on time' at the *hōrā* or 'time' of his death.

Before death and in fact during their whole lifetime, however, heroes are not

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<sup>503</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, p. 80.

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>505</sup> Gregory Nagy, 'The Homeric *Iliad* and the Glory of the Unseasonal Hero', in *Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 26-47 (p. 32).

on time [...] they are *unseasonal* [...] [Achilles'] unseasonality is a major cause of his grief.<sup>506</sup>

With the help of this framework, we see that Achillean heroism requires for the hero's life to be one of perpetual precarity, tension, and alienation not only from sociality, but from being itself. Death, or non-being, is the only place the hero belongs and, consequently, where he finds peace: 'For the hero, the ultimate real-life experience is not life but death'.<sup>507</sup>

If Andrei is an Achillean hero, as I have shown, then he is unseasonal. His extremes and excesses inform his otherness: Andrei is out of place in any social situation, especially that of a loving family. Unseasonality explains why he is in the right place only when he is on the battlefield, in proximity to death, or non-being. To apply Nagy's nature metaphor to Andrei, unseasonality is rootless, infertile, and fruitless. Home is the opposite of unseasonality, since it is related to harvesting, the seasons, and putting down roots. Fundamentally, the Achillean hero's life is the opposite of *nostos*. For Andrei, this means perpetual rootlessness. Andrei thinks that peace and domestic happiness are possible for him when he makes the choice of *nostos* and proposes to Natasha. He wants to marry, have a home, educate his son, and be part of a family, but this ordinary peace is unachievable for the extraordinary, unseasonal hero.

### *War, What is it Good For?: When Warriors Withdraw*

Reflecting on his fatal choice, Achilles contrasts peaceful domesticity that includes his beloved father and future wife with success in combat. Long before he commits himself to remain in Troy and die, however, Achilles selects *nostos*:

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<sup>506</sup> Nagy, 'Unseasonal Hero', pp. 32-46. Consistent with this view, Graham Zanker has argued that the reason for Achilles' extreme preoccupation with honour stems from his awareness of the brevity of his life, which no other warrior in the *Iliad* possesses, and thus, his 'need for compensation is all the more urgent', *The Heart of Achilles: Characterization and Personal Ethics in the Iliad* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 78.

<sup>507</sup> Nagy, 'Unseasonal Hero', p. 32.

‘For if the gods keep me alive, and I win homeward,  
 Peleus himself will presently arrange a wife for me [...]  
 And the great desire in my heart drives me rather in that place  
 to take a wedded wife in marriage, the bride of my fancy,  
 to enjoy with her the possessions won by aged Peleus [...]  
 [...]  
 And this would be my counsel to others also, to sail back  
 home again’ (*Il.* 9.393-18)

Consider that this conclusion is reached after ten years of fighting; even after a decade, Achilles has not made up his mind about whether to die at Troy or return home. In this section, I will consider the narrative sequence of Achilles’ changing relationship to battle and community, and how Tolstoy adapts it to Andrei’s story. Both for this purpose and for clarity, I have developed a taxonomy of the chronological stages of Achilles’ narrative in relation to battle and community:<sup>508</sup>

### Achilles’ Narrative Arc

Engagement	Successful warrior pursuing glory ( <i>kleos</i> )
Pre-disengagement	Tired of fighting, decision to return home ( <i>nostos</i> )
Disengagement	Loss of Briseis, withdrawal from battle
Re-engagement	Death of Patroklos, return to battle in pursuit of rival
Transformation	Conciliation with Priam, return to community
Wounded in battle	Death (not in <i>Iliad</i> )

<sup>508</sup> The change Achilles undergoes has been examined by scholars in distinctive ways. For example, Schein argues that ‘Homer conveys the nature and extent of Achilles’ transformation in three distinct but complementary ways’, Schein, *Mortal Hero*, pp. 128-67; to take another example, Zanker analyses Achilles’ changes from his pre-Iliadic days to his withdrawal from battle as related to the warrior’s motivation to virtue, see *Heart of Achilles*, pp. 74-113; finally, Michelle Kundmueller examines Achilles’ changing relationship to honour in *Homer’s Hero: Human Excellence in the Iliad and the Odyssey* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2019), pp. 51-57.

Achilles' pre-disengagement and disengagement phases both involve withdrawal from battle, but for different reasons. In the pre-disengagement phase, Achilles is disillusioned with the arbitrary nature of war and wishes to return home. In the opening section of the *Iliad*, Achilles has spent a decade fighting outside the gates of Troy, and his battle-lust is weakening; this is Achilles' mood when we meet him. The first words Achilles utters in the epic, before Agamemnon insults him, urge the Achaeans to sail home:

'I believe now that straggling backwards  
we must make our way home if we can even escape death' (*Il.* 1.59-60)

After Agamemnon threatens to take Briseis, Achilles retorts that he has no personal investment in the war:

'I for my part did not come here for the sake of the Trojan  
spearmen to fight against them, since to me they have done nothing.  
Never yet have they driven away my cattle or my horses,  
Never in Phthia where the soil is rich and men grow great did they  
spoil my harvest, since indeed there is much that lies between us,  
the shadowy mountains and the echoing sea' (*Il.* 1.152-56)

Two elements in the passage are important. First, if he did not sail to Troy to fight Trojans, then what has Achilles come for? Presumably, to win glory for himself and his father, Peleus. Since he would rather return home, it seems this motivation exists no longer. In other words, Achilles has already undergone some sort of change regarding the war before the action of the poem begins. This is evidenced in Achilles' wish to return home *before* Agamemnon dishonours him, therefore, Achilles disengages not only because he has been dishonoured but also because there is something in the nature of the battle which, loot or no loot, he can no longer abide. At the pre-disengagement stage, Achilles does not articulate what that is. However, since it has been ten years and only now Achilles announces that the reasons for being in Troy are insufficient to keep him there – he has nothing

against the Trojans – the implication is that whatever reasons sustained him hitherto are no longer satisfactory.

Second, Achilles identifies returning home as preferable to dying in battle. Specifically, Achilles contrasts war with harvesting and husbandry, opposing the Trojan spearmen to his fertile homeland. This rhetorical juxtaposition of warriors defiling crop fields demonstrates that, for Achilles, home means generativity and peace, and war involves the destruction of those values. Achilles understands that the opposite of domesticity is not only glory, but destruction – specifically, destruction of the domestic fruits of peace. Since it is solely actions such as driving away cattle or the deliberate spoilage of harvest mentioned by Achilles as examples of legitimate *casus belli*, then the pursuit of *kleos* is clearly not the reason for fighting that is uppermost in his mind. By the time Achilles reaches the disengagement phase, which will be discussed below, the opposition of peace and war will become clearer to him, and he will state it more explicitly. For now, it is enough to note that in the pre-disengagement phase, while *kleos* is not yet a sham, war is realized by the hero to be arbitrary. The solution Achilles finds to the brutal contingency of war is *nostos*, the return to the family home.

Tolstoy has Andrei's relationship to battle closely approximate Achilles' sequence above:

#### **Andrei Bolkonskii's Narrative Arc**

Engagement	Successful warrior in pursuit of glory ( <i>kleos</i> )
Pre-disengagement	Wounded in Austerlitz, desire to return home ( <i>nostos</i> )
Disengagement	Death of Lise, withdrawal from battle
Re-engagement I	Attempt to join Rostov family
Re-engagement II	Loss of Natasha, return to battle in pursuit of rival
Transformation	Conciliation with Anatole, return to community
Wounded in battle	Death



With Andrei's attempt to join the Rostov family in the re-engagement I phase, Tolstoy deviates slightly from the narrative sequence of Achilles, to make the unseasonal hero's otherness more explicit. As we have seen, Andrei cannot join the Rostovs because, for the unseasonal hero, there is either departure *or* homecoming, battle *or* family, war *or* peace. In making the stark contrast, Tolstoy departs from the inextricability of destruction and peace central to his novel to explore the tragic consequences of war. By the time they reach the disengagement phase, Achilles and Andrei temporarily suspend the necessity of having to decide at all, opting for neither *kleos* nor *nostos*. They do not fight, but they do not return home, either. In their moratorium on choice, Achilles and Andrei reject action altogether. It is a position that is unsustainable and incomprehensible to their companions. At this point, as I show below, Andrei's inaction is modelled on that of Achilles, and introduces the 'bad' psychological nihilism that manifests as denial of the will.

#### *Preserving the Harvest: Andrei and Achilles Reject the Hero's Role*

We have seen that, for Tolstoy, war is inevitable in all ages. To convey this inevitability in *War and Peace*, Tolstoy applies and develops the Homeric interrelationship between community and violence, resulting in the vast panorama of family life and the war at its borders. As Redfield observes, the interdependence of life and its destruction is sanctioned by the fact that battle fields preserve harvest fields.<sup>509</sup> Both fields act as potent literary symbols that demonstrate this interrelationship. However, for Tolstoy, the indissolubility of peace and war is not only a matter of self-defence, which would make war socially sanctioned but evil. It also reaches deeper than a matter of natural order, which would make war inevitable but evil. It might be true that war is evil, but Tolstoy's approach to the problem is more nuanced. War, for Tolstoy, cannot be ethically rejected because it

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<sup>509</sup> Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, p. 99.

presents unique opportunities for moral action.<sup>510</sup> In this section, I will investigate how, to illustrate this difficult truth, Tolstoy appropriates the Iliadic nature of heroism, where certain warriors fight for what begins as the practical reason of preserving the community and ends in achieving a moral high ground.

War-making is a social obligation, and it reflects well on those who master it.<sup>511</sup> In part due to heroism's obligatory nature, neither Achilles nor Andrei can simply return home. If they forgo battle, they forgo their position within the community. If they are unwilling to fight, they must withdraw from society: '[Achilles] longs for home because home means for him his father – but his father sent him out to be a warrior [...]. [...] This idea of going home was always the weak point in his position'.<sup>512</sup> If Andrei cannot obtain *nostos*, it is in part because he is an Achillean figure sent out by his father to win renown for the family name while performing the social function of protecting the community. Consider the elder Bolkonskii's farewell to his son:

'Remember one thing, Prince Andrei: if you are killed, I, an old man, will be in pain... [...] But if I learn that you did not behave as the son of Nikolai Bolkonskii, I will be... ashamed!'<sup>513</sup>

This restates the parting words of Peleus as he prepared his son for Troy:

'And Peleus the aged was telling his own son, Achilleus,  
to be always best in battle and pre-eminent beyond all others'  
(*Il.* 11.782-83)

As the sons of great men (in their day, both Peleus and old Bolkonskii were admired for their successes on the battlefield and in 'the assembly'), Andrei and

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<sup>510</sup> Orwin observes that 'Tolstoy did more in *War and Peace* [...] than demonstrate the place of destruction in the cycle of life. He argued there that death and even war are good, because without them there would be no morality'. Orwin, *Art and Thought*, p. 110.

<sup>511</sup> For a discussion of heroism's positive social and moral value, see Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, p. 100, and Orwin, *Art and Thought*, p. 114.

<sup>512</sup> Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, p. 17.

<sup>513</sup> *PSS* 9, p. 135. See Appendix A.170 for original.

Achilles have much to live up to. They are to behave courageously, fight only in the front ranks, and obtain glory. While their military allegiance is to the community, the *kleos* they pursue is for themselves and their fathers. However, because Achilles and Andrei are unseasonal heroes, their *kleos* comes only with death. To behave as the son of Nikolai Bolkonskii, Andrei must die. Achilles' and Andrei's social role is a profoundly tragic one.

In the pivotal Book Nine of the *Iliad*, when Odysseus, Phoenix, and Ajax arrive, Achilles is playing the lyre. The subject of his song is the *kleos* of former heroes, indicating that Achilles approaches the traditional values of military glory from a distinctive angle. As the only warrior the *Iliad* describes playing an instrument, Achilles' aestheticization of heroism demonstrates his ability to intellectually distance himself from it. As Achilles reflects in song upon stories of heroes, three heroes arrive to offer the very values that his song is presumably extolling: material wealth, political power, social status, and honour. Yet Achilles rejects the offer categorically and reveals his critical insight:

'Fate is the same for the man who holds back, the same if he fights hard.

We are all held in a single honour, the brave with the weaklings.

A man dies still if he has done nothing, as one who has done much'

(*Il.* 9.318-20)

What began as disillusion with the arbitrariness of power and warfare (seen in Achilles' attitude to Agamemnon's abuses and the remark that the Trojans have 'done nothing' to Achilles) has developed into something I interpret to be an existential commentary on the purpose of living. The death that makes heroes equivalent with losers means that, for Achilles, the pursuit of *kleos* and honour that structure the *Iliadic* world is now meaningless. This is a dramatic shift from his pre-disengagement phase, in which Achilles privileged *nostos* over *kleos* for two reasons: family and the arbitrary nature of battle. Peaceful family life seemed more precious than heroism because winning glory at Troy was predicated on an

unjustified animosity against the Trojans. This was a specific, local critique of the Trojan War itself.

In the disengagement phase, however, Achilles is dismissing *kleos* altogether, in all instances, because of the inevitability of death. In this passage, Achilles is not speaking specifically of Phthia or Agamemnon because he is no longer focused on living details, only on abstractions: a man, any man, dies whether he has accomplished nothing or accomplished great things. Achilles is no longer describing his own situation, but that of general humanity, which includes both heroes and losers. Honour and glory will not save Achilles or anyone else from death, whether at Troy or elsewhere, he concludes, and therefore, *kleos* is not worth pursuing.<sup>514</sup> In this framework, pursuing *nostos* by setting his ships for Phthia – acting as a ‘weakling’ who ‘has done nothing’ – would be as meaningless as fighting. On the battlefield or at home, activity of any sort leads to death. Therefore, nothing is worth doing.

This existential non-distinction between heroes and losers is refigured in *War and Peace* after Andrei awakens on the Pratzen hill in the aftermath of the Battle of Austerlitz. Unexpectedly seeing Napoleon, who had been his greatly admired hero, Andrei is struck by the unimportance of that hero’s achievement:

So trivial seemed to him at that moment all the interests that occupied Napoleon, so petty seemed to him his hero himself with his petty vanity and joy in victory [...]. And everything seemed so pointless and insignificant [...]. Gazing into Napoleon’s eyes, Prince Andrei thought of the insignificance of greatness, on the insignificance of life, of which no one could comprehend the meaning, and on the still greater insignificance of death.<sup>515</sup>

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<sup>514</sup> Zanker observes that ‘[B]y “honor” [Achilles] means nothing less than death. [...] [T]he text has Achilles immediately glossing his assertion of the valueless equality of effort in war by saying that both the nonachiever and the achiever alike *die* [...]’. Achilles’ special awareness of the significance of death has almost totally undermined his drive for [...] *kleos* traditional thought to offer some compensation for the hero’s death’. Zanker, *Heart of Achilles*, pp. 81-90.

<sup>515</sup> *PSS* 9, pp. 358-59. See Appendix A.171 for original. Garnett renders ‘*nichtozhnost*’ as ‘nothingness’. Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 327.

First, Andrei shifts from the unimportance of specifically Napoleon's greatness to the unimportance of greatness as a category. Napoleon ceases to be individuated and becomes an abstracted part of humanity which heroic deeds cannot distinguish. With this insight into Napoleon's nature, it is not only glory and heroism that have become meaningless for Andrei; everything has become meaningless. After recognizing the 'insignificance of greatness' ('*nichtozhnosti velichia*') Andrei goes on to reflect on the 'nothingness of life' ('*nichtozhnosti zhizni*'). This leads to his conclusion that death, too, is insignificant. After all, without greatness, death is always unheroic. This implies that, on some level, Andrei still believes in greatness, or at least in its power to imbue life – and death – with a special significance. In other words, nothing matters only because heroism – which Andrei had placed above all other human concerns – does not matter.

Andrei's position is a radicalization of Achilles' position, for whom the shine of glory is tainted by mortality, even though mortality is precisely what *kleos* is supposed to redress or, at the very least, make bearable. The social framework of Homeric epic, wherein the suffering a hero endures is justified by the glory he achieves, and the suffering he inflicts is redeemed by the suffering he risks, has become a trifling tautology for Achilles. This is the essence of his remark in the *Iliad's* Book Nine:

'Nothing is won for me, now that my heart has gone through its  
Afflictions  
in forever setting my life on the hazard of battle' (*Il.* 9.321-23).

The ten years Achilles has spent adhering to the heroic code by enduring and inflicting pain have brought him 'nothing'. It is striking that the material treasures and social honours he has obtained seem not to 'count' for him any longer. Now that Achilles has suffered – as he puts it, his 'heart has gone through its afflictions' – his attitude to war has changed. Given death, *kleos* is meaningless; in Andrei, the narrator of *War and Peace* extends Achilles' logic to the rest of life precisely because, as an Achillean figure, *kleos* had been the only thing Andrei had truly valued. If traditionally Iliadic values are meaningless, then so must be everything else. I suggest that Andrei's withdrawal to Bogucharovo in the second volume of

*War and Peace* is modelled on Achilles' withdrawal to his hut near the Myrmidons' ships. Pierre's visit to Bogucharovo is a key refiguration of Achilles' reception of his companions in Book Nine; in this scene, Andrei tries to break with the pursuit of *kleos* and his Iliadic self. As I endeavoured to show above, and very unfortunately for him, the Iliadic self is the only self that Andrei has.

Tolstoy replaces the setting of a seashore, which is where Achilles' encampment was located, with a space that is similarly liminal. Bogucharovo is located on the shores of a pond in unattractive, flat woodland of both cut and uncut birches and Andrei's home is stark and new, implying change and rootlessness. Andrei describes his living situation in military terms – 'I'm bivouacking here'<sup>516</sup> ('[*Ja zdes' na bivakakh*']) – because he is still in the equivalent of a military camp. Just like the Greek camp was on the shore of Troy, a bivouac is an improvisation, a not-quite-home perched on the edges of the human society that one either destroys, or risks being destroyed by. To settle in this precarious space is the equivalent of accepting homelessness, and therefore, the existence Andrei leads at Bogucharovo is an attempt to live without actually living. He can return to his family but chooses to settle apart from them; he can return to the army but has categorically refused to do so. Andrei's disengagement has outwitted the necessity of choice between *kleos* and *nostos* by not committing to either. In his cultivated indifference, Andrei is attempting to exit the stream of contingency, taking refuge in non-being.<sup>517</sup>

Pierre is shocked by Andrei's 'aged'<sup>518</sup> ('*postarevshim*') face and 'extinguished, dead'<sup>519</sup> ('*potukhshii, mertvii*') gaze. What has hitherto characterized Andrei's outwardness – his glinting eyes – is now extinguished. Andrei is further described as 'slain' ('*ubityi*')<sup>520</sup> and Pierre feels that it is 'inappropriate to express admiration,

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<sup>516</sup> PSS 10, p. 109.

<sup>517</sup> Addressing the theme of existential suffering and liminality implicit in Andrei's not-quite-being at Bogucharovo, Jeff Love observes: 'His retreat to Bogucharovo after his return from the war is evidence of a bitter sort of resignation from life, almost a petulant expression of dismay about the fragility of human endeavours [...] he is condemned to a peculiar liminal existence'. Love, *Overcoming of History*, p. 165.

<sup>518</sup> PSS 10, p. 108.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid.

dreams, hope for happiness and goodness in front of Prince Andrei'.<sup>521</sup> This is the sort of emotional restraint one might observe at a funeral, and indeed, Andrei is associated with the opposite of life. During Pierre's visit, Achilles' rejection of *kleos* is adapted to serve as an explanation for Andrei's new death-in-life existence, with the latter confessing: "I used to live for glory. [...] [A]nd not almost, but quite spoilt my life".<sup>522</sup> What is clear in Andrei's extinguished existence is an Iliadic hero who cannot be anything else; in an Iliadic world, there is no alternative to living for the glory obtained from ensuring the security of the community. By rejecting the significance of his military achievements, Andrei articulates what the extradiegetic narration of *War and Peace* argues: Iliadic heroism is false. However, because nothing else can be true for the Achillean Andrei, this realisation does not free him, and only serves to condemn him to a sort of moral purgatory.

When Pierre asks about his plans, Andrei's response indicates that his future is foreclosed: "Plans?" Prince Andrei repeated ironically. "My plans?" he repeated, as though wondering what was the meaning of such a word'.<sup>523</sup> Andrei says that he "would be happy to do nothing"<sup>524</sup> ("*la bi rad nichego ne dela'*") and that he is, effectively, waiting to literally die: "I'm alive, and it's not my fault that I am, and so I have to try without hurting others to get on as well as I can till death".<sup>525</sup> When *kleos* is all that matters, and *kleos* ceases to matter, there is nothing left for the Iliadic hero to do, so Andrei reasons as one who has no agency. This is a specifically Iliadic, Achillean dilemma, and therefore Andrei applies the solution selected by Homer's Achilles: if the hero cannot return to his father because he must fight, and he cannot fight because fighting is the same as not fighting, then he will simply do nothing.

For Achilles to return to battle, one of two things must occur. Either he will realize that his tragic insight is inaccurate and categories such as heroism and a glorious death are legitimate after all, or unforeseen events will force Achilles to re-enter the

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<sup>521</sup> Ibid. See Appendix A.172 for original.

<sup>522</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 430.

<sup>523</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 428.

<sup>524</sup> PSS 10, p. 113.

<sup>525</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 432.

war. If the first occurs, then Achilles' great speech is simply a well-articulated error in judgment. If the second occurs (and it does), then the issue of whether Achilles' insight is correct or not – that human life is meaningless – remains unresolved in the *Iliad*. I suggest that Tolstoy raises Achilles' insight in Andrei to resolve it in the negative. In *War and Peace*, Achilles' existential reflections are refined in Andrei to make explicit the inadequacy of *kleos* and the nihilism implicit in rejecting it while still valuing it as the only meaningful course. Even though Andrei no longer serves in the military, his apathetic state stems from his continued valuation of *kleos* as the only good in life, if only there were any good in life: 'Prince Andrei [was] taking no part in the war and at the bottom of his soul regretting it'.<sup>526</sup>

The reader shares Pierre's horror in Bogucharovo when Andrei articulates the moral relativism of his non-life. When Pierre expresses relief that he did not kill his rival, Dolokhov, during a duel, Andrei reacts caustically: "Why so? [...] To kill a vicious dog is a very good thing to do, really".<sup>527</sup> In response to Pierre's reasonable objection that killing is unjust, Andrei retorts: "Why isn't it just? [...] It is not for humans to judge what is just and unjust".<sup>528</sup> This remark stems not from humility, but from nihilism. Andrei, identified with death because he is himself 'slain', finds that slaying others – some of whom are mere dogs, anyway<sup>529</sup> – is ethically unproblematic because morality, if it exists, is unintelligible. His traumatic experience at Austerlitz and the death of his wife have brought Andrei to a moral abyss, and having once seen its nothingness, Andrei is unfit for normative ethics: "[A]nd you are left facing that abyss and looking down into it. And I have looked into it..."<sup>530</sup> Although Tolstoy's ellipses indicate that what Andrei saw in the abyss is either inexpressible or else caused too much suffering to express, Andrei sums

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<sup>526</sup> PSS 10, p. 93. See Appendix A.173 for original.

<sup>527</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 429.

<sup>528</sup> PSS 10, p. 110. See Appendix A.174 for original.

<sup>529</sup> Dolokhov's captain describes him thus: "Sometimes he is smart, educated, and kind. At other times, he's an animal." ("*To i umen, i uchen, i dobr. A to zver'*") PSS 9, p. 145. Consider this description of Dolokhov, and Andrei's comparison of him to a dog, in terms of Redfield's observation that, when characters are likened to dogs in Homeric epic, it is because dogs represent 'the most completely domesticated animal; he is capable even of such human feelings as love and shame. But he is only imperfectly capable; he remains an animal. The dog thus represents man's resistance to acculturation [...]. The dog stands for an element within us that is permanently uncivilized [...]. [T]he man who is called a dog is likened, as it were, to a lower part of himself. He is thus reduced to less than himself'. Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, p. 195.

<sup>530</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 435.



up for Pierre the conclusion resulting from the experience: “You see on earth the dominion of good and truth, but I don’t see it.”<sup>531</sup>

Pierre’s reaction to such pessimism is to insist on the validity of goodness and love, expressing astonishment that Andrei can hold such inhuman views: “What about love for your neighbour, what about sacrifice? [...] It is horrible, horrible! [...] I don’t understand one thing – how it’s possible to live with such thoughts. [...] You’ll just sit without stirring, without acting on anything...”.<sup>532</sup> Tolstoy adapts to Pierre the sentiments of the Greek hero Ajax, whose indictment of Achilles’ self-absorption rests on the uncomplicated notion of human affection and camaraderie:

[...] Achilleus  
has made savage the proud-hearted spirit within his body.  
He is hard, and does not remember that friends’ affection  
wherein we honoured him [...]  
[...]  
Now make gracious the spirit within you.  
Respect your own house; see, we are under the same roof with you,  
from the multitude of Danaans, we who desire beyond all  
others to have your honour and love’ (//. 9.628-42).

Unlike Achilles, who remains mostly unmoved,<sup>533</sup> Andrei is deeply impacted by the version of this sentiment articulated by Pierre, and its simple appeal to love. Ajax’s covert reference to ‘the multitude of Danaans’ that depend on Achilles’ graciousness while calling for Achilles’ love is restated in Pierre’s urging that ‘We must live, we must love, we must believe [...] that we are not only living to-day on this clod of earth, but have lived and will live for ever there in everything’.<sup>534</sup> For Tolstoy, the only cure for both the inadequacy of *kleos* and the emptiness of its

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<sup>531</sup> Ibid.

<sup>532</sup> PSS 10, pp. 110-13. See Appendix A.175 for original.

<sup>533</sup> ‘Mostly’ because, although he seems to disregard the endeavours of Odysseus and Phoenix to engage him in battle, it can be argued that Achilles does soften his position after Ajax’s outburst, conceding that he will remain on the battlefield and will fight only after Hektor arrives at the ships of the Myrmidons. Whether Achilles had decided on this course previously, or has been influenced by Ajax, is unclear.

<sup>534</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 436.

absence is the depth of human love – Achilles’ ‘discovery’ of the equivalence of heroic activity and weak inactivity in the face of death is rhetorically powerful and has such an intense effect on him because it is so limited. Suffering the great drama of disillusion is another form of self-important greatness. When Andrei communicates his amoral views, we are meant to recognize, along with Pierre, that his newfound wisdom is not wisdom at all but is simply a passive way of being self-absorbed. Instead of actively seeking a meaningless glory, Andrei now passively seeks a meaningless death.

The validity of Pierre’s perspective is evidenced in the changing setting during the conversation between him and Andrei. While conversing, the pair exit the ‘military camp’ of Bogucharovo and begin the journey by coach to Bald Hills. They must first cross a river and climb aboard a ferry to do so. The symbolism is clear, referencing the journey across the river Styx: Andrei is being led from the land of the dead back to the land of the living. This is further evidenced when, as their conversation progresses, Andrei begins to show signs of life, and the characteristic glitter returns to his recently ‘dead’ eyes: ‘From the peculiar light that glowed in Prince Andrei’s eyes [...] Pierre saw that his words were not in vain’.<sup>535</sup> After the river crossing is completed and they exit the ferry, Andrei is symbolically and literally brought back to life: ‘[L]eaving the ferry [...] for the first time since Austerlitz [...] something that was the best within him, suddenly joyfully and youthfully awoke in his soul’.<sup>536</sup> The ultimate result of Andrei’s moral awakening, however, is tragic. Despite his realisation, Andrei is an unseasonal, Achillean hero, and the world of human affection remains closed for him. This precedes his second disengagement which leads to literal death; Andrei was better off on the other side of Styx. It is ironic that Achilles and, therefore, Andrei are both doomed to obtain a *kleos* that they no longer seek or value. Achieving full maturity by participating in community as not only a son but a husband and a father is precluded for them, but only after they realize its significance.

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<sup>535</sup> Ibid.

<sup>536</sup> *PSS* 10, p. 118. See Appendix A.176 for original.

To summarize the preceding section and anticipate the next: since Achilles and Andrei are other, they come to see through and reject *kleos*, and are ejected from the socio-ethical structure that necessitated their pursuit of *kleos* in the first place. Like his realization about the Minister of War, what Andrei has realized after Austerlitz – that life is futile – is the product of a narrow view. Life is futile because Andrei has rejected the sociocultural structure that props up his Iliadic self, as he leaps from the insignificance of greatness to the insignificance of life. As we have seen in previous sections, however, for an Achillean hero operating in an Iliadic framework, there cannot be life beyond martial greatness – even if he longs for it.<sup>537</sup> The realization that human love is important does not rescue the unseasonal hero, but only underscores his tragedy, and is in part what leads to Andrei's psychological nihilism and resultant death.

## **The Doomed Hero and Bad Nihilism**

### *Achilles and Self-Destruction*

'Is Christian love to be chosen over Homeric rage or divine apatheia?'

Jeff Love<sup>538</sup>

The lapse into a lethargic state caused by ceasing to will the world is, for Nietzsche, the result of Dionysian truth. Confronting the unintelligible futility of human activity and the inevitability of death, one believes the wisdom of Silenus – the only thing better than dying quickly is to not exist at all. This state is more nuanced and dangerous than being suicidal since it not just a matter of longing for the cessation of self, but for the non-being of the world. The desire for non-being results from a traumatic event: the rending of the Apollonian veil which conceals Dionysian horror. I argue that, in the devastation of war, one is particularly sensitive to the baselessness of ethical values, social codes, and narratives which Apollonian intellect erects between its rational self and contingency. In war, one

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<sup>537</sup> Andrei's full 'awakening' in the forest as linked to the blossoming of the oak tree, and his renewed desire to live and to love (*PSS* 10, p. 158) will be ultimately thwarted by his Achillean nature.

<sup>538</sup> Love, 'Great Man', p. 33.

sees with a peculiar clarity precisely because of the breakdown of social, ethical, and intellectual categories. It is not coincidental that, for example, Achilles' disillusionment takes place in the context of unimaginable brutality that will ultimately lead to the destruction of Troy and his own death. A harrowing setting facilitates a vision of Dionysian truth in a way that ordinary experience cannot.

In the first half of the following section, I will focus on Books Eighteen to Twenty-One of the *Iliad* to make the case that Achilles expresses and enacts what Nietzsche considers to be psychological nihilism; I focus on this section of Homer's poem because, as we shall see, it particularly interested Tolstoy, as evident in the marks he made in his copy of the *Iliad*. In the second half of this section, I will link Achilles' psychological nihilism to *War and Peace* to show how Tolstoy's narrator acknowledges the 'bad' nihilism that results from historical 'good' nihilism by adapting Achilles' destructiveness to Andrei.

In *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche contends that one possible response to the senselessness of suffering is revulsion with human life, a psychological state characterized by a 'tired, pessimistic outlook, mistrust of life's riddle, the icy 'no' of nausea at life'.<sup>539</sup> Such disgust can manifest itself as lethargy, which both Achilles and Andrei express in their respective withdrawal from battle and community. However, for Nietzsche, even such a 'degenerating' life must eventually respond to the struggle for survival in all living beings: '[E]ven this nausea, this weariness, this fatigue [...] becomes a new fetter'.<sup>540</sup> In denying the world, the nauseated human being becomes bound to it in a different, more destructive way. In seeking to preserve itself in the face of suffering, the declining will no longer avoids the world or wishes to transcend it through mild detachment; the 'last will' expresses an aggressive 'will to nothingness, nihilism'.<sup>541</sup> This is a state of perpetual fury: 'Here, the worms of revenge and rancour teem all around; here, the air stinks of things unrevealed and unconfessed; here, the web of the most wicked conspiracy is

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<sup>539</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. by Keith Ansell-Pearson, trans. by Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 43.

<sup>540</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, p. 89.

<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

continually being spun, – the conspiracy of those who suffer [...] oh, how ready they themselves are, in the last resort, to make others penitent, how they thirst to be hangmen!'.<sup>542</sup> Suffering is transformed into vengeance that seeks the destruction of both world and self.

To investigate the rage of Achilles in Nietzschean terms, let us begin by observing that the effect of Patroklos' death on Achilles is to finally motivate the latter to action, but that this action is of a very specific kind. He is not fighting to help his fellow Achaeans, as Ajax had urged him to do, nor is he fighting for the glory or loot that characterize the heroic social structure, motivations that are pursued by his companions and legitimized by the warrior ethos. The tragic knowledge Achilles articulated in Book Nine has finally, with the death of Patroklos, reached its inevitable expression: suffering has turned outward. In the fullness of pain and tragic knowledge, Achilles behaves in a way that is symptomatic of a destructive nihilist.<sup>543</sup> This affective state that follows failure to find meaning both in one's own life and in the social world is derived from what Mark Anderson, analysing Nietzsche's concept of declining will, considers characteristic of psychological nihilism. In the grip of this state, 'universal movement and change do not track any particular course; events just happen, Becoming just is, all things flow without purpose, plan, or teleological directionality [...]. We do not stand in the context of or exist in relation to any superior structure or system, we do not fit into an

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<sup>542</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>543</sup> Scholars have discussed the uniquely philosophical nature of Achilles' speech. For example, philosopher Peter Sloterdijk addresses the 'epic rage' of Achilles as a dignified response to humanity's existential situation; see Peter Sloterdijk, *Rage and Time: A Psychopolitical Investigation*, trans. by Mario Wenning (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). Thomas Finan likewise argues that Achilles' rage is an existential response to mortality; see Thomas Finan, 'Total Tragedy and Homer's Iliad', *the Maynooth Review/Revieú Mhá Nuad*, 5 (1979), 71-83. Semon Strobos has observed that 'Achilles' doubt causes a life crisis. He is more than angry and insulted; he has lost his *raison d'être* [...]. To some extent he broods about the meaning of his life'; see Semon Strobos, 'Some Influences of the "Iliad" on Platonic Philosophy', *The Centennial Review*, 43 (1999), 159-171 (p. 161). Schein suggests that Achilles is 'alienated not only from the world of the poem but from the world celebrated by hundreds of years of poetic tradition and cultural values'; see Schein, *Mortal Hero*, pp. 107-10. Zanker has argued that Achilles' unique knowledge of his early death leads him to conceal his true motive for not joining the battle, which is 'his personal realization of the reality of death [...] his sense of loss informs all his thinking'; see Zanker, *Heart of Achilles*, pp. 97-99.

overarching rational whole, like pieces of a puzzle safe in their proper position'.<sup>544</sup>

I argue that it is this philosophical position that Achilles validates when he rejects the hierarchy that separates heroes from losers, which is the hierarchy that maintains the Iliadic social system. In finding this hierarchy arbitrary and its goals false, while simultaneously recognizing that the only alternative is a death that was fated and is, therefore, no alternative at all, Achilles is suffering the symptoms of psychological nihilism. He has, in Anderson's wording, 'lost faith' in the socially constructed categories that had sustained him. The crucial turning point is when this loss of faith becomes a loss of self-valuation: 'One had thought of oneself as having value precisely through the aim, unity, and truth of the world of which one is a part, but now that one no longer believes in these categories, one finds no source of value at all'.<sup>545</sup> In other words, Achilles' heroism made sense within the context of Iliadic values, and once they ceased to be values, the life he had led became meaningless.

To contrast psychological nihilism with the notion of historical nihilism – or the 'good' nihilism – developed in the previous chapter, consider that where the latter category's break from traditional values and narratives is liberating and generative,<sup>546</sup> psychological nihilism is stifling and destructive. It leads not to the transformation of traditional narrative, but to the breakdown of meaningful discourse altogether. It is significant that, as we saw above, Nietzsche identifies this psychological state as resulting from the experience of Dionysian formlessness, where Apollonian narrative is helpless. For example, in Book Twelve of the *Iliad*, the poet addresses the audience when struggling to find words to describe the brutal fighting near the Greek wall because such events exist at the margins of human existence, where language founders:

It were too much toil for me, as if I were a god, to tell all this,

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<sup>544</sup> Mark Anderson, 'Melville and Nietzsche: Living the Death of God', *Philosophy and Literature*, 40 (2016), 59-75, (p. 61).

<sup>545</sup> Anderson, 'Melville and Nietzsche', p. 62.

<sup>546</sup> Consider Jeff Love's observation that nihilism, for Tolstoy, is a 'high form of life' that enables one to 'live without authority'. Jeff Love, 'Tolstoy's Nihilism', p. 28.

for all about the stone wall the inhuman strength of the fire  
was rising, and the Argives fought unhappily, yet they must fight [...].  
(*Il.* 12.176-78)

Drawing on Nietzsche's conception of Dionysian formlessness, I suggest that participating in war facilitates a direct experience of historical nihilism which leads to the depressive state of psychological nihilism. Given certain circumstances (in this case, the moribund reminder that earth is where humanity enacts hell), the epistemic nihilistic position transfers into a psychological state, and tragic knowledge becomes tragic action.

The death of Patroklos has been viewed by scholars as anticipating the death of Achilles while functioning as its surrogate: in a symbolic sense, it is Achilles himself who has died.<sup>547</sup> The poet hints that, when learning that Patroklos has been killed, Achilles may commit suicide. Nestor's son, Antilochus, tasked with bringing the terrible news of Patroklos' death, finds it necessary to restrain Achilles to prevent the latter from harming himself:

Antilochos mourned with him, letting the tears fall,  
and held the hands of Achilleus as he grieved in his proud heart,  
fearing that Achilleus might cut his throat with the iron. (*Il.* 18.32-34)

Thetis arrives, and the first thing Achilles tells his mother after informing her of Patroklos' death is that he wishes he had never been born: "I wish you had gone on living then with the other goddesses/ of the sea, and that Peleus had married some other woman" (18.86-87). In effect, the hero iterates Silenus' advice to not exist at all. This is restated in the subsequent Book Nineteen, when Achilles wishes that Briseis, too, had been killed before he won her: "I wish Artemis had killed her beside the ships with an arrow/ on that day when I destroyed Lyrnessos and took her" (19.59-60). In desiring for Peleus to have not married Thetis, or for

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<sup>547</sup> See, for example, Dale Sinos, *Achilles, Patroklos, and the Meaning of "Philos"* (Innsbruck: Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Innsbruck, 1980); Steven Lowenstam, *The Death of Patroclus: A Study in Typology* (Königstein/Ts.: Hain, 1981); Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, p. 143.

Briseis to not have been captured, Achilles is wishing to undo everything in the past that has brought him to this fated moment, and thereby unmake his own existence. This is evident further when, after telling Thetis that it would have been better if she had never married Peleus, Achilles admits that he no longer wants to live:

‘[T]he spirit within does not drive me  
to go on living and be among men, except on condition  
that Hektor first be beaten down under my spear’. (*Il.* 18.90-92)

Of course, by making his life ‘conditional’ on Hektor’s death, Achilles consciously utters a contradiction. He knows very well that Hektor’s death necessitates his own; therefore, Antilochus is justified in fearing that Achilles is suicidal. On our Nietzschean reading, Achilles’ denial of the self has reached its apotheosis as he seeks to avenge his own suffering and death, both the surrogate death enacted by Patroklos and the literal death to come. In Nietzschean terms, Achilles’ denial of self has been so successful that all that is left is a naked will that seeks to vent itself at all that is. When Thetis delivers the armour that Hephaestus crafted for Achilles in Book Nineteen, the Myrmidons – brave, heroic fighters – cannot bring themselves to look at it:

Only Achilleus  
looked, and as he looked the anger came harder upon him  
and his eyes glittered terribly under his lids, like sunflare. (*Il.* 19.14-17)

Achilles does not fear the armour because he is identified with its destructive potential. The wrath that has replaced sorrow becomes hatred which, as Nietzsche argues, is the result of psychological nihilism, and it is all that sustains him now. Preparing for battle at the conclusion of Book Nineteen, Achilles remarks: “I myself know well it is destined for me to die here/ far from my beloved father and mother” (*Il.* 19.421-22). In entering the battle, Achilles pursues revenge by simultaneously pursuing his own destruction; if we consider this alongside the



earlier hints at Achilles' suicide and wish for nonbeing, then death is not only the price Achilles is willing to pay for revenge – dying has become its own end.<sup>548</sup> The anticipation of his own annihilation is evident in a famous speech Achilles delivers to Lykaon, the young son of Priam, who begs Achilles to spare him. Achilles responds brutally:

'Poor fool, no longer speak to me of ransom, nor argue it  
In the time before Patroklos came to the day of his destiny  
then it was the way of my heart's choice to be sparing  
of the Trojans, and many I took alive and disposed of them.  
Now there is not one who can escape death [...].  
So, friend, you die also. Why all this clamour about it?  
Patroklos also is dead, who was better by far than you are.  
Do you not see what a man I am, how huge, how splendid,  
and born of a great father, and the mother who bore me immortal?  
Yet even I have also my death and my strong destiny'. (*Il.* 21.99-112)

There are several elements to consider in this famous passage. First, its cruel logic reiterates that of Achilles' speech in Book Nine: the distinction between losers and heroes is levelled by death. Lykaon is 'less' great than Patroklos, who was 'less' great than Achilles, yet they must all die; there is no sense in sparing Lykaon when, in the end, nobody is spared. As epistemic nihilism becomes psychological nihilism for Achilles, theory becomes praxis. Second, and related to the first point, Achilles will not spare Lykaon because he no longer spares anyone, and he no longer spares anyone because he himself must die.<sup>549</sup> The sorrow occasioned by

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<sup>548</sup> For a discussion of how the final seven books of the *Iliad* symbolically depict Achilles as though he is dead, and how his death is foreshadowed, see Schein, *Mortal Hero*, pp. 129-32.

<sup>549</sup> There is nothing unusual about refusing Lykaon's plea in the sense that all such pleas are rejected in the *Iliad*; see Gordon P. Kelly, 'Battlefield Supplication in the *Iliad*', *The Classical World*, 107 (2014), 147-67. What is important, however, is that it is unusual for specifically Achilles to reject such a plea – he tells Lykaon that he used to spare Trojans but does so no longer. Later, Zeus testifies to the claim that it is in Achilles' nature to spare suppliants (*Il.* 24.157). Consistent with this, in Book Six, Andromache admits that, although Achilles had killed her father, he respected the latter's body and gave him a proper burial, and then ransomed her mother (*Il.* 6.416-27). Katherine Callen King observes that Achilles' merciful behaviour 'provides the only instances mentioned in the *Iliad* of prisoners being taken or released for ransom',

the knowledge of meaningless mortality makes Achilles a destroyer; in Nietzsche's words, he is ready 'in the last resort to make others penitent' for his suffering.

After killing Lykaon, Achilles shouts, "Die on, all [...] [D]ie all an evil death, till all of you/ pay for the death of Patroklos and the slaughter of the Achaians [...]" (*Il.* 21.133-34). This is extravagant reasoning. First, killing Lykaon was justified because Patroklos died and because Achilles will die. Now 'all' must die because other Greeks were killed. Achilles is clearly aware that he has changed in a fundamental sense, but the reasons he offers for this change are neither consistent nor logical. In Nietzschean terms, the reason Achilles wishes the death of 'all' the Trojans is that his self has given way to suffering completely, such that irrational destructiveness is all that remains. Evidence for this state is shown in the harrowing sequence of killings Achilles undertakes in Book Twenty, culminating in his shocking treatment of both Lykaon's and Hektor's corpses in Books Twenty-One and Twenty-Two.<sup>550</sup> We witness Achilles smashing bones and stabbing bellies, ears, and backs in mindless fury. The young Lycian warrior, Tros, has his liver torn from his body in the act of crawling toward Achilles on his knees, and the poet scolds pityingly, '[F]ool, [he] did not see there would be no way to persuade him,/ since this was a man with no sweetness in his heart, and not kindly/ but in a strong fury' (*Il.* 20. 466-68). Even the river Scamander accuses Achilles of "acts more violent/ than all men's" and laments:

'For the loveliness of my waters is crammed with corpses, I cannot  
find a channel to cast my waters into the bright sea  
since I am congested with the dead men you kill so brutally' (*Il.* 21.218-20).

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Katherine Callen King, *Achilles: Paradigms of the War Hero From Homer to the Middle Ages* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), p. 14.

<sup>550</sup> Scholars have commented on Achilles' excessive brutality in Books Twenty-One and Twenty-Two. Nagy has written that, at this stage, 'anger consumes the hero in a paroxysm of self-destructiveness. His fiery rage plummets him to depths of brutality, as he begins to view the enemy as the ultimate Other, to be hated with such an intensity that Achilles can even bring himself, in a moment of ultimate fury, to express that most ghastly of desires, to eat the flesh of Hector', Nagy, *Epic Hero*, p. 78. King suggests that Homer uses Agamemnon's killings as a foil to emphasize Achilles' brutality, such that the comparison serves to 'deepen our sense of Achilles' descent into horror', King, *War Hero*, p. 14. Schein has observed that at this stage in the epic, Achilles 'has virtually ceased to be human both physically and ethically; he has become a force of sheer destructive energy, annihilating whatever gets in his way'; Schein, *Mortal Hero*, p. 145.

The contrast between 'lovely waters' and 'corpses' is a powerful indicator of Achilles' association with death – in his excessive brutality, Achilles has glutted the sacred river with dead bodies. This complaint of the river, symbolic of life, fertility, and the flow of nature, indicates that Achilles is behaving in a way that is savage and perhaps even unnatural as he pollutes the life-giving waters. When Scamander petitions Apollo for help, Achilles attacks the river itself, symbolizing his opposition to the movement of life altogether. We can read Achilles' re-engagement in battle as the most extreme form of disengagement with sociality because his commitment to the human and natural world is now exclusively destructive.

Let us contrast Achilles' psychological nihilism with historical nihilism – its drive to death distinguishes it most strongly from 'good' nihilism. It is consequential for the ethics of *istoriia-iskusstvo* that Tolstoy elided the psychological implications of what I have termed his historical nihilism. In advancing a historical antirealism that delegitimizes memory, primary documents, and historical narrative, while simultaneously advancing a reconstruction of the past grounded in aesthetic rather than correspondent truth, Tolstoy does not offer any guidance on what this overturning of historical discourse might *feel* like. Nietzsche, addressing the problem directly, points out that the destructive disengagement from sociality inherent in psychological nihilism results from the risk of acknowledging nihilism as true. Tolstoy's extradiegetic narrator, who articulates historical antirealism, is silent on this point, failing to take responsibility for the psyche of the reader who follows and trusts in the overturning of historical narrative. Nevertheless, we can see Tolstoy's intradiegetic narrator subtly acknowledging the problem with Andrei's descent into destructiveness in the third volume of *War and Peace*.

The war context is crucial for the Dionysian experience of truth because it makes the abstract concrete, and partly explains why it was the *Iliad* that Tolstoy drew on in his representation of psychological nihilism. Dionysian chaos is particularly evident in Tolstoy's descriptions of the battlefield, which are 'characterized by

vigorous attempts to impose order and by the sudden collapse of order [...] battle consequently serves as a microcosm of history as Tolstoy conceived it'.<sup>551</sup> War's violence results in the breakdown of narrative, of which the most salient for our purposes is historical narrative. Nietzsche's argument, that seeing the destructiveness of universal history results in the negation of life, helps us understand, first, how Achilles can be identified with the most extreme version of disengagement in his re-engagement with battle. Second, it shows how Tolstoy's linking of Andrei to Achilles can be interpreted as his intradiegetic, or 'content-based', response to the problem of psychological nihilism.

### *Tolstoy's Notes on the Iliad*

That the psychological and, by extension, social consequences of Achilles' disengagement-as-reengagement were of interest for Tolstoy is demonstrated in the marks he made in his own copy of the *Iliad*.<sup>552</sup> I suggest that these metatextual marks are important for our understanding of Tolstoy's reception of Homer because they are the sole unmediated record of what Tolstoy found significant in the poem. Underlining sections of Homer's text, Tolstoy was not addressing an implied audience but interacting with the poem in a personal, non-discursive, and somatic way, conveying that he is struck by a word or a phrase by making physical markings that are intended for, and intelligible to, only himself. Decipherment of non-linguistic signs is a speculative business since such jottings are simultaneously straightforward and ambiguous, yet they invite analysis because they can showcase, if crudely, what mattered to Tolstoy in the text. Tolstoy's marked interest in the poem is concentrated almost wholly on Books Eighteen to Twenty-Three, which are my principal sources for this chapter. In these books,

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<sup>551</sup> Morson, *Hidden in Plain View*, p. 98.

<sup>552</sup> The description of marginal comments and wordless annotations Tolstoy made in the volumes in his personal library at Yasnaya Polyana were collected and edited by Tolstoy's secretary and biographer, Valentin F. Bulgakov (1886-1966), and published in three volumes between 1958 and 1978. The description of Tolstoy's marginalia in his personal copy of the *Iliad* occurs in the first volume: *Biblioteka L'va Nikolaevicha Tolstogo v Iasnoi Poliane: Bibliograficheskoe opisaniye. Chast' pervaya A-L (The Library of Lev Niolaevich Tolstoy in Yasnaya Polyana: A bibliographic description, Part One A-L)*, ed. by Valentin F. Bulgakov (Moscow: Kniga, 1972), I.

Achilles is at his most doom-conscious and violent, and Tolstoy paid a unique attention to Achilles' mistreatment of Hektor's corpse: the longest passage Tolstoy underlined in the *Iliad* is found in Book Twenty-Two and includes the entirety of Achilles' defilement of the body of Hektor.

Why should Achilles' rampage be of interest to Tolstoy, such that he marked it for himself, presumably to easily find and read it again? I approach this question with consideration of the other passages Tolstoy underlined. The first long passage in the poem that Tolstoy underlined includes lines 109-127 in Book Eighteen, in which Achilles vows to his mother that, spurred on by his rage, he embraces death because it means taking vengeance on Hektor. The underlined section includes Achilles' remark that he is ready to die – "I [...] shall lie still, when I am dead" (*Il.* 18.121) – and that he intends to:

'[D]rive some deep-girdled  
Dardanian woman, lifting up to her soft cheeks both hands  
to wipe away the close bursts of tears in her lamentation' (*Il.* 18.122-24).

The image of a sorrowing Trojan woman is important because, in the translation Tolstoy read, Gnedich rendered 'deep-girdled' as '*polnogradnie*', or 'full-bosomed'. Both renderings draw on the original Greek term (which Tolstoy certainly encountered in the 1870s and possibly in the 1860s): *bathukolpos*, which indicates a robe 'with deep folds', suggesting a sunken space, or fold, corresponding both with a body part and a garment. By underlining this section, Tolstoy is noticing and physically marking how Homer contrasts Achilles' vengeance with a powerful symbol of motherhood, generativity, and peace.<sup>553</sup> The next lines Tolstoy underlined were Achilles' merciless address to Lykaon in Book Twenty-One, beginning with the cynical, "So, friend, you die also" and concluding with Achilles' observation that even he, beautiful and strong as he is, will soon die (referenced

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<sup>553</sup> Tolstoy himself made these connections between the bosom and the harvest: for example, see my discussion of how Tolstoy linked what he considered to be the 'epic' images of 'white bosom' ('*belie grudi*') and the fertile earth, which he described literally as 'wheat rye mother' ('*pshenitsa rozh' matushka*') in Chapter Six.

above). Tolstoy does not underline any more sections until Book Twenty-Two, where he focuses on Hektor's inner dialogue; outside the gates of Troy, Hektor asks himself whether negotiation with Achilles is possible. He quickly realizes that Achilles is incapable of being reached because he no longer values the ethical norms he once did. Tolstoy underlines Hektor's question: '[W]hy does the heart within me debate on these things?' (22.122); then underlines twice Hektor's reflection: "[H]e [will] take no pity upon me/ nor respect my position" (22.123-24).

Tolstoy marked passages in the *Iliad* by drawing a single line beneath the text – with two exceptions. There are two instances in the poem when Tolstoy underlined passages by drawing two parallel lines rather than just one beneath the text. The first passage with double underlining is Hektor's private reflection, above. The second doubly underlined passage is in Book Twenty-Four: Tolstoy underlined twice the words 'dumb earth' (which Gnedich rendered as 'the earth, the mute earth' ('*zemliu, zemliu nemuyu*'). These words form part of a passage in which Apollo remarks that Achilles dishonours the 'mute earth' with his mistreatment of Hektor's corpse, implying that the ethical deviation is unnatural or forbidden: "[N]othing is gained thereby for his good, or his honour./ Great as he is, let him take care not to make us angry; for see, he does dishonour to the *dumb earth* in his fury" (24.52-54) (italics mine). I argue that the two passages that were doubly underlined by Tolstoy are both concentrated on the ethical question of Achilles' pitiless irreverence for someone or something.

In the first instance, dishonour is aimed at Hektor himself ("[H]e [will] take no pity upon me nor respect my position") and in the second instance, it is aimed at Hektor's body and, by extension, the earth. The second doubly underlined passage contrasts the earth's helpless passivity with its defilement by human violence (as we have explored in Chapter Three, Tolstoy frequently employs the contrast between crop-yielding soil and crop-destroying battle). That Hektor's body becomes as helpless and mute as the soil implies that disrespecting the human body and desecrating nature are, in some sense, of linked interest for Tolstoy. I argue that Tolstoy's double underlining of these two closely related passages of

the disrespect shown to Hektor, Hektor's body, and the earth, along with his tight focus on Achilles' violence as evidenced in the passages he underlined in Books Eighteen to Twenty-Three, demonstrate that Tolstoy is interested specifically in Achilles' destructiveness of humanity and nature. In the following section, we shall see how this destructiveness is applied to his own Achillean figure, that of Andrei.

### *Tragic Knowledge in Andrei's Speech at Borodino*

This final section examines Andrei's reflections before and during the Battle of Borodino to ground a case study of the psychological nihilism that occurs when one accepts historical nihilism articulated by the extradiegetic narration in *War and Peace*. Before Andrei's fatal wounding at Borodino, the leitmotif of Pierre visiting Andrei's military camp is repeated. During this meeting, Andrei delivers a lengthy monologue to which I will refer frequently in this section:

'War [...] is the vilest thing in life, and we ought to understand that and not play at war. We ought to accept it sternly and solemnly as a fearful necessity. [...] The military is the most honoured calling. And what is war, what is needed for success in war, what are the morals of the military world? The object of warfare is murder; the means employed in warfare – spying, treachery, and the encouragement of it, the ruin of a country, the plundering of its inhabitants and robbery for the maintenance of the army, trickery and lying [...]. And in spite of all that, it is the highest class, respected by everyone. All sovereigns [...] wear a military uniform, and give the greatest rewards to the man who succeeds in killing most people... [...] and then offer up thanksgiving services for the number of men they have killed (and even add it to the telling), and glorify the victory [...]. Ah, my dear boy, life has been a bitter thing for me of late. I see that I have come to understand too much. And it is not good for man to taste of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil... Ah, well, it's not for long!'<sup>554</sup>

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<sup>554</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 886.

This key passage entitles us to two questions: first, what exactly has Andrei understood? and second (and more complicated), if he grasps the inhuman and futile nature of war, why is he participating in it?

Andrei's speech offers clues to the first question. His insight is of a divine order because it is not (and ought not be) available to ordinary humans precisely because it makes life unbearable. What Andrei has realized is twofold. First, the celebrated notion of heroic honour that legitimizes the 'highest calling'<sup>555</sup> ('*vishee soslovie*') of war-making is illegitimate. For Andrei, this means that he must reject not only the validity of warmaking, but also the social machinery that engineers it, exemplified in everything from the tsar in military garb ('*voennyi mundir*'<sup>556</sup>) to the army. This he has already done in the first half of the novel. Second, and related to the first point, is Andrei's acceptance of what Tolstoy's extradiegetic narration argues: historical narrative (as seen in the official 'announcement of victory'<sup>557</sup> '*pravozglashenie pobedy*') is false at best and immoral at worst, because it conceals that war is hell on earth. Most relevantly for us is Andrei's insight that hell on earth is an ontological fact: the 'vilest thing in life'<sup>558</sup> ('*samoe gadkoe delo v zhizni*') is also a 'fearful necessity'<sup>559</sup> ('*strashnaia neobkhodimost'*') that must be stoically accepted. This is where Andrei has changed, articulating his cognizance of what our Nietzschean reading identifies as tragic knowledge. He has already conveyed the first part of this realization in the second volume of *War and Peace*, during Pierre's visit to Andrei's 'bivouac' in Bogucharovo. Here, the realization is fully developed and confirmed by return to war and the direct experience of its Dionysian horror, which compels Andrei to confront society's greatest calling (which has hitherto preoccupied himself, his father, and all celebrated Russian leaders) as both unethical and meaningless.

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<sup>555</sup> PSS 11, p. 211.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

<sup>557</sup> Ibid.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid.



Nietzsche observes: 'What actually arouses indignation over suffering is not the suffering itself, but the senselessness of suffering'.<sup>560</sup> Andrei suffers from knowledge of the senselessness of war. What makes this knowledge tragic is, first, that war cannot be overcome by means of historical progress because it is an inescapable fact of nature, and second, the associated implication that historical 'progress' does not really exist. The inevitability of destruction does not legitimize it or make it bearable, revealing instead the Dionysian truth that human structures and narratives are ultimately irrational. Put differently, war reveals hitherto concealed truths that are difficult and even traumatizing to accept. It is, as I have already argued above, precisely this insight into formlessness that leads to what Love terms Andrei's 'tragic'<sup>561</sup> realization that 'intellect and will cannot be reconciled; no matter how extraordinary, every great conqueror comes to naught'.<sup>562</sup> Thus Tolstoy reiterates in Andrei's tragic knowledge the Achillean insight that heroes and losers have the same end. Again, the problem is not 'just' that war is immoral, but that this most harrowing of immoralities is both inevitable and ultimately meaningless: even when 'won', it leads to nothingness.

Andrei has come to understand the historical antirealism that the text's narrator develops.<sup>563</sup> I argue that, via Andrei, Tolstoy demonstrates what it is *like* to suffer the effects of historical nihilism. The text's treatment of Andrei collapses the separation between intra- and extradiegetic narration – Andrei affectively and somatically enacts the narrator's intellectual view of history and war – by employing a narrative structure drawn from epic poetry. Consider that Achilles' critique of battle and mortality has been read by some scholars as belonging to the Homeric narrator.<sup>564</sup> It is in this sense – Andrei suffers what the narrator argues to be true – that I consider Andrei's insight as a case study of Tolstoy's engagement with the problem of psychological nihilism, however ambiguous and uncommitted that engagement is. Andrei's psychological nihilism is 'bad' in the sense that it fosters

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<sup>560</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, p. 44.

<sup>561</sup> Love, *Great Man*, p. 92.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid.

<sup>563</sup> Consider Morson's observation that the central theme of *War and Peace* is chance, and therefore, 'Andrei's view of battle coincides with Tolstoy's view of history', Morson, *Hidden in Plain View*, p. 89.

<sup>564</sup> A. Lardinois, 'Characterization through Gnomai in Homer's "Iliad,"' *Mnemosyne*, 53 (2000), 641-61 (p. 645).

an impotent self-indulgence; however, it is unclear what might be the psychological alternatives for one who accepts Tolstoy's historical nihilism.

Let us turn to the second question Andrei's speech poses: if war is senseless and immoral, why is he fighting? Andrei provides some rationale for his participation by claiming that war is an inevitability that humanity must accept. However, the narration of Andrei's story belies this lofty explanation. What brings Andrei back to war is shown in the narrative to be not a stoic commitment to ontological truth but rather an Achillean pursuit of vengeance and self-destruction. I suggest that Andrei returns to war for the same reason Achilles did: because he is afflicted by psychological nihilism. This is supported not only by the text itself, as we shall soon see, but also by Tolstoy's underlining, explored above. Tolstoy's almost exclusive focus on the violent consequences of Achilles' anger specifically after the hero has decided to return to battle is direct, unmediated evidence that this is what concerned him in the epic. Therefore, I pay particular attention to Andrei's decision to return to the war and his behaviour thereafter.

As we have seen, unlike Achilles, Andrei can temporarily and superficially perform the *nostos* he is fated never to achieve, by becoming engaged to Natasha. After this opportunity closes for him, Andrei reverts to a state of willing his own negation. The pursuit of self-negation is characterized by an irrational wrath, and its destructive power extends from self to other. In the third volume of *War and Peace*, we learn that, following Natasha's rejection, Andrei returns to the army. The narrator explains that it became impossible for Andrei to remain in the civilian world, and that, among his alternatives, army service was 'the simplest and most familiar to him'.<sup>565</sup> This is an instance of indirect first-person narration – it is how Andrei would explain his return. Andrei has, in effect, offered two possible motives for returning to battle: the first is that he cannot think of anything better to do, and the second, seen above in his speech to Pierre, is that it is his stoic duty since war is inevitable. The first reason assumes too little of Andrei, and the second too much; the narrator reveals a motivation that is a good deal more nuanced.

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<sup>565</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 715.

Before we turn to evidence from the text, consider that, in reading Andrei as corresponding to Achilles, his abrupt decision to re-join the war is stimulated, at a superficial level, by lust for vengeance. Before Natasha is nearly abducted by Anatolii Kuragin, who tricks her into believing that he intends to marry her, she sends Andrei a letter breaking their engagement. After the loss of this human connection, Andrei seeks to avenge himself on Kuragin. This resonates with Achilles' furious pursuit of Hektor. Losing Natasha is reminiscent of Achilles' loss of both Briseis and Patroklos. Like Briseis, Natasha is abducted (when Andrei first learns of the event, it is described not as a refusal of marriage but as a '*pokhishenie*',<sup>566</sup> 'abduction'). Although Natasha herself wills it, her 'abduction' spurs Andrei to a murderous rage. Furiously, Andrei pursues Anatolii from country to country to execute his revenge, re-joining the war along the way for the purpose of locating and killing his rival. If Andrei's pursuit of vengeance is read as Achillean by means of a Nietzschean lens, then his re-entry into battle is informed by voluntary self-destruction, which, once achieved, fulfils the wish for non-being. Just as the death of Patroklos was a catalyst for Achilles' descent into a destructive psychological nihilism, so the loss of Natasha serves as catalyst for Andrei's submission to his true rival: senseless suffering and the death of the unseasonal hero.

When we first encounter Andrei after Natasha's near-abduction, it is through Pierre's eyes, who informs Andrei that Natasha is ill. Andrei responds by asking not after Natasha's health, but about her location and its implied clue to Kuragin's whereabouts: "So she's still here?" said Prince Andrey. "And Prince Kuragin?" he asked quickly'.<sup>567</sup> Pierre reiterates that Natasha is very ill, and nearly died. Andrei's response is caustic as he continues to probe about Kuragin's location:

'I am very sorry to hear of her illness', Prince Andrei said. He laughed a cold, malignant, unpleasant laugh [...].

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<sup>566</sup> PSS 10, p. 365.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid., p. 371. See Appendix A.177 for original.

‘And where is [Kuragin] now, may I ask?’ he said.

‘He left for [St. Petersburg]... but, really, I don’t know’, said Pierre.

‘Well, that’s no matter’, said Prince Andrey.<sup>568</sup>

Andrei’s immediate response to the pain of Natasha’s betrayal is a wrathful vengeance, which is why he is consumed with locating Kuragin. His observation that Kuragin’s location is ‘no matter’<sup>569</sup> (*vse ravno*) is disingenuous: immediately after the meeting with Pierre, Andrei departs for St. Petersburg because ‘his object was to meet Anatole Kuragin there’.<sup>570</sup> Kuragin, warned that Andrei ‘is coming for him’<sup>571</sup> (*edet za nim*), manages to evade Andrei in St. Petersburg and travel with the army to Turkey. Andrei grimly pursues Kuragin to Turkey to find an excuse for killing him: ‘[H]e was seeking to encounter Kuragin in person in order to pick a quarrel with him that would serve as a pretext for a duel’.<sup>572</sup>

While Andrei chases Kuragin through Russia and Turkey, his intellectual, spiritual, and emotional horizons narrow.<sup>573</sup> If the infinite sky had once soothed Andrei in his solitude, it has now become a crushing weight, indicating that he can no longer find solace in social withdrawal or philosophy. At this precise time, Andrei returns to the war. Immediately after informing the reader that Andrei has re-joined military service under Kutuzov, the narrator reports:

Not finding Kuragin in Turkey, Prince Andrei did not think it necessary to gallop after him again to Russia, but despite this, he knew that upon meeting Kuragin [...] he could not fail to call him out, just as a starving person cannot fail to throw himself on food. And the awareness that the

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<sup>568</sup> Ibid., p. 371. See Appendix A.178 for original.

<sup>569</sup> PSS 10, p. 371.

<sup>570</sup> PSS 11, p. 32.

<sup>571</sup> PSS 11, p. 33.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid., p. 33. See Appendix A.179 for original. Note that the act of duelling in Turkey over a nearly-abducted woman tantalizingly recalls not only the narrowly missed fight between Achilles and Agamemnon over the twice-abducted Briseis, but also the duel between Menelaos and Paris over the (sort of) abducted Helen; these events took place near Troy in what is, today, Turkey.

<sup>573</sup> ‘It was as though the infinite, fathomless arch of heaven that had once stood over him had been suddenly transformed into a low, limited vault weighing upon him, with everything in it clear, but nothing eternal and mysterious’. Tolstoy, PSS 11, p. 33.

insult has not been avenged, that the wrath has not been poured out, but still lay on his heart, poisoned his artificial serenity [...].<sup>574</sup>

In the same chapter, Andrei visits his family home at Bald Hills, where Princess Mar'ia urges him to relinquish his wrath: "If you think that someone has wronged you, forget it and forgive."<sup>575</sup> Andrei's response is vengeful: '[A]ll his unavenged wrath suddenly rose in his heart [...] he began to think about that joyful, wrathful minute when he shall meet Kuragin, who (he knew) was in the army'.<sup>576</sup>

The terms associated with Andrei's sense of injury – wrath ('*zloba*'), insult ('*oskorblenie*'), poison ('*otravlenie*') – mark its resonance with an Achillean pridefulness and obsession with honour. The narrator takes care to point out that Andrei has been tracking his rival: he 'knew' ('*on znal*') that Kuragin is still in the army. Consumed with fantasies of revenge and focused on Kuragin's movements, Andrei becomes emotionally aloof from those he loves. For the first time in his life, he quarrels with his father, then argues with Princess Mar'ia. As he sits with his little son, he realizes that he does not feel guilt for leaving his father nor any paternal love for the boy. All of Andrei's attention has become concentrated on his wrath.<sup>577</sup> As we have seen with Achilles, one of the effects of psychological nihilism is emotional withdrawal from human ties as rage and destructiveness replace compassion and love, made obvious in Andrei's reflection as he leaves for the front:

'My boy is growing and finding joy in life, in which he will be like everyone else, either deceived or a deceiver. And I am going to the army – for what? I don't know myself, but I desire to meet that person whom I despise, just to give him the opportunity to kill me and laugh at me!' [...] [E]verything was

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<sup>574</sup> PSS 11, pp. 33-34. See Appendix A.180 for original.

<sup>575</sup> PSS 11, p. 37. See Appendix A.181 for original.

<sup>576</sup> PSS, p. 37. See Appendix A.182 for original. Garnett renders '*nevymeshchennaia zloba*' as 'unsatisfied revenge'. Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 718.

<sup>577</sup> PSS 11, pp. 35-36.

falling apart. Only senseless phenomena, without any connection, presented themselves to Prince Andrei one after the other.<sup>578</sup>

On the strength of these passages, I argue that Andrei returns to the army not because he could think of nothing better to do, nor because it is his duty to face war's inevitability. On the surface, it is to duel Kuragin. This stems from the 'unavenged wrath' ('*nevimeshennaia zloba*') that 'poisons' ('*otravliaet*') Andrei. The desire to destroy Kuragin is compared to a starving creature's need for food, implying that enacting violence on his rival is the only nourishment Andrei seeks. The text's description of the rage consuming Andrei's heart despite his efforts to control it with reason recalls the first words of the first lengthy passage Tolstoy had underlined in Book Eighteen of the *Iliad*, in which Achilles reflects:

[G]all, which makes a man grow angry for all his great mind,  
that gall of anger that swarms like smoke inside of a man's heart  
and becomes a thing sweeter to him by far than the dripping of honey'  
(18.108-10

Indeed, *mēnis* – 'rage' or 'wrath' – is both the first word and the subject of the *Iliad*. The scope of Andrei's rage comes to transcend Kuragin and include the entire social world. He is cynical about his son's future because the little boy, 'like everyone else' ('*kak i vse*'), is fated to either be deceived by others or be a deceiver himself – the social world is utterly corrupt. As Andrei reflects on the 'senseless phenomena' ('*bessmyslennye iavlenia*') of life, he admits that he is traveling to the army to either kill Kuragin or be killed himself. As a restatement of Achilles' decision to kill Hektor and die himself, I view this as Andrei's conscious wish for nonbeing. Thus, Natasha's betrayal is the catalyst for Andrei's descent into psychological nihilism, a state wherein life's senselessness, society's deceitfulness, and personal loss all conspire to produce an irrational urge for revenge that aims at the annihilation of both self and other. As with Achilles,

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<sup>578</sup> PSS 11, p. 38. See Appendix A.183 for original.

Andrei's re-engagement with the world takes place at the most extreme point of disengagement when he becomes associated with irrational destructiveness.

Andrei's reaction to Natasha's 'abduction' and his emotional distance from his son refer to Andrei's long speech on the nature of war. During their first meeting after Andrei's discovery of Natasha's duplicity, Pierre suggests that perhaps Andrei ought to forgive Natasha. Andrei dismisses the suggestion: "Yes, ask for her hand again, be magnanimous, and so on?... Yes, this is all very noble [...]"<sup>579</sup> Andrei declines to forgive Natasha not because he no longer loves her, but because acting 'magnanimously' ('*velikodushno*', or in a manner that is 'great-hearted') and nobly is no longer legitimate. Consistent with his change of heart, Andrei reiterates a variation of this key term – magnanimity ('*velikodushie*') – in the third volume of the text, on the eve of the Battle of Borodino, and links it to his suspicion that his son must grow up to be either a liar or a fool. As part of his speech to Pierre in his military tent, Andrei relates that he can no longer take prisoners and advocates killing them:

"We ought not to take prisoners [...]. But playing at war, that's what's vile; and playing at magnanimity and all the rest of it. [...] That's all rubbish. [...] [T]hey duped us, and we duped them. They plunder other people's homes [...] and, worse than all, kill my children, my father, and then talk [...] of generosity to a fallen foe. No prisoners; and go to give and to meet death! Any one who has come to think this as I have, through the same sufferings..."<sup>580</sup>

For Andrei, just as for Achilles, honouring the humanity of the prisoner of war or the supplicant is hypocrisy; like all socially mediated values, magnanimity is a construct and therefore illegitimate. This reflection restates the one Achilles offers Lykaon about why he no longer behaves magnanimously by taking prisoners: he has suffered too much, and sparing others is a hypocritical act when everyone

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<sup>579</sup> PSS 10, p. 371. See Appendix A.184 for original.

<sup>580</sup> Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p. 885.

must die. Recall that magnanimity is one of the nine honour-linked values that Homeric heroes traditionally display (see pages 92 to 93); the Greek word, *megathumos*, 'great-hearted', is often applied to Achilles in the *Iliad*, indicating both his bravery and his tendency to anger. In the translation of the *Iliad* that Tolstoy used, Gnedich employs the phrase '*velikie dushi*', 'great spirits', in line 525, Book Nine, in Phoenix's speech regarding how, unlike Achilles, traditional heroes had been responsive to gifts and persuasion. It is precisely this epic, traditional, chivalric '*velikodushie*', 'magnanimity', that neither Andrei nor Achilles display any longer. By the time of Borodino, Andrei has suffered not only the loss of Natasha, but also the death of his father and the destruction of his home; in the third volume of *War and Peace*, he remarks sarcastically, "I have had the pleasure [...] not only of taking part in the retreat, but also of losing everything I valued in the retreat – not to speak of my property and the home of my birth... my father, who died of grief"<sup>581</sup>. At this point in the narrative, *nostos* is not foreclosed for Andrei in an exclusively symbolic way.

The refusal of magnanimity extends from love to battle. Andrei, too, once mercifully took prisoners, but he no longer recognizes the value of sociality and its associated ethical responsibilities. Andrei will not be '*velikodushen*', 'great-hearted', with Natasha, with his son, or with the French prisoners for the same reason: in both peace and war, he was 'duped' ('*nas naduli*') and betrayed, and the only solution for the psychological nihilist is an unsparing but authentic cruelty toward others and himself: '[T]o kill and go toward death!'<sup>582</sup> ('*[U]bivat' i itti [sic] na smert'*'). Andrei has realized this by means of suffering ('*stradaniami*'), again reiterating that suffering leads to tragic knowledge. He concludes his speech with a religiously charged statement: "It is not appropriate for a human to eat of the tree of good and evil... Well, it's not for long!"<sup>583</sup>. This is another reference to Andrei's expectation that he will soon die and that, in some sense, he welcomes it. The link between tragic knowledge and death is explicit: knowing what ought to be

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<sup>581</sup> *Ibid*, p. 844.

<sup>582</sup> *PSS* 11, p. 210.

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid*, p. 211.



concealed from humans leads to death, and death is a consolation in the face of this knowledge.

During the battle, a grenade drops two steps beside Andrei, and soldiers fall to the ground and take cover, shouting for Andrei to do the same:

‘Get down!’ shouted the voice of the adjutant, who had laid down on the earth. Prince Andrei stood hesitating. The grenade, like a top, smoked and spun between him and the adjutant, on the edge of arable land and meadow, beside a mugwort bush.

‘Is this really death?’ Prince Andrei thought, looking with an entirely new, envious gaze at the grass, the mugwort, and the stream of smoke rising from the spinning black ball. ‘I cannot, I do not want to die, I love life, I love this grass, earth, air...’ he thought all this and the same time remembered that others are looking at him.<sup>584</sup>

In this passage, hell on earth is made natural. Violent death, represented by the grenade, is positioned ‘on the edge’ (*‘na kraiu’*) of peaceful, life-giving earth and the human activity that it sustains. In this tense and decisive moment, land made arable by humans and a mugwort plant, with its healing properties, both temporarily and paradoxically coexist with the smoking grenade that will deface them (recall Tolstoy’s double underlining of *‘zemliu, zemliu nemuyu’* ‘the earth, the mute earth’ in the *Iliad*). The destructive object is on the very edge – yet within the proper bounds – of civilisation. Even more striking is that the grenade is compared to a spinning top (*‘volchok’*), a harmless children’s toy, an analogy reiterated again two sentences later when the grenade is described as a ‘ball’<sup>585</sup> not in the sense of a sphere but the toy (*‘miachik’*). This surprising analogy recalls the passage discussed at the beginning of this chapter, where battling armies are compared to children stung by bees; I suggest that there is, in *War and Peace*, an element of unseriousness in war precisely because war is so natural.

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<sup>584</sup> PSS 11, p. 254. See Appendix A.185 for original.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid.

While everyone falls to the ground (they fall to ‘the earth’, ‘*na zemliu*’) to protect themselves, Andrei ‘stood hesitating’ (‘*stoial v nereshitel’nosti*’). Why does he hesitate? Although, in the next lines, Andrei will reflect that falling to the ground is dishonourable and that he wishes to live, these are only the next lines.<sup>586</sup> Andrei’s immediate reaction to death’s proximity is to be still and wait. This is consistent with his previous acceptance of and even desire for death. In a certain sense, with his hesitation and failure to act (inaction is also a form of action), Andrei has committed suicide. Notice that, while he is gazing enviously at the living grass and healing mugwort bush, Andrei is also looking just as enviously at the rising smoke from a cannon ball which, he realizes, will kill him. He desires life while he accepts death, an acceptance partly resultant from an Iliadic nature that is obsessed with honour. Andrei does not fall to the earth because he remembers that ‘others are looking at him’ (‘*na nego smotriať*’), and the will to live proves to be weaker than the will to be honoured by adhering to the heroic code, regardless of whether he finds it legitimate. Andrei has not deviated from devotion to *kleos* at all costs, even when *kleos* no longer means anything.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I have been considering the oversight of Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* narrator regarding the psychological implications of historical nihilism, which, borrowing from Nietzsche studies, I have termed ‘psychological nihilism’. As I argue, the narrator’s oversight can be redressed by examining how Andrei Bolkonskii responds to the breakdown of meaningful social constructs during battle, when war is accepted as inevitable. I have shown that Tolstoy modelled Andrei’s character and narrative arc on those of Homer’s Achilles, developing and radicalizing in Andrei the psychological nihilism which, as I have contended, is displayed by Achilles to a marked degree in the last six books of the *Iliad*. This offers, first, a close study of how Tolstoy adapted and refigured Homeric character, plot, and themes in *War and Peace*. Second, by means of comparative analysis of

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<sup>586</sup> Compare the passage of Andrei’s wounding with Anna Karenina’s suicide. After Anna commits herself to leaping beneath the train, she hesitates, suddenly overcome with a love of life – this realization arrives too late to change the ending that has already been set in motion and is now out of her hands. *PSS* 19, p. 348.

Homer's *Iliad* and Tolstoy's *War and Peace* using Nietzschean tools, this chapter proposes a solution to the puzzle Tolstoy's narrator raises but does not address: if we accept that historical nihilism is true and that hell on earth is natural, what happens? One possible answer, indicated by Andrei's story modelled on Achilles', is, psychological nihilism. I shall continue the examination of Tolstoyan character as informed by Homeric character in the subsequent chapter, in which we leave behind the battlefield for the domestic sphere and the figure of Odysseus.

## Chapter Five

### Tricksters and Their Others

Sometimes we hear the pious son castigating the unbelieving father in the father's  
inescapable accents.  
Harold Bloom<sup>587</sup>

When analysing Tolstoy's debt to Homer, it may seem counter-intuitive to refer to the dramatic and seemingly non-epic novel, *Anna Karenina* (1879).<sup>588</sup> Tolstoy acknowledged that *Anna Karenina*, composed immediately after *War and Peace*, demonstrates a shift in his literary priorities from public memory to private domesticity. Tolstoy's wife, Sofia, wrote in her journal that her husband confessed that the 'fundamental idea' of the novel is 'the idea of the family' ('*mysl' semeinaia*') as opposed to 'the national idea' that had motivated *War and Peace*.<sup>589</sup> However, this shift in narrative focus – in which the subsequent text has the antecedent text 'in mind', as I intend to show – resonates strongly with the same shift in values that the *Odyssey* exhibits relative to the *Iliad*.<sup>590</sup> Tolstoy was closely reading the *Odyssey* while composing *Anna Karenina* and, according to his son, Sergei, was applying Greek terms directly from Homer's poem to his novel. This indicates that the movement from war to domesticity was motivated, in some part, by the same movement in Homeric epic. This chapter will concentrate on those aspects of

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<sup>587</sup> Harold Bloom, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?* (New York, NY: Riverhead Books, 2004), p. 127.

<sup>588</sup> Categorizing *Anna Karenina* as novelistic rather than epic is not only consistent with a conventional understanding of what works fall into the category of epic narrative, but, crucially, with Tolstoy's own definition of epic. See Chapter One, footnote 38, in which I show how Tolstoy compares a violent siege with a political and personal journey. He concludes that the former is an 'epic' ('*epopeia*') and the latter is a 'drama': 'The taking of Korsun by Vladimir is an epic. Men'shikov marries Peter II to his daughter, his exile and death – drama'. *PSS* 48, p. 344.

<sup>589</sup> *The Diaries of Sofia Tolstaya*, trans. by Cathy Porter, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985), p. 861.

<sup>590</sup> For example, Henry Power writes: 'The *Odyssey* is a poem with a domestic focus. The *Iliad* is about a decade-long struggle, by the greatest army in human history, to topple a mighty civilization [...]. The *Odyssey* is concerned with something smaller'. *Homer's Odyssey: A Reading Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011) p. 17. For a more general discussion of how the *Odyssey* may refer to, or allude to, the *Iliad*, see R.B. Rutherford, 'From the "Iliad" to the "Odyssey"', *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 38 (1993), 37-54.

*Anna Karenina* that echo and refigure parts of the *Odyssey*, albeit in unexpected ways.

It has already been observed that *Anna Karenina* can be compared to the *Odyssey* in terms of plot and character. Specifically, Griffiths and Rabinowitz assert that the protagonist Konstantin Levin in *Anna Karenina* is a continuation of Pierre Bezukhov from *War and Peace*, specifically the latter's joyful absorption into the duties and joys of domesticity;<sup>591</sup> Pierre, they argue, is predicated upon Homer's Odysseus.<sup>592</sup> It may seem obvious that if anyone in *Anna Karenina* is reminiscent of Odysseus, it must be Levin: he is an intellectual and spiritual wanderer who spends much of the novel in pursuit of home, wife, and the Tolstoyan 'idea of the family'. However, despite Levin's and even Pierre's many intellectual and spiritual turns, neither possesses the quality that most distinguishes Odysseus and which an Odyssean figure absolutely must share with him: a subtle, strategic, cunning ability to speak and act falsely. The main purpose of this chapter is to present and examine evidence for my argument that, of all Tolstoy's creations, Anna is the most like Odysseus.

First, I will explore the narrative design features that *Anna Karenina* shares with the *Odyssey*. From the absence of the protagonists in the introduction – neither Odysseus nor Anna arrive until their story is well underway – to the experience of death or near-death at the exact centre of their narrative, to the narrative's violent ending, the texts display strong correlations in plot structure. Then, I will investigate the trickster archetype, traditionally a masculine figure, and consider how Anna disrupts gender norms to participate in stereotypically male versions of trickery and the ways such trickery unites her with Odysseus. Finally, I will focus on the trickster's lies: Anna and Odysseus mislead, manipulate, cheat, charm, and bewilder by means of literal and symbolic disguises. If lying is in a trickster's nature, then we can read Anna's deceits not as deviations from her true course but as revelations of her true self.

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<sup>591</sup> F.T. Griffiths and S.J. Rabinowitz, *Epic and the Russian Novel from Gogol to Pasternak* (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2011), p. 146.

<sup>592</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

Critics such as Tzvetan Todorov and Thomas Van Nortwick have argued that Odysseus does not really wish to return home because return means stagnation and even death – home is an interruption rather than a goal.<sup>593</sup> This reading challenges the allegedly household-oriented ethos of the *Odyssey* and is the perspective this chapter takes. Tricksters are, above all, unsettled creatures, and an Odyssean Anna’s exuberant love of adventure would, by definition, prevent her from settling comfortably with her husband or her lover. Ascribing to Anna a fear of stasis resolves the long-standing riddle of why she initially refuses a divorce from her husband – in divorcing, she would be compelled to marry her lover. However, an Odyssean Anna does not prioritize marriage or family. An Odyssean Anna subverts Tolstoy’s ‘idea of the family’ as the travels of Odysseus subvert the anticipated bliss of *nostos*. If Homer’s and Tolstoy’s texts are shown to share certain structural elements, and if it is possible to demonstrate that Anna and Odysseus share certain definitive features as tricksters, then we can read Anna’s story anew.

As Sydney Schultze pointed out, arguing for a ‘side’ – Anna is morally wrong, Anna is not morally wrong – has largely characterized discussion regarding *Anna Karenina*.<sup>594</sup> Critics and readers tend to take one of three positions regarding Anna’s guilt: some condemn Anna and offer evidence that this was Tolstoy’s intention, as argued by Gary Saul Morson<sup>595</sup> and Gary L. Browning;<sup>596</sup> others see Anna as a tragic victim and criticize Tolstoy for persuading us to condemn her, as argued famously by Anna Akhmatova,<sup>597</sup> D.H. Lawrence,<sup>598</sup> F.R. Leavis,<sup>599</sup> and

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<sup>593</sup> ‘Odysseus resists returning to Ithaca so that the story can continue’, Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. by Richard Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), p. 63. See also Thomas Van Nortwick, *The Unknown Odysseus: Alternate Worlds in Homer’s Odyssey* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press: 2009).

<sup>594</sup> Sydney Schultze, *The Structure of Anna Karenina* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1972), p. 10. Schultze made this observation in 1972; half a century later, it is still an accurate summary.

<sup>595</sup> Gary Saul Morson, *Anna Karenina in Our Time: Seeing More Wisely* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>596</sup> Gary L. Browning, ‘The Death of Anna Karenina: Anna’s Share of the Blame’, *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 30 (1986), 327-39.

<sup>597</sup> Akhmatova’s critique of the implied morality in Tolstoy’s novel is quoted in Isaiah Berlin, *Personal Impressions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 238.

<sup>598</sup> George John Zytaruk, *D.H. Lawrence’s Response to Russian Literature* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), p. 74.

<sup>599</sup> F.R. Leavis, *‘Anna Karenina’ and other essays* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1967).

more recently, Anne Eakin Moss,<sup>600</sup> still others concede that Anna is tragic but find evidence that Tolstoy agreed, as contended by R.F. Christian<sup>601</sup> and Amy Mandelker.<sup>602</sup> Finally, some scholars conclude that the novel (to say nothing of its author) is internally conflicted with regard to its heroine's guilt, a view most popularly held by George Steiner and Harold Bloom, and defended more recently by Catherine Brown.<sup>603</sup> In these varied readings, there is an intense focus on moral guilt which has limited the terms of the conversation about the novel to inventing arguments for or against Anna's culpability. Reading Anna as an Odyssean figure, however, is one way to move past these rather exhausted approaches.

If we admit that Odysseus' infidelity to Penelope has been regarded as of lesser narrative significance than the journey it enables both himself and his readers to undertake, then what vistas open if we do the same for Anna? Of course, it is also important to consider what might prevent us from doing so, and to this end, I will examine the dissimilarities between Odysseus and Anna, not least of which is, predictably, gender. In the rest of the chapter, I argue that how and why Odysseus acts in the mythical world of Homeric Greece can provide insight into how and why Anna makes the choices she does in Tolstoy's fictionalized Russia. This critical position avoids both pity and condemnation and their associated preoccupation with moral guilt. At the very least, it casts Anna's 'sin' as less important than the narrative possibilities it engenders.

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<sup>600</sup> Anne Eakin Moss, 'Tolstoy's Politics of Love: "That Passionate and Tender Friendship that Exists Only Among Women,"' *The Slavic and East European Studies Journal*, 53 (2009), 566-86 (p. 581).

<sup>601</sup> R.F. Christian, 'The Problem of Tendentiousness in Anna Karenina', *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue Canadienne des Slavistes* 21.3 (1979), 276-88.

<sup>602</sup> Amy Mandelker, 'The Judgment of Anna Karenina' in *A Plot of Her Own: The Female Protagonist in Russian Literature*, ed. by Sona Stephan Hoisington (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995), pp. 33-43.

<sup>603</sup> Catherine Brown, 'Scapegoating, Double Plotting, and the Justice of Anna Karenina', *The Modern Language Review*, 106 (2011), 179-94.

*Prelude: Why Anna is Not Helen*

Why not compare Tolstoy's Anna to Homer's Helen? After all, Helen abandoned her husband and child<sup>604</sup> for the sake of an illicit love affair with Paris. Indeed, this comparison is precisely the one Aleksei Karenin, Anna's husband, makes in the third part of the novel. The observation Karenin makes is: "I cannot be made unhappy because a contemptible woman has committed a crime [...] to say nothing of historical instances, starting from Menelaos, recently revived in everyone's memory by *La Belle Hélène*".<sup>605</sup> There is a comical and even pathetic irony in this reflection. First, that it is Karenin himself comparing Anna to Helen ought to give us pause because he is not the most reliable judge of his wife's character.<sup>606</sup> Second, and related to the first point, is that the reference Karenin makes is not to Homer's Helen of Troy, but to the irreverent, comical opera *La belle Hélène*, composed by Jacques Offenbach; it had premiered in St Petersburg in 1869. Since neither the Homeric Helen nor Tolstoy's Anna are heroines of comedies, it seems that Karenin is mistaking the nature of the plot he finds himself in. Finally, Karenin is no Menelaos. Immediately after casting Anna as Helen and himself as Menelaos, a paragraph later, Karenin considers and rejects the possibility of a duel with his wife's lover; the act of duelling 'had particularly fascinated' him but, Karenin reassures himself, "no one expects it of me".<sup>607</sup>

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<sup>604</sup> Menelaos and Helen have a daughter, Hermione, to whom Helen refers in Book 3 of the *Iliad*, blaming herself for 'abandoning my marriage bed, my kinsmen and my child' (3.211).

<sup>605</sup> PSS 18, p. 295. See Appendix A.186 for original. In all subsequent citations of *Anna Karenina*, I will refer to the revised Constance Garnett translation: Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, trans. by Constance Garnett, ed. by Leonard J. Kent and Nina Berberova (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 2000). I use my own translation in this reference because I believe that, in this key passage, my translation is closer to the original. Notice that Karenin uses Tolstoyan terms in referring to the Iliadic narrative as 'historical'.

<sup>606</sup> Consider, for example, that Karenin is initially blind to the attraction between his wife and Vronskii that is obvious to everyone else; as he becomes more aware, the narrator makes clear that Karenin has *never before* considered the nature of his wife's character: 'He began to think of her, of what she was thinking and feeling. *For the first time* he pictured vividly to himself her personal life, her ideas, her desires [...]. It was the chasm he was afraid to peep into' (italics mine). Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 252.

<sup>607</sup> 'This horror had in his youth set him pondering on dueling, and picturing himself in a position in which he would have to expose his life to danger. Having attained success and an established position in the world, he had long ago forgotten this feeling [...]. [...] "I, the innocent person, should be the victim – killed or wounded [...] Don't I know perfectly well that my friends would never allow me to fight a duel – would never allow the life of a statesman, needed by Russia, to be exposed to danger? [...] A duel is quite irrational, and no one expects it of me."' Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, pp. 320-21.



The instant transition from recollecting Helen to contemplating a duel intended to avenge the dishonour implied by a wife's unfaithfulness is an overt reference to the single combat arranged between Menelaos and Paris in Book Three of the *Iliad*; Offenbach's opera does not include this duel. Although Karenin had been preoccupied with violence, he has never been capable of it; his rise in the political sphere ensured that he would never have to be. The elemental fear of physical harm has been overcome with the security of a modern role which permits even cowards to succeed (see footnote 18). The passage invites comparison between Karenin and Vronskii: '[T]he first idea that presented itself to Vronsky – that a duel was now inevitable [...] [H]e could not help picturing the challenge [...] and the duel itself'.<sup>608</sup> That Vronskii immediately leaps to the thought of violence shows that he is a much more likely candidate for the role of Menelaos than is Karenin. When the two men encounter one another in Part Four, the distinction between them is made obvious:

The gas jet threw its full light on [Karenin's] bloodless, sunken face [...]. Karenin's fixed, dull eyes were fastened upon Vronsky's face [...]. Vronsky went into the hall. His brows were scowling, and his eyes gleamed with a proud and angry light in them. 'What a position!' he thought. 'If he would fight, would stand up for his honor, I could act, could express my feelings; but this weakness or baseness...'.<sup>609</sup>

Vronskii, consistently described as virile and strong, is here associated with angry pride. He wants to 'stand up for his honour' (as Menelaos had done), but Karenin will not think of it. Karenin's administrative world depends on cerebral success and this effective disembodiment is reflected in his 'bloodless', 'dull' eyes. When Vronskii tells Anna that he cannot understand why Karenin will not challenge him, she agrees: "Oh, if I'd been in his place, I'd long ago have killed, have torn to pieces a wife like me".<sup>610</sup> Anna and Vronskii would respect Karenin were he to

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<sup>608</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 361

<sup>609</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 407-08.

<sup>610</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 412.

behave aggressively, as Menelaos had done. In Karenin's circle, rejecting violence is not odd, shameful, or weak, as Paris' hesitation to fight Menelaos in Book Three of the *Iliad* had seemed to be to Hektor and his companions. Karenin's world – which is also Anna's and Vronskii's world, although they do not seem to be aware of it – is *not* Iliadic: Anna and Vronskii cannot be Helen and Paris because they are confined to a realism that is more reminiscent of the *Odyssey's* interpersonal dynamics than the *Iliad's* grand violence.<sup>611</sup>

That Tolstoy had the *Odyssey* rather than the *Iliad* in mind when writing *Anna Karenina* is evidenced in the memoirs of his son, Sergei. Sergei describes how his father prompted him to read Greek excerpts from the *Odyssey* in 1876 or 1877, when Tolstoy was writing the novel: 'One day, he said to me: "In Homer, *karenon* means head. From this word, I got the name Karenin." Is this why he gave this surname to Anna's husband, since Karenin is a cerebral person, in him, reason prevails over heart, i.e. feeling?'.<sup>612</sup> This is possible. However, one may well ask why Tolstoy would give Karenin, who is one of the least Homeric characters imaginable, a surname drawn from Homer. Sergei's interpretation decontextualizes the connection his father had made, rendering it wholly abstract. This conventional explanation for Tolstoy's use of the Homeric term – that Karenin is cerebral – fails to account for the fact that, first, Karenin is not in the least a Homeric character. Second, Anna, too, shares Karenin's surname. Finally, Tolstoy took the term from the *Odyssey* only after encountering it in the narrative in specific and consistent ways. Consulting the text, we see that the *Odyssey's* mentions of *karē* ('head'; this must be the root of what Tolstoy renders *karenon*, which refers to a summit or an extremity) often refer to the Achaeans' long, flowing hair (*Od.* 1.90; 2.7; 2.408; 15.133), a feature that Tolstoy's novel emphasizes in Anna, not her husband. For example, Homer uses the word when Athena transforms a dirty and wet Odysseus into a beautified version of himself, paying particular attention to his hair:

[A]nd on his head [*karētos*] she arranged

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<sup>611</sup> Compare this to Morson's argument that, although Andrei Bolkonskii is a character from epic, cannot behave epically because he finds himself in a novelistic universe, Morson, *Hidden in Plain View*, p. 245.

<sup>612</sup> Sergei Tolstoy, 'Ob Otrazhenie Zhizni v "Anne Kareninoi,"' in *Iz Vospominanii* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1939) pp. 566-90 (p. 569). See Appendix A.187 for original.

the curling locks that hung down like hyacinthine petals. (*Od.* 6.230-31).

Consider how this passage, in which Odysseus uses his sexuality to influence the Phaiakian princess Nausikaa, recalls the description of Anna's hair at the ball in Part One, where Anna is at her most bewitching: 'On her head, among her black hair [...] was a little wreath of pansies [...] the little wilful tendrils of her curly hair [...] free about her neck and temples'.<sup>613</sup> Anna's curly hair is adorned with flowers, while Odysseus' curly hair is compared to flowers. When Odysseus vows vengeance on the suitors, *karē* appears again:

'[A]nother could strike the head [*karē*] from my shoulders  
if I did not come as an evil thing to all those people' (*Od.* 16.102-03)

Odysseus would rather face decapitation than fail to obtain revenge. This links *karē* not to having a head, as Sergei contends, but to literally losing it through violent means for the sake of revenge. Recall that Anna's story concludes with her extraordinarily violent beheading; we shall soon see how this relates to exacting revenge. Whether or not Tolstoy intended it, I argue that the Odyssean word he selected for the Karenins' surname has much more relevance for Anna than for her husband. We know from Sergei's recollections that Tolstoy had the *Odyssey* in view when composing his novel. In this chapter, I intend to show how and why the figure from the novel most closely linked with Homer's hero is Anna herself.

## ***Anna Karenina* and the *Odyssey*: Narrative Structure**

### *The Absentee Beginning: First Words and Prophecies*

*The Odyssey* begins without Odysseus. In a text named after the hero, the absence is striking. As the first four books of Homer's poem lack Odysseus, so does Odysseus' household in Ithaca. Following the hero's nearly twenty-year absence, the suitors of his wife, Penelope, have installed themselves in his home,

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<sup>613</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 92.

where disorder reigns. Amid the chaos, the hero's son, Telemachos, muses that only Odysseus could set things right, if he were there:

[Telemachos] sat among the suitors, his heart deep grieving within him,  
imagining in his mind his great father, how he might come back  
and all throughout the house might cause the suitors to scatter.

(*Od.* 1.114-16)

Since Odysseus is expected to restore order to a disrupted household and to fulfil the reader's or hearer's expectations, the anticipation of his appearance exists both at the level of narrative and meta-narrative. The act of hearing or reading reflects the state of suspense in Ithaca as everyone within and without the poem waits for Odysseus.<sup>614</sup> The first part of the narrative moves forward, then, by the need for reconstitution. Odysseus' appearance will initiate the re-stitching of what his absence had rent apart.

Similarly, *Anna Karenina* begins *in medias res*, conspicuously without Anna Karenina. The eponymous heroine is not introduced until the near-end of the first book, in Chapter Eighteen. The principal personages – Stiva, Dolly, Levin, Kitty, Vronskii – have all been introduced and the interrelationships between them established long before Anna makes her appearance. In the opening pages, due to Stepan Arkad'evich's affair with his children's governess, the Oblonskii household is infamously in a state of great confusion and the reader is made to anticipate the arrival of the heroine along with the household's inhabitants. Like Telemachos longing for Odysseus to restore order, the members of the Oblonskii house believe that only Anna can facilitate the necessary restoration of everything to its proper place. Stiva and his servant, Matvey, discuss Anna's arrival:

'Matvey, my sister Anna Arkadyevna will be here tomorrow', he said [...].

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<sup>614</sup> 'One of the most remarkable features of the epic is that its namesake hero does not appear until the fifth book. We have, however, been prepared for his appearance [...] so that when we finally see him, his appearance is enhanced [...] by prolonged anticipation'. William H. Race, 'First Appearances in the Odyssey', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 123 (1993), 79-107 (p. 91).

‘Thank God!’ said Matvey, showing by this response that he, like his master, realized the significance of this arrival – that is, that Anna Arkadyevna, the sister he was so fond of, might bring about a reconciliation between husband and wife.<sup>615</sup>

Robert Louis Jackson writes that the chapter describing Anna’s arrival is pivotal because it unifies the various narrative directions: ‘The unifying element in the chapter, indeed its axis, must be sought in Anna [...] Anna’s character is free to [...] introduce “order” in the field of personalities around her [...]’.<sup>616</sup> While Anna’s appearance is necessary both to the Oblonskiis and to the progression of the narrative, the design that it introduces is of the ‘interesting’ sort that renders families unhappy.<sup>617</sup> The irony is that Odysseus and Anna, both awaited so impatiently as harbingers of order, turn out to embody disruptive forces that push boundaries and incite chaos wherever they appear.

My view of Anna as an Odyssean inciter of chaos contrasts with Amy Mandelker’s; the latter describes Anna as a victim of repression from the moment she is introduced: ‘Anna enters the novel as a Victorian stereotype of the “Angel in the House”, making peace in the Oblonsky household, surrounded by a bevy of children’.<sup>618</sup> If, as I argue, Anna is disruptive rather than conciliatory, then the ‘peace’ she makes is superficial or false; being surrounded by children is no proof of love. This is evidenced in those very children’s attitude to Anna. After her performance at the ball (where she consciously seduced Kitty’s beloved suitor, Aleksei Vronskii), Anna prepares to leave Moscow. At this point, the Oblonskii children intuit the real Anna: ‘Whether it was that the children were fickle, or that they had acute senses, and felt that Anna was quite different that day from what she had been when they had taken such a fancy to her, that she was not now interested in them, – but they had abruptly dropped their play with their aunt, and

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<sup>615</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 7.

<sup>616</sup> Robert Louis Jackson, ‘Chance and Design: Anna Karenina’s First Meeting with Vronsky’ in *Close Encounters: Essays on Russian Literature*, ed. by Robert Louis Jackson (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press: 2013), pp. 81-93 (p. 83).

<sup>617</sup> Recall the famous opening line of *Anna Karenina*: ‘Happy families are all alike’. On this formulation, if Anna makes things interesting, she simultaneously and necessarily brings unhappiness.

<sup>618</sup> Amy Mandelker, ‘The Woman with a Shadow: Fables of Demon and Psyche in “Anna Karenina”,’ *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 24 (1990) 48-68, (p. 56).

their love for her, and were quite indifferent that she was going away'.<sup>619</sup> The children's 'acute senses' recognize what Dolly (and Mandelker) does not: Anna does not actually care for them and her display of affection had been a pose. Surely, lack of interest is not what children sense from a motherly, angelic, Victorian stereotype. From the outset, Anna is subtly shown to be manipulative and insincere. However, as I will discuss, it is precisely because Anna is not a conciliatory but a subversive figure, that she is able to function for others as a catalyst of transformation and growth.

The first words Odysseus utters in the *Odyssey* are addressed to the nymph Kalypso. She has just announced that she shall release him at last, but his response is characterized by disagreement:

So she spoke to him, but long-suffering great Odysseus  
Shuddered to hear, and spoke again in turn and addressed her:  
'Here is some other thing you devise, O goddess [...]  
I will not go aboard any raft without your good will' (*Od.* 5.173-77)

Odysseus' accusatory and stubborn 'I will not' to a goddess whose love he dares to reject immediately identifies him as self-willed and oppositional. From the chaos he enacts on the land of the Cyclops, where he wounds Poseidon's son, Polyphemos (9.381-390), to the disorder he brings to the land of the Laistrygones, described in Book Ten, to the brutal slaughter he enacts on Ithaca in Books Twenty-One and Twenty-Two, the poem confirms Odysseus' role as a harbinger of confusion and transformation. Thomas Van Nortwick argues: 'To each new place [Odysseus] brings uncertainty, disorder, and pain [...]. Odysseus is the principal agent of mortality and change'.<sup>620</sup> If we apply this observation to Anna, she, too, emerges as an agent of disorder – and therefore, change – from her first appearance.

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<sup>619</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 170.

<sup>620</sup> Van Nortwick, *Unknown Odysseus*, p. 48.

Focusing on Anna's first words in the novel – 'All the same, I don't agree with you'<sup>621</sup> (*'la vse taki s vami ne soglasna'*) – Jackson goes on to describe the sort of character the words reveal: 'Contradiction, conflict, tension, between opposite elements, are evident in Anna's nature from the outset [...] Almost her first word, *vse-taki*, [nevertheless], firmly establishes that singular quality of contrariety which will define, in a sense, Anna's whole stance before society'.<sup>622</sup> Anna's small protest, overheard by Vronskii, comes from 'outside the door' of the train compartment.<sup>623</sup> At this point in the narrative, we have seen and heard the heroine, but the narrator prolongs the anticipation of the reader's and Vronskii's actual meeting with her. This stalling facilitates our overhearing (along with Vronskii) of Anna's first, deeply significant phrase. Analysing Homer's introduction of Odysseus, Race describes the technical reason for such continuation of suspense: 'Odysseus' appearance is further delayed, for we are told that Hermes did not find him. [...] This is one of several significant absences in first appearances that permit uninhibited conversations to occur'.<sup>624</sup> I do not suggest that here, Tolstoy is deliberately adapting the technique Homer used to introduce Odysseus in order to introduce his own long-awaited, eponymous heroine. Nevertheless, the use of this technique, at precisely the same narrative juncture (introduction of the hero/heroine) when Tolstoy was deeply involved in re-reading the *Odyssey*, supports my reading of *Anna Karenina* as Odyssean at the level of narrative design.

To summarize, the first appearances of Anna and Odysseus are delayed, and the initial chapters of *Anna Karenina* and the *Odyssey* are marked by their heroes' conspicuous absence. The expectation that each will function as restorer of order is subtly disappointed by the first words they utter – words of protest. This disappointment is concretized when the introduction to each concludes with a sort of prophecy that anticipates the destruction and suffering that both will endure and beget. Kalypso warns Odysseus that his journey will inaugurate tragedy:

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<sup>621</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 73. See also, *PSS* 18, p. 67.

<sup>622</sup> Jackson, 'Chance and Design', p. 83.

<sup>623</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 73.

<sup>624</sup> Race, 'First Appearances', p. 91.

'[I]f only you knew in your own heart how many hardships  
you were fated to undergo before getting back to your country'  
(*Od.* 5.206-7)

Scholars have written about Anna's trust in omens,<sup>625</sup> but regardless of whether the narrator takes supernatural faith seriously or not, the prophecies Anna receives turn out to be eerily accurate. Soon after her introduction in the novel, Anna is shaken by the 'omen of evil' presaged by a peasant's death beneath the wheels of the train.<sup>626</sup> The Odyssean lens shows that, from her entry into the narrative, Anna is no ideal 'Angel in the House', but a wilful and disruptive agent whose associated prophecy, like Kalypso's warning, alerts her audience to expect calamity.

### *The Subterranean Peripeteia*

In this section, I will compare the narrative centre of the *Odyssey* and *Anna Karenina*. The former locates its hero on Kalypso's island in Book Five, but that is not how he orders his own story. When Odysseus recounts his travels on Scheria, he groups the narrative around a centre that contains the *katabasis*, or descent into the underworld, of Book Eleven. Odysseus' search for the prophet Teiresias in Hades and subsequent return from the underworld is a 'psychic experience [...]'. This return of the hero from the realm of darkness and death into the realm of light and life is a *journey of a soul*.<sup>627</sup> In the underworld, Teiresias foretells that after Odysseus returns to Ithaca, it is not his fate to remain at home but to 'go on a journey' (11.121) to an unfamiliar land. Odysseus reports that, when he was surrounded by the phantoms of the dead, the ghost of the hero Herakles addressed him:

"Unhappy man, are you too leading some wretched destiny [...]?"

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<sup>625</sup> R.L.P. Jackson, 'Defining Moments in Anna Karenina', *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 43 (2014), 16-38 (p. 31).

<sup>626</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 115

<sup>627</sup> Gregory Nagy, 'The Mind of Odysseus in the Homeric Odyssey' in *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours*, pp. 296-313 (p. 307).



[T]he hordes of the dead men gathered about me  
with inhuman clamor, and green fear took hold of me' (*Od.* 11.617-33)

Stamatia Dova defines *katabasis* as follows: 'The hero descends with divine assistance to the underworld where he performs an important task, has significant encounters with ghosts, and comes back alive to proceed successfully with the rest of his endeavors'.<sup>628</sup> The experience characterizes 'an individual seeking the truth about his own journey before and after death'.<sup>629</sup> Symbolically, Odysseus died, received wisdom, and was reborn. The journey 'constitutes a violation of the established order of things'<sup>630</sup> not only because Odysseus returned from death but also because the Odysseus that emerges from Hades is different from the one that descended there. Privy to knowledge ordinarily denied to humans, he has gained insight: he is not fated to remain at home, and his is, in Herakles' words, a 'wretched destiny'.

Almost precisely at the half-way point of *Anna Karenina*, at the end of Part Four, Anna nearly dies in childbirth. Despite the worst expectations of Vronskii, Karenin, and medical professionals – 'She is dying. The doctors say there is no hope'<sup>631</sup> – Anna survives. As she falls into delirium, however, she experiences preternatural insight into her husband's true nature and her own: "You say he won't forgive me, because you don't know him. No one knows him. I'm the only one [...]. Now I understand, I understand it all, I see it all!"<sup>632</sup> In the throes of fever, Anna 'sees' something else, too: "They've come again; why don't they go away?... Oh, take these cloaks off me!"<sup>633</sup> ('cloaks' – '*shuby*' – can be also correctly translated as 'furs'). It is not the case that Anna is simply hallucinating since she expresses moral truths about herself and her husband and prophecies accurately that, when she recovers, she will not remain at home but will journey to Italy: "And I'll go to

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<sup>628</sup> Stamatia Dova, *Greek Heroes in and Out of Hades* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), p. 1.

<sup>629</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>630</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>631</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 469.

<sup>632</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 470.

<sup>633</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 471. *PSS* 18 p. 434. See Appendix A.188 for original.

Rome; there's a wilderness, and there I shall be no trouble to any one".<sup>634</sup> Who are the mysterious 'they' that surround Anna and seem to be throwing 'cloaks' or 'furs' upon her? Anna's phantasmagorical vision strongly resonates with that of Odysseus, who related how 'the hordes of dead men gathered about' after the ghost of Herakles lamented Odysseus' 'wretched' life.

If we regard Anna's near-death as a form of Odyssean *katabasis*, then she has (or thinks she has) temporarily crossed into a spiritual world where she is privy to knowledge not accessible to ordinary sight and thought. The removal of 'cloaks' or 'furs' signifies awakening, perhaps from an animal state to a more transcendent one. Anna is supernaturally assisted during her journey and, emerging from the *katabasis*, she will be radically transformed. Pietro Pucci's view of Odysseus' psychic transformations as intimately linked with death is helpful in our Odyssean reading of Anna's re-emergence from death:

Odysseus arrives in a new situation by passing through unconsciousness, or by himself being at the margin of the world of consciousness, his life as a character undergoes a crisis [...]. Death grasps him and coexists with his life [...]. His previous self is deeply altered. Here too it is not mere chance that a physical change, a deep transformation in his body, momentarily takes place.<sup>635</sup>

As an Odyssean figure, the physical strain of giving birth ushers in Anna's psychic transformation, and a part of her symbolically dies. The Anna that returns from the 'underworld' to fulfil her near-death prophecy of fleeing to Italy is a profoundly different woman. That this passage is at the very centre of the novel suggests that, like Odysseus' *katabasis*, it anchors Anna's narrative at its most significant turning point. We will discuss how the *katabasis* changes Anna in the section that focuses on character. For now, as we consider narrative design elements, it is enough to note that reading her illness as Odyssean signifies a transformation.

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<sup>634</sup> Ibid.

<sup>635</sup> Pietro Pucci, *Odysseus Polutropos: Intertextual Readings in the Odyssey and the Iliad* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 15.

## *Vengeful Ends*

*The Odyssey* ends with extreme, for some critics even gratuitous, violence inflicted upon Penelope's suitors and the female slaves who committed the transgression of sleeping with the suitors.<sup>636</sup> Whether Odysseus is justified in his murders or not, he enacts vengeance while also functioning as the object of the gods' vengeance, for he and his men have broken multiple divine taboos (wounding Polyphemos and consuming the Oxen of the Sun). We can perhaps even suggest that, in some sense, Odysseus brought the injustice of the suitors onto himself by staying away from home for so long. On the other hand, the vengeance of the gods against the suitors, who are in violation of the law of hospitality, is enacted through Odysseus. He is a sort of conduit for both divine and human justice.

Here, it is instructive to read Tolstoy's famous epigraph to *Anna Karenina* side-by-side with the first words spoken by Zeus in the first book of the *Odyssey*. The novel's epigraph consists of God's statement in Romans 12.19 of the *Bible* (and has puzzled many critics):<sup>637</sup>

Vengeance is mine, I will repay.<sup>638</sup>

Compare Zeus in the *Odyssey*:

'Oh for shame, how the mortals put the blame  
upon us  
gods, for they say evils come from us, but it is  
they, rather,  
who by their own recklessness win sorrow

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<sup>636</sup> See, for example, Laurel Fulkerson, 'Epic Ways of Killing a Woman: Gender and Transgression in "Odyssey" 22.465-72', *The Classical Journal*, 97.4 (2002), 335-50 (p. 335). Richmond Lattimore reflects in the introduction to his translation of the *Odyssey* that the deaths of the suitors and slave women 'seemed excessive to me. I do not know how it seemed to Homer... [Homer] may have conceived some liking for his own creatures, and put off, as long as he could, their necessary slaughter'. Richmond Lattimore, 'Introduction' in *The Odyssey of Homer*, p. x.

<sup>637</sup> Morson, *Anna Karenina in Our Time*, p. 127.

<sup>638</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, epigraph.

beyond what is given,  
as now lately, beyond what was given, Aigisthos  
married the wife of Atreus' son [...]  
though he knew it was sheer destruction [...]  
for vengeance would come on him from Orestes'. (*Od.* 1.33-40)<sup>639</sup>

In the case of the *Odyssey* and *Anna Karenina*, the introduction to the work invokes the words of God or a god to anticipate the texts' violent conclusions. Before he commences his slaughters of the suitors and the slaves, Odysseus restates Zeus' words regarding vengeance that is justly visited upon violators of both divine and human law:

'[F]earing  
neither the immortal gods who hold the wide heaven,  
nor any resentment sprung from men to be yours in the future.  
Now upon all of you the terms of destruction are fastened'. (*Od.* 22.39-41)

Let us consider the epigraph to *Anna Karenina* in light of the Homeric position that just destruction properly comes from the gods by means of humans. Morson writes that Tolstoy's epigraph to *Anna Karenina* is polarizing because it is so typically read as condemning either Anna or the society that condemns her: 'If one breaks the law of God or commits acts that go against the nature of things, then, by an inner logic, one will meet destruction [...]. [But] vengeance belongs to God. Taken this way, the epigraph seems to fault not Anna but the society that condemns her'.<sup>640</sup> Morson then introduces a third possibility, relevant for our Odyssean reading: 'It is as if *she* [Anna] were saying the words of the epigraph'.<sup>641</sup> Approaching the vengeance exacted in the novel from an Odyssean perspective, both the traditional and Morson's reading of the epigraph are valid: Anna initiates

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<sup>639</sup> Zeus refers to Aegisthus, who had seduced Clytemnestra, queen of Mycenae, and killed her husband, Agamemnon, thus incurring the rage of the gods and the death of both lovers at the hands of Orestes, Clytemnestra's and Agamemnon's son. The connection between (a woman's) unfaithfulness and the death it earns from divine sources is explicit and shows strong links with the epigraph of *Anna Karenina*.

<sup>640</sup> Morson, *Seeing More Wisely*, p. 127.

<sup>641</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130

vengeance as she suffers vengeance for her transgression. Put differently, revenge is enacted by humans who are acting on behalf of the gods.

Although Anna acts violently against herself in great part to make others suffer, her action is simultaneously motivated by her sense of shame:

‘Yes, to die!... [A]nd my awful shame, it will all be saved by death. To die! and he will feel remorse [...] he will suffer on my account’.<sup>642</sup>

Consider that the brutal violence Odysseus inflicts on the suitors and the slaves involves dismemberment and mutilation, with the women targeted specifically for the dishonour to Odysseus, their master, implied in their sexual acts. Odysseus must murder the women because, if he does not, he would sustain societal shame, and Telemachos advises his father:

‘I would not take away the lives of these creatures by any clean death [...]’.

[...] [T]heir heads were all in a line, and each had her neck caught fast in a noose, so that their death would be most pitiful. (*Od.* 22.462-71)

Anna’s death is similarly ‘unclean’ in its gruesomeness: she is decapitated, and her body is disfigured. Like Odysseus and the slave women, Anna is guilty of transgressing against both human and divine law. However, in a self-referential circle, by acting as the agent of her own destruction, Anna’s death becomes active revenge. In literally taking punishment into her own hands and wielding it as an instrument of vengeance against others even as she inflicts it upon her body, we can read Anna as refiguring the fates of both Odysseus *and* his female slaves, simultaneously active and passive, enacting and enduring violence because of sexual shame.

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<sup>642</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 842.

Some critics have agreed with Lattimore that the vengeance of Odysseus goes too far, suggesting that Odysseus, too, is not only enacting but suffering the consequences of divine vengeance: 'In a sense, the Odyssean Odysseus is bound even more tightly to the revenge theme than is the Iliadic Achilles [...]. [T]he hero incurs nemesis for failing to spare his people despite thematic justification and the fact that he acts [...] with the approval of the gods'.<sup>643</sup> On our Odyssean reading, Anna's revenge-suicide is ethically ambiguous for precisely the same reason that Odysseus' revenge-murder is ethically ambiguous: the punishment is approved of by the gods (Anna and Vronskii have transgressed) and yet it demonstrates a selfish failure to 'spare the people'. By killing herself, Anna abandons her children and inflicts enormous suffering on Vronskii, who will effectively commit suicide at the end of the novel.

To summarize, I am not suggesting that Anna's suicide is qualitatively like Odysseus' slaughters. Rather, I wish to highlight that both Homer's and Tolstoy's texts conclude with the gruesome fulfilment of vengeance both human and divine by means of destroying the sexually transgressive body. Vengeance motivates both Anna and Odysseus; yet, according to the introductory words from the gods in both texts, it ought to properly be reserved for a higher power. This creates a state of unresolvable tension: when humans enact divine vengeance, they both cause and endure tremendous suffering. This renders them ambiguous agents of justice.

### *And Violent Ends*

Following Anna's suicide, Vronskii enlists in the Serbian war against Turkey. The rationale for the novel's sudden inclusion of the 1876 Serbian-Turkish war is not obvious; it seems to have no relation to the novel as a whole. Prior to the ending, the war is mentioned exactly once in the entire, lengthy text, in which its importance is undermined by juxtaposing its destructiveness with the generative theme of giving birth. When Levin runs for the doctor during his wife's labour, he is

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<sup>643</sup> Jim Marks, *Zeus in the Odyssey* (Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2008), p. 67.

distressed because the doctor, who has assisted hundreds of births, is taking his time:

‘So you’ll come immediately?’ said Levin [...].

‘In an hour’s time’.

‘Oh, for mercy’s sake!’

‘Well, let me drink my coffee, anyway.’

The doctor started upon his coffee. Both were silent.

‘The Turks are really getting beaten, though. Did you read yesterday’s telegram?’ said the doctor, munching some roll.

‘No, I can’t stand it!’ said Levin, jumping up.<sup>644</sup>

This passage’s comic effect derives from the irrelevance of the war compared with the immensity of what is occupying both Levin’s and the reader’s thoughts. At this point in the narrative, Levin is much more invested in the imminent arrival of his baby than in whether the Turks were beaten. The previous chapters have dwelt on Kitty’s pregnancy, with no mention of the war, and the reader shares Levin’s impatience with the doctor’s remark.

The emphasis on familial concerns, shifting historical and national interests into the background, is seen as the defining feature of *Anna Karenina*, acknowledged by critics as the source of the text’s thematic difference from *War and Peace*.<sup>645</sup> If what Tolstoy termed ‘the idea of the family’ is the focus of the text, why does it conclude with a historical war? It cannot simply be a plot device to get rid of Vronskii, not least because, in becoming the setting for his death, the war with Turkey loses entirely its comparative unimportance and takes on a tragic significance. If we apply an Odyssean lens to the introduction of the war, I suggest that it serves to align *Anna Karenina* with *War and Peace*, the *Iliad*, and the Homeric epic tradition by shifting from drama to historical ‘epic’ events that the first generations of Tolstoy’s readers would personally remember. As discussed in this

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<sup>644</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 804.

<sup>645</sup> Tatiana Kuzmic, *Adulterous Nations: Family Politics and National Anxiety in the European Novel* (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 2016), p. 92.

chapter's opening, the shift from battlefield to home life is observable in the *Odyssey*, which focuses on the actions of a single man and his family rather than on the fate of kingdoms, as the *Iliad* had been. However, at the end of the poem, Odysseus demonstrates his heroic nature in a violent battle against the suitors; the battle is described in grand, Iliadic terms, with Odysseus taking on the role of a sort of updated Achilles.<sup>646</sup> Odysseus' violence is the means by which 'the hero simultaneously declares his identity and brings 'Iliadic' combat back into the epic'.<sup>647</sup> Thus, the *Odyssey* refers to its predecessor to validate and ensure its position beside the *Iliad* as a song of the *klea andrōn*, 'the glories of men'.

Our Odyssean reading reveals that the Serbian-Turkish war may have been introduced as a nod to *War and Peace* for the purpose of locating *Anna Karenina* along a historical continuum that has both epic scope and national relevance. The theme of the telegraphed war update that Levin had earlier dismissed is resurrected almost verbatim in a conversation between Sergei Ivanovich and an anonymous woman. This time, however, the Turks' loss is not irrelevant:

'What do you say to today's telegram? Beaten the Turks again.'  
'Yes, so I saw', answered Sergei Ivanovich. They were speaking of the last telegram stating that the Turks had been for three days in succession beaten at all points and put to flight, and that tomorrow a decisive engagement was expected.<sup>648</sup>

Except for the new technology of telegrams, this exchange reads like many exchanges in *War and Peace*, the sole interest of which lies in the subject of winning or losing battles, which form part of a larger national narrative. With the introduction of the war, the ending of the novel assumes aspects that are 'serious' in the sense that they traditionally form the subject matter of history books rather than novels, and heralds Tolstoy's return to the practice of *istoriia-iskusstvo*. This

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<sup>646</sup> Pucci, *Odysseus Polutropos*, p. 147.

<sup>647</sup> Michael N. Nagler, 'Odysseus: The Proem and the Problem', in *Classical Antiquity*, 9 (1990) 335-56 (p. 351).

<sup>648</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 873.



movement from fictionalized human experience to historical event grants Anna's narrative distinctively Russian relevance along with epic proportion, particularly if we consider that the Russian nation is a *she* ('*ona*'). Tatiana Kuzmic describes a version of this perspective: 'Through the framework of gendered nations, Anna's dismembered body becomes symbolic of Tolstoy's indictment of the war that occupies the end of the novel [...]. [I] compare the breaking of family boundaries through the act of adultery with the breaking of national boundaries through the act of war'.<sup>649</sup>

Of course, it is not Anna but Vronskii who ends on the field of battle, but the links I emphasize in this section exist at the level of narrative design, not character. In other words, what is important here is that if Tolstoy's novel concludes with epic violence for the same reasons the *Odyssey* concludes with epic violence, regardless of the individual personage responsible for it, then it invokes the *Iliad* in both cases. In its shift from peace to war, *Anna Karenina*, like the *Odyssey*, concludes with martial violence, which serves to legitimize each text by widening the scope from individual to epic narrative. The overall design of Tolstoy's text follows that of Homer's in its absentee beginning, underworldly middle, and vengeful conclusion that is related to Iliadic epic. In partaking of historical epic, Anna's story is not solely about a victim (or initiator) of personal tragedy but participates in a monumental, national history.

### **Character: *Anna Polutropos***

Homer's Odysseus is defined perhaps more than anything else by his identity as *polutropos*, or 'much-turning/much-turned' (*Od.* 1.1). This ineffable term has been rendered in multiple ways: 'crafty', 'shrewd', or, as in Lattimore, 'many ways'; recently, Emily Wilson rendered the term 'complicated'.<sup>650</sup> Pietro Pucci describes *polutropos* as 'a word that qualifies the whole literal and literary essence of

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<sup>649</sup> Kuzmic, 'Adulterous Nations', p. 93.

<sup>650</sup> Wilson's translation of the *Odyssey* begins thus: 'Tell me about a complicated man'. Homer, *The Odyssey* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2017).

Odysseus, since it evokes or names at once his many travels, his many ruses, and his many rhetorical skills'.<sup>651</sup> In other words, the many turns of Odysseus themselves take many turns. In this section, I explore the nature of the trickster as described by Lewis Hyde and discuss how an Odyssean reading of Anna's character can help us see her as participating in the trickster archetype.

The hero is a cunning, articulate, and skilful deceiver, conjuring stories about himself which others usually believe. He is a wanderer and Homer's audience is privy to the people and places he encounters. Weary of journeying yet taking pleasure in it, Odysseus is a family man who longs for his wife and son yet knows exactly how to use his sexuality to manipulate women. Often, he is disguised and therefore not himself. However, Van Nortwick argues that Odysseus' disguises are not a deviation from his identity but rather its most definitive proof: Odysseus lies because he is himself.<sup>652</sup> Only his wife, Penelope, seems to truly know him, and she knows an Odysseus who existed long before the *Odyssey's* narrative began and whom its readers or hearers will never meet. We can trust her account as much as any other, which is to say that the 'real' Odysseus – if he exists at all – remains a subject for interpretation.

If we apply these characteristics of Odysseus to Anna Karenina, a motivation for Anna's deceitful behaviour emerges which is qualitatively different from the two alternatives offered by Morson; he argues that readers and critics misinterpret Anna as a victim of romance who lies to secure a passionate love. Morson suggests that Anna teaches herself to lie after meeting Vronskii because she seeks a romantic life that is unrealistic, and which Tolstoy wishes us to regard as the sort of everyday evil that must be overcome.<sup>653</sup> If Anna is Odyssean, however, she is neither victimized nor malicious, but simply tricky. She is, in other words, *polutropos* – much-turning. It is in her nature to deceive, and she is most herself when she is lying. On this reading, we ought not assume that Karenin's description of Anna as allegedly open and honest<sup>654</sup> – an Anna who exists before *Anna Karenina* begins and whom readers certainly never encounter – is more accurate

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<sup>651</sup> Pietro Pucci, *Odysseus Polutropos*, p. 24.

<sup>652</sup> Van Nortwick, *The Unknown Odysseus*, p. 33.

<sup>653</sup> Gary Saul Morson, *Anna Karenina in Our Time*, pp. 55-140.

<sup>654</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 246.

than Penelope's description of her own wandering husband. Despite Karenin's protestations to the contrary, Anna's reputation as skilled manipulator and persuasive rhetorician precedes her. As we have seen, the novel opens with the expectation that she will remedy the crisis in the Oblonskii household; Anna can live up to this reputation because she knows exactly what to say and how to say it, even if it is not true. She tells Dolly:

'What touched me most' (and here Anna guessed what would touch Dolly most) 'he's tortured by two things: that he's ashamed for the children's sake, and that, loving you—yes, yes, loving you beyond everything on earth', she hurriedly interrupted Dolly, who would have answered – 'he has hurt you, pierced you to the heart'.<sup>655</sup>

It is difficult to imagine Stiva being ashamed for the children's sake, especially since we know that he is not ashamed at all, but whether he told Anna so does not matter. Anna rushes to complete her sentence before Dolly can interrupt because it is a formula and must be said all at once for full effectiveness; she utters the phrase because she knows it will work, and it does. Afterward, we see her deceive Kitty regarding her attendance at balls<sup>656</sup> (I will discuss this in detail below) and Dolly's children regard her display of interest in them as false, so it is almost impossible that Anna was transformed into an effective dissimulator only upon meeting Vronskii. Anna exhibits an epithet that Homer attributed to Odysseus: *polumētis* (*Od.* 4.763, 20.36) 'very cunning' or 'crafty' or, as Lattimore has it, 'resourceful'.

In an analysis of the trickster archetype, Lewis Hyde finds that trickery involves, above all, blurring and crossing of boundaries:

Every group has its edge, its sense of in and out, and trickster is always there, at the gates of the city and the gates of life, making sure there is commerce. He also attends the internal boundaries by which groups articulate their social life [...] right and wrong, sacred and profane, clean and

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<sup>655</sup> Ibid, p. 81.

<sup>656</sup> Ibid, p. 85.

dirty, male and female, young and old, living and dead – and in every case trickster will cross the line and confuse the distinction.<sup>657</sup>

According to Hyde's formulation, the trickster is at ease with ambiguity and moves fluidly across spaces, social groups, and moral states. If we apply this category to Anna, or rather apply Anna to this category, her disruption of boundaries becomes evident as she passes and trespasses across multiple socio-culturally constructed spaces and their opposites. We see her shift between three distinct social groups in St Petersburg and the seemingly antithetical categories of faithful and disloyal wife; loyal and neglectful mother; wife and mistress; domestic concerns and worldly travel; socially acceptable behaviour and its opposite; ultimate social insider and ostracized outsider; truth and falsehood; shame and shamelessness; and most dramatically, between life and death. In each case, Anna's position forces a question regarding the naturalness, inevitability, or legitimacy of the boundary she troubles. Why, for example, should Princess Betsy be welcome in society despite her disloyalty to her husband, when Anna is not? Why should Vronskii be permitted to attend social events when Anna is not?

Hyde goes on to describe the trickster as one who can organize and shape events along ethically atypical lines which leads to unpredictable consequences: 'Where someone's sense of honorable behavior has left him unable to act, trickster will appear to suggest an amoral action, something right or wrong that will get life going again'.<sup>658</sup> To 'get life going again' is Anna's narrative function in the text, and it is exactly what Stiva waits for her to do at the outset of the novel. Dolly's sense of honourable behaviour has left her unable to act, and Anna appears for the precise purpose of reconciling the couple by means of amoral deceitfulness. Where Kitty's mother's sense of honourable behaviour has caused her to await in agitation what she expects will be Vronskii's imminent proposal, Anna's seduction of Vronskii accomplishes the decisive severing of these expectations and ushers the forward movement of events. When Karenin's sense of honourable behaviour paralyzes

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<sup>657</sup> Hyde, *Trickster*, p. 10.

<sup>658</sup> Hyde, *Trickster*, p. 11.

him in the unsustainable position of having forgiven his wife but unable to move forward socially because of it, Anna's sudden flight to Rome opens for him the course his life will take. When Vronskii's sense of honourable behaviour keeps him in tormented suspense about whether he will be married and have children, Anna's amoral decisions to consider a divorce or use birth control determine his fate. In each case, Anna herself occupies a morally ambiguous space where she has power to direct other people's lives and her interventions 'get life going' again, sometimes for better, usually for worse.

One of the most defining features of the trickster is the capacity to lie 'creatively', as Hyde terms it: 'Trickster discovers creative fabulation, feigning, and fibbing, the playful construction of fictive worlds. It is Trickster who invents the gratuitous untruth'.<sup>659</sup> A tricky untruth is gratuitous because, often, it does not serve any purpose at all. Like Odysseus, Anna lies even when she does not need to, simply for the pleasure it gives herself and others. We see her artfully assume disguises, often in a way that is joyful and playful, eliciting pleasure in those who read her mask:

She drew a long face, and half-closing her eyes, quickly transformed her expression, folded her hands, and Vronsky suddenly saw in her beautiful face the very expression with which Alexey Alexandrovitch had bowed to him. He smiled, while she laughed gaily, with that sweet, deep laugh, which was one of her greatest charms.<sup>660</sup>

A mutual joy in pretending exists between Anna and her closest friend, Betsy Tverskaia. In a brief passage which gives us insight into Anna's dishonesty, she responds to Betsy's feigned ignorance of her relation to Vronskii with a mask of indifference, and the reciprocal deceitfulness is experienced as pleasurable for its own sake:

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<sup>659</sup> Ibid, p. 37

<sup>660</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 411.

Anna knew that Betsy knew everything, but, hearing how she spoke of Vronsky before her, she almost felt persuaded for a minute that she knew nothing.

'Ah!' said Anna indifferently, as though not greatly interested in the matter [...].

This playing with words, this hiding of a secret, had a great fascination for Anna [...]. And it was not the necessity of concealment, not the aim with which the concealment was contrived, but the process of concealment itself which attracted her.<sup>661</sup>

This is deliberate theatre, with each player consciously participating in the façade. Part of the reason Anna lies is very simple: like all tricksters, she likes lying. Successful deception is an implicitly creative process, and the theatrical subversion of reality facilitates a *jouissance* that can be enjoyed for its own sake. When Odysseus lies to Poseidon's son, Polyphemos, pretending to be the aptly named Nobody, he is of course doing so because it will ensure the survival of himself and his crew members, but Odysseus also finds a playful joy in the ruse:

'[T]hen I spoke to him, and my words were full of beguilement [...]  
[A]nd the heart within me  
laughed over how my name and my perfect planning had fooled him'  
(*Od.* 9:363-414).

However, lying for the trickster is not always gratuitous. Hyde defines the trickster's lies as special because they transcend the elementary dichotomy of true and false. The deceits of the trickster, for Hyde, move beyond contradiction to a higher ground of synthesis: 'The problem is to make a "lie" that cancels the opposition and so holds the possibility of new worlds'.<sup>662</sup>

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<sup>661</sup> Ibid, p. 339.

<sup>662</sup> Hyde, *Trickster*, p. 52.

### *But First, Knowledge*

The quest for new worlds presupposes a quest for knowledge, and both Anna and Odysseus are curious seekers of both. This section is informed by Hyde's formulation of the trickster's creation of new worlds and will address the trickster's strong impulse toward knowledge and truth, particularly knowledge of others. While playing her game of pretend with Betsy, Anna offers a revelatory glimpse into her own nature which her friend dismisses. When Betsy suggests that Anna is too prone to solemnity, Anna responds incongruously:

'Possibly you are inclined to look at things too tragically'.

'How I should like to know other people just as I know myself!' said Anna, seriously and dreamily. 'Am I worse than other people, or better? I think I'm worse'.

'*Enfant terrible, enfant terrible!*' repeated Betsy.<sup>663</sup>

Betsy, who is a skilled rhetorician herself, strives to keep the conversation light precisely because Anna's remark is not. 'Dreamy', as Garnett renders it, does not quite capture Anna's tone. Anna is speaking 'seriously and thoughtfully' ('*serëzno i zadumchivo*'<sup>664</sup>) or reflectively. This alerts us that in this instance, Anna means – or thinks she means – what she says, and what she says is both profound and weighty. Anna wants insight into others that equals her insight into herself; the assumption here is that Anna's self-perception is quite deep. She *is* 'worse' than other people in the conventionally moral sense of the term. This moral intuition and curiosity about the experience of others was articulated by Anna the last time she was at Betsy's, in Part Two of the novel. Discoursing on the nature of love, Betsy asks Anna's opinion:

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<sup>663</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 341.

<sup>664</sup> *PSS* 18, p. 315.

'I think', said Anna, playing with the glove she had taken off, 'I think... of so many men, so many minds, certainly so many hearts, so many kinds of love'.

Vronsky was gazing at Anna, and [...] sighed as after a danger escaped when she uttered these words.<sup>665</sup>

Vronskii is relieved because Anna's tolerance for multiple perspectives implies a moral flexibility; it is likely for this very flexibility that Anna regards herself as 'worse' than others. Read in a wider context, however, it reinforces that Anna is interested in the interiority of others, which we know she wishes to understand. Her observation comes just sentences after she has excused herself for arriving late because she was listening to a missionary describe life in India. Anna's hunger for knowledge of others is not only poetic, but intellectual and even, we can say, anthropological. Her words about 'so many men, so many minds' resonate very closely with the third line of the *Odyssey* which refers to its hero's travels thus: 'Many were they whose cities he saw, whose minds he learned of'. (*Od.* 1.3)

Odysseus has encountered the minds of others by means of wandering and trickery, but it is his intellectual curiosity that motivates these encounters. Pauline Nugent reads his temptation to hear the Sirens' song in Book Twelve as hunger for knowledge:

[T]hat attraction [of knowledge] proved to be an irresistible allurement for the Greek hero whose intellectual inquisitiveness surpassed even that of his countrymen [...]. The encounter with the Sirens reflects this same unfulfilled desire for more: more knowledge, more experience, complete and profound fulfillment.<sup>666</sup>

This, I argue, is the deeper motivation for Anna's lies: she seeks expansive knowledge of the world and the people in it. Like Odysseus particularly and like

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<sup>665</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 243.

<sup>666</sup> Pauline Nugent, 'The Sounds of Sirens; "Odyssey" 12.184-91', *College Literature*, 35 (2008), 45-54 (pp. 50-53).



tricksters generally, Anna attempts to obtain knowledge not only via passive learning (listening to the missionary describe India, reading English novels) but also psychosomatically, by actively modelling alternative ways of behaving, thinking, and living. Perhaps the most foundational of these alternatives, since it provides the platform for the ones that will follow, involves a conscious shift from traditionally feminine modes of being.

*So Unfeminine: "Madame Karenina, however, did not wait"*

The trickster figure is typically male,<sup>667</sup> and this tendency is an appropriate place to begin analysing Anna's pursuit of otherness because one of the boundaries she consistently troubles – and thereby undermines to some extent – is gender. The boundary is important because it underwrites much of the difficulty in reading Anna as a trickster figure. This subsection will focus entirely on Anna and the way her behaviour disrupts traditional gender boundaries for the purpose of demonstrating that, precisely because she is a woman, the material of gender she subverts simultaneously separates her from and unites her with the male Odysseus.

As discussed above, Anna's first words in the novel are oppositional as she argues for the 'feminine' point of view.<sup>668</sup> We watch her through Vronskii's eyes as she steps outside the train compartment to meet her brother, and then later as she shakes Vronskii's hand: 'Madame Karenina, however, did not wait for her brother, but catching sight of him she stepped out with her light, resolute step [...] with a gesture that struck Vronsky by its decision and grace, she flung her arm around his neck'.<sup>669</sup> A moment later, Vronskii is being introduced to Anna: 'Madame Karenina stood [...] holding herself very erect [...] He pressed the little hand she gave him, and was delighted [...] by the energetic squeeze with which she freely and

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<sup>667</sup> Consider Hyde's admission: 'I have been speaking of trickster as 'he' because all the regularly discussed figures are male'. Hyde, *Trickster*, p. 11.

<sup>668</sup> The exact exchange Vronskii overhears consists of an unknown gentleman remarking, 'It's the Petersburg view, madame', to which Anna responds, 'Not Petersburg, but simply feminine'. Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 109. Consider that, in a manuscript draft of this exchange, Anna says: 'Not Petersburg, but human' ('*Ne Piterburgskii, a chelovecheskii*'), PSS 20, p. 152.

<sup>669</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 73.

vigorously shook his hand'.<sup>670</sup> Crossing the literal threshold of the train's steps, Anna crosses the symbolic threshold of typical feminine behaviour, immediately after clarifying that she is, indeed, an embodiment of the feminine position. We, along with Vronskii, are invited to notice that it is unusual for a woman to leave a carriage without waiting to be fetched by her male escort, as Vronskii's mother does. The adjectives that describe Anna's actions – resolute, decisive, erect, energetic, free, vigorous – are stereotypically masculine, and yet are not presented as defects. Anna, in other words, can transform what is usually regarded as a feminine flaw into an attractive attribute.

After confessing her affair to her husband, Anna writes Vronskii a letter and laments its laconic quality: "I have told my husband," she wrote, and sat there a long while unable to write more. It was so coarse, so unfeminine'.<sup>671</sup> This is Anna's observation, not the narrator's. Anna not only moves, speaks, and takes initiative in conventionally unfeminine ways, but she also communicates in a way she herself believes is unfeminine. As she travels to St. Petersburg, Anna reads a novel (the identity of which has generated some interest)<sup>672</sup> and finds herself identifying with the assertive and liberal behaviour of the male as well as the female protagonists:

It was distasteful to her to read, that is, to follow the reflection of other people's lives. She had too great a desire to live herself. If she read that the heroine of the novel was nursing a sick man, she longed to move with noiseless steps about the room of a sick man; if she read of a member of Parliament making a speech, she longed to be delivering the speech; if she read of how Lady Mary had ridden after the hounds, and had provoked her sister-in-law, and had surprised everyone by her boldness, she too wished to be doing the same [...]. Anna was feeling a desire to go with [the hero] to the [English] estate.<sup>673</sup>

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<sup>670</sup> Ibid, pp. 74-75.

<sup>671</sup> Ibid, p. 513.

<sup>672</sup> See Edwina Jannie Blumberg, 'Tolstoy and the English Novel: A Note on *Middlemarch* and *Anna Karenina*', *Slavic Review*, 30 (1971), 561-69.

<sup>673</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 116.

This passage – a montage of seemingly unrelated activities in a foreign country, one of which involves galloping on horses in England – is similar in style and tone to the description of the activities of a foreign prince whom Vronskii is obliged to entertain:

[The prince] had been in Spain, and there had indulged in serenades and had made friends with a Spanish girl who played the mandolin. In Switzerland he had killed chamois. In England he had galloped in a red coat over hedges and killed two hundred pheasants [...]. In Turkey he had got into a harem; in India he had hunted on an elephant.<sup>674</sup>

Anna's daydreaming on the train is described with a similar urgency. We learn that she is curious about travel during her first conversation with Kitty, when exclaiming about the latter's youthfulness: 'I know that blue haze like the mist on the mountains in Switzerland. That mist which covers everything in that blissful time when childhood is just ending'.<sup>675</sup> The unprompted readiness of the comparison is odd. Why Switzerland? Has Anna been there? Or has she simply been picturing it to herself? The only other mention of Switzerland in the novel is the remark that the foreign prince has been there to kill chamois, once again linking Anna's dreams with that young man's reality. The foreign prince has also ridden elephants in India and the only other time that country is mentioned in the novel is when Anna apologizes to Princess Betsy for being late. She had lost track of time because she was listening to the stories of a visiting missionary: "He's very interesting. [...] [H]e told us about the life of Indians, most interesting".<sup>676</sup> We know at the outset, then, that Anna is imagining Switzerland, is curious about India, and wishes to ride with hounds on English estates. More startlingly, we see from her dream of being married to both Karenin and Vronskii that she, too, is capable of enjoying a 'harem', if only in her imagination, and that Anna's harem would be male.<sup>677</sup>

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<sup>674</sup> Ibid, p. 405.

<sup>675</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 85.

<sup>676</sup> Ibid, p. 157.

<sup>677</sup> 'She dreamed that both were her husbands at once, that both were lavishing caresses on her. [...] And she was amazed that it had once seemed impossible to her, was explaining to them, laughing, that this was so much simpler, and that now both of them were happy and contented.' Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 172.

When Vronskii visits her after spending an evening with the well-travelled prince, Anna responds with jealousy. It is easy to assume that she is unsettled due exclusively to her suspicion of Vronskii's unfaithfulness. However, if we read her as an Odyssean figure, then Anna is not simply possessive of her lover, but also envious of the carefree movements of both the prince and Vronskii. When Vronskii confesses that he has not been enjoying himself with the prince, Anna snaps, "Why so? Isn't it the life that all of you, all young men, always lead?"<sup>678</sup> We know from her reflections that Anna herself is curious about and even wishes to lead a life that aristocratic young men typically lead – a life of making speeches in Parliament and traveling to English estates. She goes on to ask about the prince: "He's seen a great deal, anyway; he's cultured?"<sup>679</sup> The lack of satisfaction Anna finds in merely reading about the lives of others evidences her urge to experience otherness by actively embodying it. For this, she must transcend the narrow confines of what it means to act, move, and even sit in a feminine manner.

After the illness following her near-death, Vronskii visits Anna for the first time and exclaims: "I don't know you with this short hair. You've grown so lovely. Like a little boy"<sup>680</sup> Once again, we see Anna praised for crossing traditional gender boundaries. This crossing is noted and then admired by Dolly, as well, who sees Anna riding on horseback in the country: 'For the first minute it seemed to her unsuitable for Anna to be on horseback. The conception of riding on horseback for a lady was [...] associated with ideas of youthful flirtation [...]. But when she had scrutinized her [...] nothing could have been more natural'.<sup>681</sup> Anna's 'unladylike' behaviour is so effective that it prompts Dolly, however haltingly, to be tempted from her prejudices. Anna's transgressive nature has the dangerous ability to make transgressions appear beautiful and even natural; to this end, neither the narrator nor the novel's characters criticize Anna's atypical behaviour.

When Anna spies Dolly, she does exactly what we witnessed her daydream about on the train as she boldly gallops forward: 'She uttered a cry, started in the saddle, and set her horse to a gallop. On reaching the carriage she jumped off without

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<sup>678</sup> Ibid, p. 409.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid, p. 410.

<sup>680</sup> Ibid, p. 496.

<sup>681</sup> Ibid, p. 692.

assistance'.<sup>682</sup> The reader is encouraged to recognize Anna's disembarkation 'without assistance'; it is a reiteration of her refusal to wait for Stiva to fetch her from the train. Anna has remained independent, taking decisive action without masculine support. This independence, however, now extends to her entire life – Anna has succeeded in living what she had once read, galloping across country estates, and the alternate world has been realized in deed.

Anna's gender-querying illuminates the most obvious difference between herself and Odysseus. Due to their gender difference, Anna traverses a boundary Odysseus does not, incurring along the way misunderstanding and condemnation. Traversing this boundary empowers Anna to be (and empowers us to read Anna as) Odyssean in terms of the adventurous mischief that engenders so many possibilities. On the other hand, ironically, traversing the boundary also draws criticism upon Anna that demonstrates just how un-Odyssean she must remain. In other words, Anna may do the things tricksters do, but she will not be judged the way tricksters are judged because tricksters are traditionally male.<sup>683</sup> It is partly for this general unfairness that a gender-oriented discourse of Anna as transgressor exists. Mandelker, who argues strongly for Anna as a tragic victim, writes:

Even if she is forgiven her sexual transgression, she is never excused for abandoning her son and ignoring her daughter. But is she judged by the same criteria as a hero who might act similarly? A hero [...] will usually be written and read as having heroically shaken free of the mundane and will not come under the same terms of literary evaluation as a heroine who acts in the same way. [...] [P]aternity is primarily seen as a condition of often oppressive responsibility that deprives the male of the freedom to pursue his true path in life.<sup>684</sup>

Consistent with Mandelker's critique, Odysseus was not traditionally blamed by readers or critics, and is not blamed within the poem, for taking his time getting home and then for promptly leaving his kingdom, his wife, and his son, again.

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<sup>682</sup> Ibid, p. 692.

<sup>683</sup> While it is true that Penelope is a worthy contender for the title of trickster, her trickery remains safely within the bounds, and in the service of, home and family; Anna's trickery works to undermine these very categories.

<sup>684</sup> Mandelker, 'A Plot of Her Own', p. 38.

However, because Anna suffers condemnation from both characters within the poem and moral critics of the novel, her boundary crossing achieves a level of sociocultural significance which Odysseus could not.<sup>685</sup> The possibilities she conjures contradict everyone's expectations. Anna's choices show perhaps what Tolstoy wished they did not: that even a woman who ignores her children and flees marriage can discover joy and meaning in life, however temporarily. Women like Kitty may be more contented and respected in the bounds of conventional morality, but they do not get to see Rome. That this is not a trivial distinction is borne out by the existence of Tolstoy's novel itself and is admitted in its opening line about families whose uniqueness dooms them to unhappiness. It is because Anna is 'wrong' that she is also brave and interesting; as an Odyssean figure, that she is wrong is less important than the alternatives she is able to conjure.

#### *A Whole New World: Travel Without Children*

Anna's modelling of an alternate world is so effective that even Dolly is tempted to participate in it. In Part Six of the novel, Dolly resolves to visit Anna at Vozdvizhenskoe, Vronskii's home in the country. As she draws closer to Vronskii's estate, Dolly fantasizes about leaving her husband, taking a lover, and not having more children.<sup>686</sup> Such thoughts are shocking for a character like Dolly, but the narrator presents her justifications without judgment. After her arrival, Anna assumes her trickster role by enchanting, tempting, and fascinating Dolly with an endless display of splendid horses, carriages, parties, gardens, games, costumes, and conversation. Dolly is struck by '[t]hat modern European luxury of which she had only read in English novels, but had never seen in Russia and in the country'.<sup>687</sup> The narrator criticizes English luxury in the final of three references in *Anna Karenina* to 'the' English novel. The first and second refer to the book Anna was reading which prompts her daydreams of an unencumbered, adventurous life;

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<sup>685</sup> This may also help explain why the *Odyssey* features a happy family that is consistent with Tolstoy's 'idea of the family' at its conclusion, while *Anna Karenina* does not.

<sup>686</sup> It is striking that as Dolly draws closer to Anna and her transgressive mode of life, she herself begins experiencing transgressive thoughts, as though such thinking is 'contagious;' of course, a trickster can 'infect' others with subversive ideas.

<sup>687</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 699.

this third mention confirms Anna's cross-cultural knowledge and power to act out scenes she had once imagined.

The alternate world at Vozdvizhesnkoe is a charade and its spell over Dolly is ultimately broken. Anna and Vronskii are constantly changing outfits and inventing clever but shallow ways to entertain themselves and their stream of guests. Soon, Dolly is disenchanted: 'All that day it seemed to her as though she were acting in a theater with actors cleverer than she'.<sup>688</sup> This assessment is exactly right: Dolly does not enjoy her role in the 'theatre' that Anna has conjured because Dolly is not a clever trickster and because she respects the boundaries that Anna does not. She learns that Anna is not content with the game she plays at Vodvizhenskoe, either. However, when creating alternatives to convention, the trickster's priority is not what is good or even enjoyable, but what is possible. Anna has shown Dolly, the reader, and herself that a woman can live beautifully and freely, the way young men in English novels do, Dolly's (and Tolstoy's, presumably) disapproval notwithstanding.

Disapproval is to be expected. It is in the trickster's nature to arrange the scene in a manner that seems unpleasant and even dysfunctional to those who remain securely on this side of the sociocultural boundary. We learn that Dolly 'did not like the light tone of raillery that was kept up all the time [...] and the unnaturalness altogether of grown-up people [...] playing at a child's game'.<sup>689</sup> Dolly's critical attitude toward purposeless play is a matter of course for responsible and conventionally moral people: 'From the point of view of [the trickster's] more settled neighbors, his aimlessness makes him an embodiment of uncertainty [...]. [They] often tire of the trickster's disruptions and set out to bind or suppress him. That turns out not to be so easy, and to have unexpected consequences'.<sup>690</sup> Dolly participates in Vronskii's effort to 'bind' Anna to conventionality when she makes the case for marriage and children and is astonished to discover that Anna does not want either, since children would interfere with her ability to remain carefree and sexually active.

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<sup>688</sup> Ibid, p. 720.

<sup>689</sup> Ibid, p. 720.

<sup>690</sup> Hyde, *Trickster*, p. 73.

It is significant that the narrator permits Anna to be happy on the other side of the moral boundary:

Vronskii [...] with a fresh rush of love looked at [Anna], full of life and happiness [...].

Anna, in that first period of her emancipation [...] felt herself unpardonably happy and full of the joy of life [...].

[H]owever sincerely Anna had meant to suffer, she was not suffering.

Shame there was not. [...]

The desire for life, waxing stronger with recovered health, was so intense, and the conditions of life were so new and pleasant, that Anna felt unpardonably happy.<sup>691</sup>

There is an unfeigned, pure happiness in Anna and even a hint of approval, or at least indulgence, in the sentences describing her unashamed and 'unpardonable' joy; genuine happiness is difficult to judge harshly, even for Tolstoy's narrator. The manipulateness Anna used with Dolly to reconcile a miserable marriage is applied in Italy with Vronskii to enhance a joyful love affair. In a draft for the novel, Anna deftly and subtly arranges things to suit Vronskii's changing moods:

She [...] knew not so much what he needed, but rather knew that mirror into which at a given moment he wanted to look at life and at her, and immediately, unnoticeably, took on the tone in which he wanted to see her and all of life.

At first, she saw that he wanted to be young, carelessly happy, set free [...]. And she made their life this way. Then there was a time, when they were in Rome, when he wanted them to be famous tourists, and they were so. In Florence, he wanted them to be the sort of people who desire only freedom for quiet family life and art, and they were so. Then in the spring, when moving to the palazzo, he wanted to be conquerors and patrons of the arts, and she made their life this way.<sup>692</sup>

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<sup>691</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, pp. 526.

<sup>692</sup> *PSS*, 20, p. 396. See Appendix A.189 for original.



In each new city, Anna empowers herself and Vronskii to try on new personae. How does Anna know how to *be* a famous tourist or a patron of the arts when she has never been either? Through her travels, Anna is finally able to realize the wish she had once uttered so seriously and thoughtfully to Betsy: she has come to see many cities and learn of many minds. Anna's creativity and cultural depth flourish during her travels, where she meets artists and sees historically significant places, while she conjures, discards, and conjures anew a multiplicity of alternate worlds and characters. I suggest that Anna's talent for otherness implies that these many selves were already within her; she has never been a single self.

Multiplicity is culturally mind-opening and consistent with being *polutropos*; Odysseus is 'the ultimate multiform [...]. Odysseus can be all things to all people'.<sup>693</sup> To return to the question of gender: was Odysseus morally wrong to seek knowledge of the minds and cities of others, inhabiting the multiform? While not irrelevant, this question is rarely considered when assessing the epic trickster's journeys. If we regard Anna as trickster with the fabulistic obligation to disrupt, the ethical question is less relevant. If she realizes a possible world that challenges the cultural boundaries of her own, then that is what matters.

### *I Forgot: What They Say v. What They Do*

Successful boundary crossing often necessitates the pretence that no boundary has been crossed, and the trickster conceals his or her desire for fulfilment because of the cultural boundary it disturbs. For this reason, readers will frequently find a chasm between the words and deeds of tricksters – in words, the trickster preserves the conventional boundary, but always experiments with alternatives in deeds. In this section, I will first explore specific instances in the *Odyssey* when the actions of Odysseus belie his stated intentions. I will then use the insights gained from this exploration to consider how Anna's deeds contradict her words.

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<sup>693</sup> Nagy, 'The Mind of Odysseus', p. 312.

When we encounter Odysseus in Book Five on Kalypso's island, he is weeping because he longs to return home. However, the desire for Ithaca is not unconditional:

[H]is eyes were never  
wiped dry of tears, and the sweet lifetime was draining out of him,  
as he wept for a way home, since the nymph was no longer pleasing  
to him. (Od. 5.151-54)

This 'no longer pleasing' is instructive: it implies that there was a time when the hero found the nymph very pleasing, indeed. Put differently, Odysseus longs to return to his wife now that he is tired of sleeping with Kalypso. Unlike his companions at Troy, Odysseus does not immediately return to Ithaca after the war. First, the wind transports him and his men to Ismarus, where he remains long enough to sack the city; upon arriving in the land of the Lotus-eaters and, later, the Cyclopes, Odysseus goes exploring. However, the suspicion that Odysseus is not quite eager to return home becomes particularly strong when considering his visit to Aiolos, the keeper of winds.<sup>694</sup> Retelling his adventures, Odysseus praises the merriment and bounty of Aiolos' kingdom:

'And evermore, beside their dear father and gracious mother,  
these feast, and good things beyond number are set before them;  
and all their days the house fragrant with food echoes  
[...]  
We came to the city of these men and their handsome houses,  
and a whole month he entertained me' (Od. 10.8-14)

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<sup>694</sup> Scholars have noted that Odysseus does not seem particularly eager to return to Ithaca. For example, see Karl Reinhardt, 'The Adventures in the Odyssey', in *Reading the Odyssey: Selected Interpretive Essays*, ed. by Seth L. Schein (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 63-132, (p. 95). See also Peter Ahrensdorf, *Homer on the Gods and Human Virtue: Creating the Foundations of Classical Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) p. 127.

We are entitled to ask why, if Odysseus is hurrying homeward, he remains on the island for a month. His description provides the answer: he stayed while the visit was 'pleasing' because there were good company and good things to eat.

The most peculiar delay, however, occurs in Book Ten. Odysseus finally requests assistance from Aiolos, the keeper of the winds, for the journey to Ithaca, and the latter gifts the hero with a bag of winds which swiftly conveys Odysseus home with his crew:

'[A]t last appeared the land of our fathers,  
and we could see people tending fires, we were very close to them.  
But then the sweet sleep came upon me, for I was worn out' (Od. 10.29-31)

After being away from his kingdom for more than a decade, Odysseus recognizes his beloved Ithaca and, indeed, is so close that he can identify his individual subjects on the shore. At this point in the poem, Odysseus has effectively reached home. Therefore, it is both astonishing and inexplicable that, when the longed-for reunion is imminent, Odysseus falls asleep. While he naps, his companions release the bag of winds and are blown straight back to the island of Aiolos, who is furious. Aiolos rightly thinks that Odysseus' sudden need for sleep is absurd and refuses to help someone whom the gods must despise. Remarking sheepishly that his crew were overwhelmed 'with our own silliness' (10.79), Odysseus quickly explained that 'since homecoming seemed ours no longer' (10.79) they bravely 'sailed on' (10.80) but not, it must be noted, back toward Ithaca, but *in the opposite direction* toward Lamos. After a brief visit to the Laistrygones, Odysseus spends a year in Circe's abode, until his companions entreat him to leave:

'There for all our days until a year was completed  
we sat there feasting on unlimited meat and sweet wine.  
But when it was the end of a year [...]  
Then my eager companions called me aside and said to me:  
"What ails you now? It is time to think about our own country"  
(Od. 10.467-72)

Once again, as in Aiolos' halls and initially with Kalypso, Odysseus enjoyed feasting and merriment with little thought for his homeland. It is not an exaggeration to say that Odysseus simply *forgot* his wife, son, and kingdom. This is a remarkable position for a man who claims to be yearning desperately for his family and kingdom, assuring his audience that he 'cannot think of any place sweeter on earth to look at' (9.28) than Ithaca and blaming his protracted absence on Circe:

'[...] Circe the guileful detained me  
beside her in her halls, desiring me for her husband,  
but never could persuade the heart within me' (*Od.* 9.31-33)

While Kalypso explicitly detained Odysseus (though not, perhaps, at first), it is unclear that Circe did so, and for one whose heart allegedly remained unpersuaded, Odysseus remained on Aeaëa for an excessive amount of time.

Anna, too, undermines her false words with true deeds. For example, she assures Vronskii's mother and the Oblonskiis that her life is devoted wholly to her son, Serëzha. Countess Vronskaia even gently chides Anna for being so attached to the boy, informing Vronskii that Anna 'has a little son eight years old, I believe, and she has never been parted from him before, and she keeps fretting over leaving him'.<sup>695</sup> First, associating Anna's motherly devotion with that of Countess Vronskaia undermines it, since Vronskii's mother is neither loving nor attentive. Second, there is reason to suspect whether Anna has never been parted from Serëzha. When discussing Kitty's passion for balls, for example, Anna insists that she herself does not enjoy such gatherings, and strongly implies that she attends them only when she cannot avoid it:

'No, my dear, for me there are no balls now where one enjoys oneself [...].'  
'How can you be dull at a ball?'  
'Why should not I be dull at a ball?' inquired Anna.  
Kitty perceived that Anna knew what answer would follow.

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<sup>695</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 74.

'Because you always look nicer than anyone'.

Anna had the faculty of blushing [...].

'I imagine it won't be possible to avoid going'.<sup>696</sup>

Anna presents herself both to the elderly matron and to the young, unmarried girl as a devoted mother who does not care for pleasure 'any longer'. Yet soon after her conversation with Kitty, we learn from the narrator about Anna's evenings in St Petersburg: 'Towards ten o'clock, when she usually said good-night to her son, and often before going to a ball put him to bed herself'.<sup>697</sup> We see that Anna *does* regularly attend balls. In light of this information, what are we to make of Anna's words to Kitty? If we do not believe Anna, then she is misleading Kitty about the nature of her character. The supposition that Anna is being manipulative is confirmed by Anna's artful blush and prompting for compliments. It is further confirmed at the ball, where Anna is 'gay and eager'.<sup>698</sup> Surely, when finding oneself in a situation one had wished to avoid, one is neither gay nor eager. Invited to waltz, Anna demurs: "I don't dance when it's possible not to dance".<sup>699</sup> Since she then spends the entire night dancing with Vronskii, this self-description of her character – consistent with those offered to Countess Vronskaia and Kitty – is shown to be untrue.

After admitting to Dolly that she does not want to return to her family, Anna travels to St Petersburg immersed in fantasies of play and pleasure, until at last she is interrupted by a sober recollection of home:

[I]n the visions that filled her imagination, there was nothing disagreeable or gloomy: on the contrary there was something blissful, glowing, and exhilarating. Towards morning [...] thoughts of home, of husband and of son, and the details of that day and the following came upon her.<sup>700</sup>

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<sup>696</sup> Ibid, p. 85.

<sup>697</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 88.

<sup>698</sup> Ibid, p. 138.

<sup>699</sup> Ibid, p. 139.

<sup>700</sup> Ibid, p. 182.

The passage juxtaposes the bliss of Anna's visions with the colourless sobriety of home life and shows clearly that Anna does not constantly think of her son. The implication is that there is something 'disagreeable and gloomy' about returning home, confirmed immediately upon encountering the husband and son, who are ordinary, disappointing creatures in comparison to the brilliant gaiety of Moscow. Anna forgot them in the swirl of pleasure and hinted to Dolly that forgetting one's family is not so terrible. Likening herself to Stiva, Anna says: "I am his sister, I know his character, that faculty of forgetting everything, everything' (here she waved her hand before her forehead) 'that faculty of being completely carried away'".<sup>701</sup> The waving hand implies Anna's lightness of tone as she admits that she can relate to forgetting her family, and that it is not a serious offense. Identifying Anna's thoughtlessness with Stiva's is evident in another comment Anna makes to Dolly regarding her seduction of Vronskii:

'But truly, truly, it's not my fault, or only my fault a little bit', she said, daintily drawling the words 'a little bit'.

'Oh, how like Stiva you said that!' said Dolly, laughing.<sup>702</sup>

Anna's little performance provokes her audience's laughter, cunningly shifting the question of guilt. While Dolly is correct that it is entirely like Stiva to diminish the gravity of a heedless action and one's own culpability for it, Anna's lightness regarding the misdeed recalls Odysseus' sheepish admission of his own 'silliness' in falling asleep before Ithaca's shores because he simply could not help it. Aiolos finds the behaviour unconscionable, but Odysseus immediately shifts the responsibility:

"My wretched companions brought me to ruin, helped by the pitiless sleep" [...]

So I spoke to them, plying them with words of endearment' (*Od.* 10.68-70)

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<sup>701</sup> Ibid, p. 122.

<sup>702</sup> Ibid, p. 172.

Odysseus tries to manipulate his audience to agree that the mishap is not really his fault, and if it is, well, it is a mere trifle. In Anna's case, it is she herself who is carried away and forgets everything.

It is Anna's treatment of her very own 'bag of winds', however, that illustrates most explicitly the Odyssean tension between word and deed.<sup>703</sup> Anna insists to others and to herself that, above all, she longs for a divorce, exclaiming to Vronskii: 'If you knew how terrible it is to me, what I would give to be able to love you freely and boldly!'.<sup>704</sup> It is surprising, then, that upon being confronted with this chance when Karenin graciously acquiesces to divorce, Anna refuses it. Karenin's offer presents Anna with everything she has been *saying* she desires: freedom to be with Vronskii openly and even custody of her son. Karenin's offer functions as a generous 'bag of winds' with which to speed Anna on a journey in whichever direction she wishes. Yet, just as Odysseus suddenly becomes helpless and loses consciousness at the sight of Ithaca's mainland, Anna is paralyzed when her passionately pursued goal is in sight and instead turns and flees to Italy with neither divorce nor son.

Morson argues that Anna's ego prevents her from accepting the divorce – she refuses to be indebted to Karenin's goodness, for which she resents him.<sup>705</sup> Turner agrees that Anna does not want to be a recipient of Karenin's generosity, but attributes it to her superficial emotions: '[H]ere as elsewhere, Anna is so dominated by her feelings of the moment, that she will not or cannot look beyond

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<sup>703</sup> The tension in the *Odyssey* between true and false is further borne out in Penelope's fable about deceptive dreams:

'There are two gates through which the insubstantial dreams issue.  
One pair of gates is made of horn, and one of ivory.  
Those of the dreams which issue through the gate of sawn ivory,  
these are deceptive dreams, their message is never accomplished.  
But those that come into the open through the gates of the polished  
horn accomplish the truth for any mortal who sees them'. (*Odyssey*, 19.562-67)

<sup>704</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 637.

<sup>705</sup> Morson observes – rightly – that granting Anna the divorce she seeks is a generous gesture that puts Karenin in a precarious position, both ethically and socially: 'Far from leaving the refusal [of divorce] unexplained, Tolstoy makes the reason clear. In a Dostoevskian way, Anna resents Karenin for his very goodness. For Anna, the offer of a divorce [...] precisely because it was made out of genuine forgiveness and love, necessarily establishes Karenin's moral superiority over her. [...] She cannot tolerate that'. Morson, *Anna Karenina in Our Time*, p. 115.

them'.<sup>706</sup> In other words, if Anna does not agree to divorce Karenin, it is because she is either cruel or weak. However, if we read Anna's inexplicable choice as Odyssean, then its explanation has both a straightforward and a less obvious, indirect component. The simple answer involves approaching Anna's immersion in Moscow's pleasures as anticipating those at Vozdvizhenskoe and in Italy. This carefree gaiety resonates with Odysseus' forgetful revels in foreign kingdoms, devoted to play without responsibility. This leads to the conclusion that Anna does not desire the freedom to marry Vronskii because family life with Karenin *or* Vronskii is the exact opposite of freedom: home with anyone means the absence of play, pleasure, and sexual novelty.<sup>707</sup> Indeed, this is precisely what Anna tells Dolly when explaining why she will not have more children with Vronskii.

A more complicated explanation might be the following: if Odysseus does not wish to return home or is at least significantly more ambivalent about desiring return than he claims to be (as evident in deeds that consistently belie his words), it is because home means a reconstitution and confirmation of Odysseus' familial and social role as husband, father, and king. It is the structure of a *self* that Odysseus is avoiding, seeking instead a fluid, porous, unbounded existence.

### *Conclusion: Anna by Any Other Name*

Odysseus' continual deferment of return is interpreted by Barbara Cassin as grounded in 'incapacity to *inhabit* a home. What his Odyssey teaches him [...] is that "home is Mediterranean," meaning the open, the cosmic, the infinite'.<sup>708</sup> On this reading, a clear demarcation exists between striving for home and arriving there. If Odysseus' self is defined by the striving, then arriving necessarily means the end of the Odyssean self. Therefore, the cessation of self is what Odysseus – and Anna, if she is Odyssean – attempts to postpone. In the final section of this

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<sup>706</sup> CJG Turner, 'Divorce and Anna Karenina', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 23 (1987), 97-116 (p. 108).

<sup>707</sup> The similarity of living with either man is underscored by the fact that both have the same name, Aleksei, which may imply that, in some sense, as far as Anna's future is concerned, the outcome is the same.

<sup>708</sup> Barbara Cassin, *Nostalgia: When Are We Ever at Home?* (Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 2016), p. ix.



chapter, I will consider, first, Van Nortwick's application of Hyde's notion of trickery to re-interpret Odysseus' identity. Van Nortwick's reading of Odysseus is consistent with Cassin's: Odysseus, in this view, is identified with his trickery such that, in a seeming paradox, his false self is his true self. The Odyssean trickster is all process without substance and, therefore, without rest. Then, I will apply Van Nortwick's reformulation of Hyde to examine the character of Anna and provide evidence against the assumption that there is a stable, consistent, authentic self that exists behind Anna's lies and disguises.

Van Nortwick uses Hyde's notion of alternate worlds to explore Odysseus' identity and finds two versions of that identity. First, Odysseus is a king, husband, and father who must be restored to his rightful place; second, Odysseus is a wanderer who is tasked with completing the restoration.<sup>709</sup> Any tension between them implies that behind the disguises and deceits, there is nevertheless a stable, consistent, homogeneous Odysseus toward which the poem is striving. Van Nortwick proposes that the reconstituted Odysseus 'conflicts with the creation of the hero through the course of the poem so that now we cannot easily imagine him inhabiting the roles that are supposed to define him. The plot requires him to be fulfilled while at rest, but stasis has been defined as the enemy of his very existence'.<sup>710</sup> The stable Odysseus contradicts the Odysseus we see for most of the poem. If his identity acts against stasis, and return to Ithaca necessitates stasis, then by perpetuating his journey, Odysseus is perpetuating his true self. Van Nortwick argues that by putting off his return and choosing, at least for a short time, to remain himself, Odysseus is able to embody other selves, thereby presenting other possibilities and other worlds.<sup>711</sup>

This vision of Odyssean self-creation is, I suggest, a powerful and empowering perspective from which to read Anna's seemingly contradictory choices. It widens the field of answers to critics' polarization about Anna's initial refusal of a divorce. Like the readers who assume that Odysseus' true self consists of husband, father,

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<sup>709</sup> Van Nortwick, *Unknown Odysseus*, 31-33.

<sup>710</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>711</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

and king, critics such as Morson and Browning see Anna's wandering as a deviation from the self that is a faithful wife, doting mother, and respected member of the aristocracy. Critics such as D.H. Lawrence and Mandelker see Anna's behaviour as surrender to social pressure resulting in a deviation from the self that might be flourishing at Vronskii's side. Whether Anna is a repressed victim or deliberately cruel, both perspectives regard Anna as acting falsely because they assume the existence of a homogeneous, stable, true Anna. She is either morally wrong to be unfaithful to Karenin or she is forced by society to be practically wrong in refusing the divorce that would facilitate her happiness. On these readings, the woman presented in the novel is a 'false' Anna who betrays (or is compelled to betray) the 'real' Anna's true, best interests. This is precisely how characters such as Dolly and Karenin see Anna, contrasting her against the person they think they know.<sup>712</sup>

Odyssean ambivalence toward static family life manifests itself first at the level of narrative form. When the tricksters arrive home, the story is over. However, the plots of Homer's and Tolstoy's texts consist in great part of the restless wanderings of their eponymous heroes. The Anna the novel delivers from beginning to end, the Anna who structures the meaning of the narrative, *is* the restless, faithless, multiple Anna. As I have shown, she does not gradually become faithless after meeting Vronskii; within the bounds of the novel, there is and never has been another, ideal Anna acting as a happy mother and wife. The wandering, multiple Anna is the only Anna. The ideal mother and wife is the abstract aim that will never be reached because it does not exist anywhere other than the imaginations of Karenin, Dolly, Vronskii, Kitty (but not, it must be noted, Stiva), and anyone else Anna deceives into believing in it (including the reader), who express astonishment

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<sup>712</sup> Consider, for example, the narrator's use of free indirect discourse to convey Karenin's certainty that Anna is deceiving him: '[T]o him, knowing that every joy, every pleasure and pain that she felt she communicated to him at once [...] to him, now to see that she did not [...] care to say a word about herself, meant a great deal. More than that, he saw from her tone that she was not even perturbed at that'. Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 256. Karenin assumes that Anna *used to be* honest with him. This is, indeed, how Morson reads this passage. However, as I have argued, this is not the first time the novel show Anna deceiving others; if she 'was not even perturbed' at misleading Karenin, I propose that it is precisely because there is nothing unusual in her deceitfulness. It is unusual only for Karenin, who is realizing his wife's nature for the first time – see footnote 606 for a brief discussion of Karenin's ignorance about Anna's identity.

at Anna's 'new' behaviour. Indeed, moral judgment of Anna's actions can only be enacted by asserting the 'true' Anna who existed before the novel began and who has deviated from her role as mother, wife, and esteemed social figure and must return there, whether at Karenin's or Vronskii's side.

The answer to Anna's rejection of divorce, I suggest, can be found in Odyssean ambivalence to return: accepting the divorce from Karenin obliges Anna to marry Vronskii and assume restoration and stasis. In pursuing her wandering, stasis is exactly what Anna seeks to avoid because finding home means the death of her self. If Anna becomes anything other than lost, the heroine described by the narrative will cease to exist. This tension between the false and authentic Anna is exemplified in the heroine's thoughts as she journeys home for the first time:

'What's that on the arm of the chair, a fur cloak or some beast? And what am I myself? Myself or some other woman?' She was afraid of giving way to this delirium. But something drew her towards it, and she could yield to it or resist it at will.<sup>713</sup>

The furry beasts Anna imagines here anticipate the 'cloaks' or 'furs' that she will feel suffocated by during her *katabasis*; it is both a premonition and a hint at the permeable boundary between human and animal which the trickster can push against at will. It is significant that Anna is fully in control of whether she is 'herself' or yields to being 'some other woman'; being someone else is comparable to putting on or casting off a cloak, or a disguise. During her *katabasis*, Anna experiences a disturbing encounter between her selves:

'Don't be surprised at me. I'm still the same... But there is another woman in me, I'm afraid of her: she loved that man, and I tried to hate you, and could not forget about her that used to be. I'm not that woman. Now I'm my real self, all myself. I'm dying now, I know I shall die'.<sup>714</sup>

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<sup>713</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 177.

<sup>714</sup> Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 724.

Anna here describes three selves: the 'she' that loved Vronskii, the 'I' that tried to hate Karenin and is speaking now, and the 'her that used to be'. She is now her 'real' self and, crucially, this self is dying. Presumably, the Anna that 'used to be' is the one that Karenin and Dolly remember whom the reader never encounters. For Mandelker, Anna's feverish soliloquy demonstrates a schizoid self who is unable to achieve psychic integration because she is a victim of patriarchal repression where adulterous passion, her only avenue of self-expression, is forbidden.<sup>715</sup> However, if Anna's confused speech is a necessary stage of the trickster's *katabasis*, then it is natural that she must be temporarily disturbed while passing through self-annihilation to fuller knowledge of the multiplicity of self and other.

Although Anna loses part of herself during her illness, the loss is not occasioned by victimhood, but is evidence that Anna contains multitudes. Her Italian journey demonstrates that she has no homogeneous, consistent self whom she has betrayed and must recover. Anna *is* many selves, and the self that dies during her *katabasis* is the one that was preventing her from realizing these selves in possible worlds: 'Having no way, trickster can have many ways'.<sup>716</sup> The 'real' Anna who does not really love Vronskii is merely a function, a moral justification for an allegedly false Anna's choices. By maintaining that her 'real' self is the good Anna who loves Karenin, has never been parted from Serëzha, and does not willingly attend balls, Anna's transgressive self can be forgiven as a sinful 'other woman' that she could not control and of whom she is 'afraid'. However, we have seen that Anna can take on other selves or not, as she wishes, as though a persona is a cloak. Victimhood is a performance that functions as cover for adventure, letting Anna model a woman's life as neither wife, mother, nor esteemed social figure.

That this alternative life is achievable is very important, because it puts into question the moral universe that insists otherwise. Reading Anna as tragically unable to live with her passion may seem to condemn Tolstoyan assumed ethics,

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<sup>715</sup> Mandelker, 'Woman with A Shadow', p. 46.

<sup>716</sup> Hyde, *Trickster*, p. 37.

but it tacitly endorses their limited polarity by agreeing that there are only two ways of being: a saintly wife or her rebellious opposite. Yet, for Odysseus, leaving Ithaca so soon after his return is not an act of subversion or rebellion, but rather an authentic self-expression that involves adventure, joy, and the pursuit of knowledge. If we read Anna as Odyssean, she need not be divided against her 'better' or 'liberated' self in an elementary binary. If the trickster's opposition is not one of straightforward contradiction, then Anna's movement against convention is a dialectical one. She does not reject convention, but transcends it, if only for a short while, demonstrating the parochialism of Karenin's world.

In this chapter, I have proposed an alternative reading of *Anna Karenina* that emphasizes the praxis of possibility rather than moral theory and, in doing so, have departed considerably from my goal of reading Tolstoy 'naively' or 'reparatively'. This experimental chapter nevertheless draws on restorative rather than revelatory methodology, not because Tolstoy intended the link between Anna and Odysseus, but because he intended a link between *Anna Karenina* and the *Odyssey* in the first place as a 'family idea', and in the second place, as a continuation of *istoriia-iskusstvo*. That Anna is the most theatrical, manipulative, and fundamentally false of Tolstoy's people has empowered me to make the connection between her and Homer's consummate trickster figure.

## Chapter Six

### Violence and Stupidity

'The Russians, less civilized than others, that is to say, less corrupt intellectually and still keeping a vague understanding of the essence of Christian teaching; the Russians, a predominantly agricultural people, will understand, at last, the source of salvation, and will be the first to apply it'.<sup>717</sup>

Tolstoy, *The Law of Violence and the Law of Love* (*Zakon nasillia i zakon liubvi*, 1908)

Tolstoy's final novel, *Hadji Murat*, is regarded by critics as an anomaly in his oeuvre. The text took nearly a decade to compose, between 1896 and 1904; it was left unpublished in Tolstoy's lifetime. Its departure from the religious ethos of non-violence to which the elderly writer passionately subscribed is surprising, if not altogether inexplicable, and has perplexed scholars. Harold Bloom remarked that *Hadji Murat* 'contradicted almost all of [Tolstoy's] principles for Christian and moral art'<sup>718</sup> and Ani Kokobobo observes: 'Scholars have engaged in a partial circumvention of *Hadji Murat*'s place in Tolstoy's oeuvre, leaving unanswered the contentious questions as to whether *Hadji Murat* is a requiem to Tolstoy's lost youth or a denial of his zealous Christianity, or both'.<sup>719</sup> The novella includes a celebration of Homeric heroism in Tolstoy's final hero who, as Bloom argues, combines within himself the virtues of both Achilles and Odysseus while remaining conspicuously free from their flaws.

Following Bloom, Donna Orwin describes the novella as 'epic'<sup>720</sup> and 'a timeless fantasy [about] a warrior',<sup>721</sup> and reiterates Bloom's assessment of Tolstoy's Murat

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<sup>717</sup> PSS 37, p. 176. See Appendix A.190 for original.

<sup>718</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and Schools of the Ages* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1994), p. 335.

<sup>719</sup> Ani Kokobobo, 'Tolstoy's Enigmatic Final Hero: Holy War, Sufism, and the Spiritual Path in *Hadji Murat*', *The Russian Review*, 76 (2017), 3-52 (p. 38). Kokobobo seems to be referring here to Bloom's earlier interpretation of Tolstoy's attempt to resurrect his youth: 'In writing the story Tolstoy the old man is again Tolstoy the young artist, more interested in vitality than in moralizing'; Harold Bloom, 'Introduction' in *Leo Tolstoy*, Bloom's Modern Critical Views (Broomall, PA: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003), pp. 1-8 (p. 6).

<sup>720</sup> Orwin, 'Tolstoy *molodets*', p. 90.

<sup>721</sup> *Ibid*, p. 91.

as an idealized Homeric hero: 'Unlike Achilles, Murat commits no egregious crime from excessive rage, nor does he display the excessive craftiness of an Odysseus'.<sup>722</sup> Edmund Heier, too, expressed bewilderment at the absence of sermonizing in *Hadji Murat*, and agrees with Bloom that it can be explained by Tolstoy's reversion to a less didactic style: 'What is so puzzling is that *Hadji Murat* was produced in the midst of Tolstoy's moralizing period [...]. None of the Tolstoyan precepts are extolled in *Hadji Murat*. There is no example or illustration of Tolstoy's teaching. Indeed, it appears that in old age he returned to the memories of his youth'.<sup>723</sup>

It is certainly possible that the aging Tolstoy wished to revisit his younger days by characterizing a fantastical Homeric warrior. However, any speculation, psychoanalytical or otherwise, regarding the novel's justification, and even glamorization, of violent heroism ought to be situated in the context of Tolstoy's overall reception of Homeric material in the final four decades of his life, between 1870 and 1910. It is the purpose of this final chapter to, first, situate Tolstoy's writing of *Hadji Murat* within his changing relationship to Homeric material, and, subsequently, to seek an explanation for the novel's violence that is informed by the association Tolstoy finds between Homeric epic, North Caucasian epic, and religion. I will consult Tolstoy's letters, notebooks, and journals along with published didactic articles concerning religion, education, and art, specifically: *A Confession (Ispoved'*, 1882), *Religion and Morality (Religiia i npravstvennost'*, 1894), *Progress and the Definition of Education (Progres i opredelenie obrazovaniia*, 1862), *What is Art? (Chto takoe isskustvo?*, 1897), *On Shakespeare and Drama (O Shekspire i o drame*, 1906), and *What is Religion, of What Does its Essence Consist? (Chto takoe religiia, v chem sushchnost' ee?*, 1906). I will also consider excerpts from Tolstoy's unpublished fiction and selections from the novellas *Walk in the Light While There is Light (Khodite v svete poka est' svet*, 1889), and *The Kreutzer Sonata (Kreitserovskaia sonata*, 1889).

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<sup>722</sup> Ibid.

<sup>723</sup> Edmund Heier, 'Hadji Murat in the Light of Tolstoy's Moral and Aesthetic Theories', *Canadian Slavonic Papers/ Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, 21 (1979), 324-35 (p. 326).

Tolstoy's Murat is both religious and illiterate, qualities which, as I will show, Tolstoy privileged at this stage in his life. For Tolstoy, epic poems that contain spiritual wisdom result from the singular relationship between illiteracy and religious faith. While the notion of 'illiteracy' might seem counter-intuitive when it is tasked, by Tolstoy, with producing poetry, the term is nevertheless accurate. It is not only the term that Tolstoy uses, but is also, as we shall soon see, true of the epic poems he privileges, since they were begotten in oral, non-literate<sup>724</sup> cultures. I will show how, for Tolstoy, the spirituality and absence of Western-style education of the North Caucasus people generally, and in the character of Hadji Murat specifically, can 'justify' heroic violence. Tolstoy associated these qualities with both Homer and Homeric epic, both before and during the composition of his final novel. *Hadji Murat*, I argue, is not a reversion to a liberal, young Tolstoy, but rather a faithful reflection of his religious commitment, as evidenced in a deliberate spiritualization and 'ethicalization' of epic heroism.

### **Tolstoy's Anti-Intellectual Turn**

#### *'Stupid as a Horse': Why Tolstoy Privileged Illiteracy*

In the 1870s, Tolstoy struggled to write: while working on *Anna Karenina*, his journal and letters make frequent mention of his aversion to composing the novel. In an 1874 letter he complained that writing the text is 'terribly repulsive and loathsome'<sup>725</sup> (*'uzhasno protivno i gadko'*) and in 1875 reiterated that the novel is 'repulsive to me'<sup>726</sup> (*'mne protivna'*). To his aunt, Tolstoy confessed that he wished to stop writing *Anna Karenina* altogether because he is busy with 'practical' affairs and is 'not working on prose'<sup>727</sup> (*'ne zaniat poezie'*). While it is true that Tolstoy came to be repelled by the 'immoral' subject matter of *Anna Karenina*, he was

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<sup>724</sup> Of course, 'non-literate' is a much more appropriate term to describe oral cultures as it does not have the negative association that 'illiterate' carries, but we ought to keep in mind that, for Tolstoy, the latter term, which is the one he used, was not negative.

<sup>725</sup> PSS 62, p.103.

<sup>726</sup> Ibid., p.159.

<sup>727</sup> Ibid., p.95.



perhaps even more influenced by the anti-intellectualism he located in ‘primitive’, archaic cultures.

In 1870, Tolstoy inveighed against the printing press in a journal entry: ‘Thanks to the printing press, publicity, and its threats, the last authenticity of our lives is being destroyed’.<sup>728</sup> This sentiment was reiterated decades later in *What is Religion, of What Does Its Essence Consist?* (*Chto takoe religija, v chem sushchnost’ ee?*, 1906), a work of religious philosophy. In this text, Tolstoy observes that technological advances such as railroads, phonographs, and, most salient for our purposes, the printing press, ‘disfigure rather than beautify life’.<sup>729</sup> This distaste for technological development was preceded by Tolstoy’s increasing regard for living ‘stupidly’ – without intellectual thought and especially without published writing – as a more natural, intuitive, and cheerful state of being, especially when seeking spiritual truth. He begins one of the chapters of the autobiographical work, *A Confession*, with the following admission: ‘How often I envied the peasants their illiteracy and lack of education’.<sup>730</sup> This envy is occasioned by Tolstoy’s belief that absence of education and intellectual activity is implicated in spiritual faith. He recounts in Chapter Fourteen of the same text the catalyst for his religious realization: ‘I was listening to the conversation of an illiterate peasant, a pilgrim, speaking about God, religion, life and salvation when a knowledge of faith was opened up to me’.<sup>731</sup> Mentioning the peasant’s illiteracy (*‘bezgramotnost’*) in a text in which Tolstoy admits to envying illiteracy shows that this quality in the wise peasant is not incidental. The relationship between lack of education and spirituality is emphasized again a few sentences later, when Tolstoy adds that he is interested in ‘the tales of illiterate and stupid men who found salvation’ and who ‘knew nothing about the teachings of the Church’.<sup>732</sup> The adjective Tolstoy uses and which Kentish’s translation renders as ‘stupid’ is *‘glupye’*, which can also be translated as ‘foolish’ or ‘dumb’.

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<sup>728</sup> PSS 68, p. 129. See Appendix A.191 for original.

<sup>729</sup> ‘What is Religion, of What Does Its Essence Consist?’ in *Leo Tolstoy: A Confession and Other Religious Writings*, trans. and ed. by Jane Kentish (London: Penguin Books, 1987), pp. 83-128 (p. 101).

<sup>730</sup> ‘A Confession’ in *Leo Tolstoy: A Confession and Other Religious Writings*, trans. and ed. by Jane Kentish (London: Penguin Books, 1987) pp. 19-80 (p. 73). PSS 23, p. 52. See Appendix A.192 for original.

<sup>731</sup> Ibid, p. 71.

<sup>732</sup> Ibid, p. 72. PSS 23, p. 52. See Appendix A.193 for original. Kentish renders *‘glupykh’* as ‘stupid’.

The special awareness facilitated by illiteracy and ‘stupidity’ is again praised in Tolstoy’s work on religious philosophy, *Religion and Morality*: ‘[T]he attributes that make some people more capable than others of receiving the rising truth are not any especial active qualities of the mind but, on the contrary, are passive qualities of the soul that rarely coexists with the great and curious intellect’;<sup>733</sup> he observes further that religious founders were ‘in no way distinguished by either philosophical or scientific learning’.<sup>734</sup> Indeed, the absence of formal education or pursuit of advanced knowledge seem to have been, for Tolstoy, a prerequisite for spiritual awakening. If one was not fortunate enough to have remained illiterate, intellectual activity is best renounced: ‘What happened was that the life of our class, the rich and learned, became not only distasteful to me, but lost all meaning. All our activities, our discussions, our science and our art struck me as sheer indulgence’.<sup>735</sup> Consider that here Tolstoy is not critiquing conventionally ‘immoral’ activity (such as balls and seductions); his attack is aimed at intellectual activity. It is the ‘discussions’, the ‘science’, the ‘art’ of the ‘rich and learned’ that Tolstoy rejects.

In his 1908 introduction to a printed catalogue of artworks, *Russian Peasants*, produced by Nikolai Orlov (1827-1885), an artist of peasant life and a personal friend, Tolstoy reads the painter’s work as conveying the moral struggle between the Western-educated ‘intelligentsia’ and the ‘as yet unruined’ (*ne isporchennogo eshë*) Russian peasants,<sup>736</sup> championing the latter: ‘[T]rue religious understanding of life was and still is possessed by the Russian illiterate, wise, and holy peasant *narod*’.<sup>737</sup> Sophisticated intellectual activity is contrasted, for Tolstoy, with peasant wisdom expressed in a *narodnoe iskusstvo* based on a collective knowledge requiring neither literacy nor technology. This knowledge is religious and, as Tolstoy recounts in Chapter Thirteen of *A Confession*, it is conveyed to the common people ‘by the pastors, and by the traditions that form a part of [the

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<sup>733</sup> ‘Religion and Morality’, in *Leo Tolstoy: A Confession and Other Religious Writings*, trans. and ed. by Jane Kentish (London: Penguin Books, 1987) pp. 131-50 (p. 141).

<sup>734</sup> Tolstoy, ‘Religion and Morality’, p. 141.

<sup>735</sup> Tolstoy, *A Confession*, p. 59.

<sup>736</sup> *PSS* 37, p. 275.

<sup>737</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277. See Appendix A.194 for original.

common people's] lives and are expressed in their legends, sayings and tales'.<sup>738</sup> This is the clearest statement from Tolstoy that legends and folk tales are inherently spiritual.

Given the above, Tolstoy's paradoxical and unsuccessful efforts to distance himself from intellectual and creative work invariably led him to both privilege and attempt to imitate 'stupid' or 'primitive' life. Writing to Fet in 1870, Tolstoy mocked literature and praised straightforward, manual labour: 'I am, thank God, as stupid as a horse this summer. I work, chop wood, dig, mow and, thank God, don't think about nasty lit-t-erature and lit-t-erators'.<sup>739</sup> In referring to himself as 'stupid', Tolstoy uses the same word – '*glup*' – that he had used to refer to the 'illiterate and stupid men who found salvation' (see above). Consistent with this pursuit of 'stupidity', in an 1877 letter to the philosopher Nikolai Strakhov, Tolstoy praised anti-intellectualism: 'I have not for a long time been as indifferent to philosophical problems as I am this year, and I flatter myself with the hope that this is good for me'.<sup>740</sup> Consulting a lengthy passage from Tolstoy's 1875 letter to Fet, we see that Tolstoy's wish to cease writing fiction was motivated by the contrast he made between intellectual activity and the educated society that sustains it, and authentic existence in a non-literate culture.<sup>741</sup> He found support for the latter when he spent several summers in the 1870s among the partly nomadic, Turkic-speaking Bashkir people of the Samara Oblast':

For two months I have not soiled my hands with ink or my heart with thoughts, and now I take up the boring, vulgar *Karenina* with the sole wish to free a space for myself as quickly as possible – luxury for other activities, but only not pedagogical ones, which I love, but want to drop. [...] I must live the way we lived in the healthy Samara wilderness, to see occurring before my eyes the struggle between the nomadic life (millions in vast spaces) with the agrarian, primitive life – to feel all the significance of that struggle, to

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<sup>738</sup> Tolstoy, *A Confession*, p. 67.

<sup>739</sup> PSS 61, pp. 236-37. See Appendix A.195 for original.

<sup>740</sup> PSS 62 p. 308. See Appendix A.196 for original.

<sup>741</sup> As discussed in Chapter One, Tolstoy taught himself Greek at this time and linked the Bashkirs of the Samara steppes to Homeric Scythians and ancient Greeks, describing the Bashkirs as 'giving the sense of Herodotus'.

become certain that, the destroyers of the social order [...] are a parasitical sickness on a living oak, and that the oak has no concern with it. [...]

Why fate brought me there (to Samara), I don't know; but I know that I listened to the speeches in the English parliament (after all, this is considered very important) and I felt bored and insignificant, but there – flies, filth, peasants, Bashkirs, and I, with intense respect, fearing to overlook anything, am listening, am watching, and feeling that all of this is very important.<sup>742</sup>

Although Tolstoy loves intellectual activity, he thinks he must relinquish it because it is 'parasitical' ('*bolezn' parazita*') upon the 'living' ('*zhivogo*') organism of authentic, primordial existence.<sup>743</sup> Simply put, the intellect destroys life, and the civilized world, as represented by the British Parliament, is 'insignificant' when compared to the concerns of an agrarian culture living in the 'wilderness'.

As we have seen above, and in Chapters One and Four, the traditional wisdom Tolstoy found in works like the *Iliad* and Russian folk tales – which are, for Tolstoy, fundamentally similar<sup>744</sup> – is further legitimized by its un-reliance on institutional support and technologies like the printing press. In an 1862 pedagogical article, Tolstoy argued against the social improvement technology brought by appealing to both folk art and religious texts: 'I ask the reader to notice that *Homer*, *Socrates*, *Aristotle*, *German fairy tales and songs*, *Russian epic*, and, finally, *the Bible and*

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<sup>742</sup>PSS 62, pp. 198-99. See Appendix A.197 for original.

<sup>743</sup> For Tolstoy's views of the Bashkir people, particularly how he linked them with spiritual wisdom, see the short story 'Iliad' (1886); the text follows the Bashkir protagonist and his wife, who experience a religious conversion following the loss of their riches, PSS 25, pp. 31-35. See also 'How Much Land Does a Man Need' (*Mnogo li cheloveku zemli nuzhno*, 1886), which also shows the Bashkirs as sagely unmotivated by material greed, PSS 25, pp. 67-78. Finally, see Chapter One of this thesis, where I discuss how Tolstoy attempted to 'live Homerically' among the Bashkir people, whom he described as 'giving the sense of Herodotus' ('*Gerodotom pakhnet*').

<sup>744</sup> Recall, for example, Tolstoy's pedagogical article which aligns with the 'side of the people' ('*na storone naroda*') because 'the *narod* even without progressive society could live and somehow satisfy all their human needs: work, make merry, love, think and create artistic works (*Iliads*, Russian folk songs)'. PSS 8, p. 346. See Appendix A.125 for original. In a draft for the article, Tolstoy had added more examples which illustrate the same links between Homer and Russian *narodnoe iskusstvo*: 'Venus de Milo, the Bible, the *Iliad*, Russian folk songs...'. PSS 8, p. 453. See Appendix A.126 for original.

*the Gospels*, had no need of the printing press to remain eternal'<sup>745</sup> (italics mine). It is significant, then, that in 1879, around the time of his expressed disdain for intellectual thought generally and literature specifically, that Tolstoy began composing a series of *bylini*, or folk tales, in addition to making notes for an intended epic about Il'ia Muromets, the legendary knight and Russian folk hero.

Tolstoy's Il'ia figure is described in the journals as exhibiting a 'Reckless courage. [E]njoyment of risking his life and bones',<sup>746</sup> which implies that Tolstoy still regarded warlike characters positively.<sup>747</sup> Another tale, *Plakida-voin* (*Plakida the Warrior*), retells the story of the Roman martyr Placidus who became a saint. In Tolstoy's version, Plakida (the transliterated Russian version of Placidus) is overcome with grief after his sons are stolen by lions; the heart-broken father decides to leave his wife. In his absence, the lions return the boys, and their mother raises them to become warriors. In Tolstoy's retelling, Plakida leaves his wife and land willingly, and Tolstoy dwells particularly on Plakida's efforts to evade recognition by soldiers from his homeland and on the moments when Plakida is recognized, first by the soldiers, then by his sons, and finally, by his wife in a vineyard: 'The garden with a vineyard and Plakida's wife is going to get water. They stop and ask: "What sort of wife art thou?" "I have no more husband or 2 [sic] children." "Look back at me." Her heart sank'.<sup>748</sup> Tolstoy's version not only has Plakida conceal himself, but also reverses the order of recognition so that the final reunion is with his wife (in the traditional narrative, Plakida is separated from his family against his will, his wife recognizes him herself, and then brings him to meet his sons).

Tolstoy's Plakida echoes Homer's Odysseus in multiple ways: they are both warriors, they are both travellers, and, most importantly, they both seek to conceal themselves from recognition. The order of Plakida's reunions – first with his sons, then with his wife – is reworked to correspond exactly with that of Odysseus'

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<sup>745</sup> PSS 8, p. 342. See Appendix A.11 for original.

<sup>746</sup> PSS 48, p. 90. See Appendix 198 for original.

<sup>747</sup> Unless Tolstoy intended to write a critique of Il'ia Muromets, which seems unlikely given both his goal of producing a folk narrative and the overall tone of the other *bylini* he composed.

<sup>748</sup> PSS 48, p. 209. See Appendix A.199 for original.

successive reunions with his son, Telemachos, and then his wife, Penelope. This correspondence must be considered along with the following: disdaining to compose novels associated with intellectual thought, the printing press, and the writing process, Tolstoy instead composed folk tales of epic warriors which initially emerge from the oral tradition of the Russian *narod*. As discussed in Chapter One, in pedagogical articles and drafts from the decade of 1860, Tolstoy had referred to Homer's poetry as the equivalent of Russian folk songs and had pointed out that neither required the printing press. It is, therefore, significant that his own folk narratives echo Homeric plot. Since Tolstoy associated Homeric poetry and Russian folk traditions (neither of which require institutional support, technological innovation, or literacy), he began to compose folk narratives about violent warriors despite an aversion to both violence and writing in the final decades of his career.<sup>749</sup>

Directly beneath the series of folk tales in his notebook, Tolstoy listed a series of words and phrases used by peasants. Four of them are organized under the subheading 'epos' ('epic') and the first includes a Greek phrase written in Greek letters, εἰ ἂν ('ei an'), which is a conditional clause encountered frequently in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The four phrases grouped under the *epos* subheading have the quality of Homeric – and Tolstoyan – epithets, with an emphasis on earth, fertility, and harvest:

They who will come – εἰ ἂν [if ever]

White breasts.

Cold ground.

Rye and wheat – our nursing mother.<sup>750</sup>

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<sup>749</sup> Tolstoy's rejection of violence in the latter half of his life is well-documented, as is his controversial doctrine of 'nonresistance to evil', articulated in *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (which famously inspired Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)). For a discussion of Tolstoy's views on violence and war, see Orwin, 'Leo Tolstoy: pacifist, patriot, and molodets', 76-95. For an overview of Tolstoy's relationship with Gandhi, see Janko Lavrin, 'Tolstoy and Gandhi', *The Russian Review*, 19.2 (1960), 132-39.

<sup>750</sup> PSS 48, p. 219. See Appendix A.200 for original. Note that Tolstoy writes the Greek incorrectly, with mistaken accentation and missing breathing marks. The correct Greek should be: εἰ ἄν.

While it is impossible to determine what Tolstoy intended here, what is salient for our purposes is that the *bylini* and the *narodnye* expressions they include are, for Tolstoy, linked to ancient Greek constructions. This list of epithets, taken together with Tolstoy's tales of warriors, indicates that after relinquishing novelistic writing, Tolstoy sought to compose the equivalent of oral tales which were modelled on Homeric epic. However, unlike the military heroes of Tolstoy's earlier work, these warriors emerge from a national folkloric tradition and are deeply religious.

My main argument is that Tolstoy does not simply adapt Homeric poetry to suit his religious views, but rather locates his religious views in Homeric epic. This is strongly evidenced in the novella, *Walk in the Light While There is Light*, mentioned briefly in Chapter One. Composed intermittently throughout the decade of 1880, during which Tolstoy produced several stories titled *Folk Tales* ('*Narodnye rasskazy*'), this novella reads the *Iliad* as a deliberate warning against disobeying God's will about marriage. The narrator of *Walk in the Light While There is Light* is in agreement with the protagonist, Pamfilii:

'I could have forgotten the *Iliad*, which we studied and read together, but you who live among sages and poets, cannot forget. What is the entirety of the *Iliad*? It is a novel about disobeying God's will in relation to marriage. Menelaos, and Paris, and Helen, and Achilles, and Agamemnon, and Chryseis – all of this is a description of all the terrible disasters that befall men and that are now occurring because of that disobedience'.  
'Of what does the disobedience consist?'  
'The disobedience is that a man loves a woman for the sake of his own pleasure'.<sup>751</sup>

In a letter to his friend and editor, Vladimir Chertkov, Tolstoy describes the *Walk in the Light* novella as 'a very useful thing'<sup>752</sup> ('*ochen' poleznaia vesh'*'), and admits that, while it lacks aesthetic force, it contrasts Christian and worldly life

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<sup>751</sup> PSS 26, p. 269. See Appendix A.201 for original.

<sup>752</sup> PSS 86, p. 3.

effectively.<sup>753</sup> In an anachronistic leap, the novella imputes to Homer the moralistic critique of human attachment from a Christian perspective. The critique is, of course, Tolstoy's own. During the same decade, he identifies the Christian critique of marriage in the *Iliad* once again, this time in a draft for *The Kreutzer Sonata*. An exchange on the nature of love relates the same theme of inconstancy exemplified by the Homeric characters, Helen and Paris.<sup>754</sup>

'There is, after all, that feeling between people which is called love and which lasts neither months nor years, but a lifetime.'

'No, there isn't. Menelaos, maybe, would have preferred Helen for an entire lifetime, but Helen preferred Paris, and this has always been and will be the way in the world. [...] Besides that, it's not only a possibility, but a probability, that Helen would become satiated with Menelaos, or the other way around'.<sup>755</sup>

Though it is unclear whether the narrator regards Homer as intentionally making this critique, it reiterates exactly the observation made in *Walk in the Light While There Is Light*: that Christian marriage 'excludes that love of a woman which Paris experienced'.<sup>756</sup> Reading Homeric epic as religious, or proto-Christian, is a legitimizing strategy: if the pre-literate wisdom found in Homeric epic is of a spiritual nature, then Tolstoy is justified in equating it with Russian folk narratives.

In the 1870s and 1880s, linking his didactic folk stories to Homeric poetry became particularly important for Tolstoy because, in his view, the ancient epics served as ethical models that did not require literacy, education, or institutional support. As he turned increasingly away from public intellectual activity and the modern educational apparatus associated with it, Tolstoy justified his fictional writing by modelling it on archaic epic. Like Homeric narratives, Tolstoy's *bylini* draw on

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<sup>753</sup> Ibid.

<sup>754</sup> Recall that Tolstoy had deployed the same theme of inconstancy in *Anna Karenina* – see Chapter Five.

<sup>755</sup> PSS 27, p. 409. See Appendix A.202 for original. Notice that the final, published version substitutes Helen of Troy with an anonymous 'woman' – the implication might well be that, for Tolstoy, 'woman' was synonymous with the figure of Helen.

<sup>756</sup> PSS 26, 269. See Appendix A.203 for original.



national, familiar stories, contain a spiritual lesson, and require neither education nor literacy from its audience. In some sense, in writing folk narratives, Tolstoy is not 'really writing' at all, but participating in the oral tradition. Violence in the tales, therefore, is ethically justified and even necessary since, like the violence of the *Iliad*, it serves the wider purpose of inciting moral goodness in its uneducated audience. Hadji Murat's violence, therefore, is not an anomalous occurrence in the 1890s, as other critics have suggested. Instead, it has warlike predecessors in the previous two decades of Tolstoy's writing.

### **Tolstoy's Homer and Religion**

#### *A Tolstoyan Cultural History*

In the 1890s, Tolstoy was actively teaching himself to cease being an author. In 1898, he laments in his journal: 'I can't write, and I'm yearning to and compelling myself. How stupid! As though writing is life. Life isn't even in external activity [...]. [Life is] even more full and meaningful without writing. So, I'm learning to live without writing. And it's possible'.<sup>757</sup> Since Tolstoy condemns literature utterly and decides to cease writing altogether, it is significant that just a few weeks after these entries, Tolstoy begins serious work on *Hadji Murat*, resulting in a dilemma: 'I cannot write anything, but I don't stop thinking of H[adjij] M[urat] [...]'.<sup>758</sup> Tolstoy's inability to write may be helpfully contextualized in his attitude to artistic production at the time. In *What is Art?*, published in 1897, Tolstoy observes that Europe's upper classes consume art for personal pleasure rather than collective religious feeling. It is this latter use that, Tolstoy argues, is the proper aim of artistic activity.

This is not a call for parochial didacticism or moralizing in art, however, but is a historically-situated aesthetic evaluation: for Tolstoy, only works which arise from and are responsive to an epoch's 'religious consciousness' ('*religioznoe soznanie*') are capable of being truly original. It is crucial to underscore that Tolstoy does not privilege any particular religious consciousness, but instead makes the historical,

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<sup>757</sup> PSS, 53, p. 181. See Appendix A.204 for original. Note that Tolstoy uses '*glupo*' again here in reference to writing or compelling himself to write.

<sup>758</sup> PSS 53, p.184. See Appendix A.205 for original.

aesthetic, and philosophical claim that epochs are always characterized by such a consciousness, and that artworks have traditionally been responsive to it. Tolstoy describes the evolution of religious consciousness: 'With every forward step that humanity takes – and such steps are taken by means of greater and greater elucidation of religious consciousness – people experience newer and newer feelings. And therefore only on the basis of religious consciousness, showing the highest stage of human understanding of any historical period, can arise new feelings, never experienced before'.<sup>759</sup> The pleasure pursued by the upper classes, however, cannot be a source of originality because '[t]here is nothing older and more hackneyed than pleasure'.<sup>760</sup>

The first historical example *What is Art?* supplies to fortify its position is that of Homeric epic: 'From the religious consciousness of the ancient Greek flowed the actually novel and important and endlessly diverse emotions for the Greeks, expressed by both Homer and the tragedians [...]. [F]eelings flowing from religious consciousness [...] are all new, because religious consciousness is nothing other than the indication of the newly created relation of man to the world'.<sup>761</sup> In 1898, therefore, Homeric epic (along with Greek tragedy) displays aesthetic freshness of vision because, in Tolstoy's view, it is a direct expression of religious sentiment, which is itself perpetually evolving in response to humanity's relationship to the world.

Since Tolstoy claims that the artwork of his time reflects not religious consciousness but the pleasure of the aristocracy, it is therefore no longer an innovative expression of the *narod – narodnoe iskusstvo*, the art of the people – but a superficial plaything of the wealthy. It is salient that, first, in a draft for *What is Art?*, Tolstoy casts *narodnoe iskusstvo* as the highest form of art because it is accessible to all; second, this art is linked with Homer and no other artistic production (we have already seen Tolstoy make this comparison, see page 8); finally, this Homeric link is not one of similarity but one of *direct equivalence*: 'Which works are exceptional and which are not? [...] Those that are common to all

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<sup>759</sup> PSS 30, p. 86. See Appendix A.206 for original.

<sup>760</sup> Ibid., p. 85. See Appendix A.207 for original.

<sup>761</sup> Ibid., p. 86. See Appendix A.208 for original.

exist in a higher realm [...] Paintings – again landscapes, portraits, animals, all simple folk music, folk poetry – Homer'.<sup>762</sup> However, unlike the 1850s and 1860s, when Tolstoy saw the *nardnost'* of epic as arising from national history and collective memory, in his penultimate decade, Tolstoy emphasizes the religious qualities underlying Homeric epic.

Previously, Tolstoy had associated Homeric epic with Biblical narratives, Bach's music, and Raphael's painting not because they encouraged moral thinking but because they were unmediated and accessible expressions of the *narod*. In his penultimate decade, Tolstoy's reception of Homeric epic is informed by a religious internationalism that does not privilege any one religion, such that a production like Homer's is beloved by the *narod* precisely *because* of its moral nature: 'And all good, high art was like this: the Iliad, the Odyssey, the history of Jacob, Isaac, Joseph, and the Jewish prophets, and the psalms, and the evangelicals, and the story of Sakya Muni, and the Vedic hymns – convey very high feelings [...] and were understood by people of those times, who were even less educated than our working class'.<sup>763</sup> In Tolstoy's examples, Homeric poetry stands out as the sole instance of a literary rather than an explicitly religious production; clearly, for Tolstoy, Homeric epic has deep religious resonances.

In *On Shakespeare and Drama* (written in 1904, published in 1906), Tolstoy accuses modern art of borrowing ancient Greek forms while neglecting the religion from which those forms derive meaning. The educated artists of Europe 'did not understand that, for the Greeks, the struggles and sufferings of their heroes had religious significance'.<sup>764</sup> It is perhaps unsurprising that, given Tolstoy's intensive study of ancient Greek literature, language, and history, his religious assessment of Greek art generally, and Homeric epic particularly, is not inaccurate. Gregory Nagy, explaining why the ancient Greeks regarded Homer and Hesiod as the foundation for all essential knowledge, observes that all such knowledge was

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<sup>762</sup> Ibid., 346. See Appendix A.209 for original.

<sup>763</sup> Ibid., 109. See Appendix A.210 for original.

<sup>764</sup> *PSS* 35, p. 265. See Appendix A.211 for original.

religious in character, inseparable from ancient Greek myth, sacrificial practices, and hero-worship,<sup>765</sup> and were developed from religious rituals.<sup>766</sup>

That such religious practices – which, for Tolstoy, are the most refined expression of human knowledge in any given era – have been replaced by formal pleasure as the proper foundation of literature (and other art forms) is, in Tolstoy's view, a dramatic deviation not from ethical but from historical precedent. This deviation results in aesthetic and moral failure only secondarily. In this framework, epic violence is justified on the ground that it reflects the ethico-religious values of its epoch, which also renders it aesthetically novel. It is essential to reiterate that Tolstoy is not arguing for a 'vulgar' instrumentalism in art, reflected in a one-to-one correspondence between artistic productions and moral law; instead, he makes a dialectical argument that every epoch mirrors its unique religious consciousness and that, in the past, 'great' art expressed this consciousness. He is aware of the instrumentalist critique of his theory and attempts to anticipate it in another draft for *What is Art?*: 'Art, aside from its insignificant, unimportant manifestations, served religion not in the sense that art clothed religious superstition in aesthetic forms (as people who do not understand the meaning of religion like to imagine), but in the sense that art reflected those feelings which flowed from the highest understanding of life accessible to that time'.<sup>767</sup>

That Tolstoy is developing the above aesthetic theory while simultaneously unable to 'stop thinking about' Hadji Murat provides another clue to explain the violence of his final hero: if Tolstoy's narrative mirrors not the 'art for pleasure' values of the Europeanized aristocracy, but what he regards as religious spirit, it participates in the traditional form of art production. The following sentence from the sixteenth chapter of *What is Art?* communicates Tolstoy's approach to aesthetic history: '[A]ll art conveying the most diverse feelings, by means of which people communicative

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<sup>765</sup> Gregory Nagy, 'Introduction to Homeric Poetry' in *Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 9-25 (pp. 11-12).

<sup>766</sup> 'There is broad cultural evidence suggesting that hero worship in ancient Greece was not created out of stories like that of the Iliad and the Odyssey but was in fact independent of them. The stories, on the other hand, were based on the religious practices, though not always directly [...] Evidence also places these practices of hero worship and animal sacrifice precisely during the era when the stories of the Iliad and Odyssey took shape'. Nagy, 'Homeric Poetry', p. 11.

<sup>767</sup> PSS 30, p. 341. See Appendix A.212 for original.

with one another, *was not judged and was permitted* provided it did not convey feelings which contradicted the religious consciousness<sup>768</sup> (italics mine: ‘*ne osuzhdalos’ i dopuskalos*”). Tolstoy follows this statement immediately with a reference to the ancient Greeks, which, as ever, includes Homer: ‘So, for example, the Greeks selected, approved of and admired art that conveyed the feelings of beauty, strength, courage (Hesiod, Homer, Phidias) [...]’.<sup>769</sup> Put differently, if the historical (or fictional) Murat is violent, he cannot be judged morally because, like Achilles in the *Iliad*, he is part of a larger religious context from which his violence is inextricable. This is not to suggest that, for Tolstoy, Murat’s violence is in the service of religion (any more than Tolstoy’s position would imply that Achilles’ violence is in the service of religion), but that Murat’s *narrative* is underwritten by a religious consciousness that reflects a historically novel relation between humanity and the world.

#### *Universal Brotherhood in Tolstoy’s Homer*

Tolstoy’s religious ideas, outlined in works such as *Confession* (1879), *Critique of Dogmatic Theology* (1880), and *What I Believe* (1884), culminated in his translation into Russian from Greek and Hebrew the four New Testament Gospels published in 1882 as *The Harmonization, Translation and Investigation of the Four Gospels*. In the decade of 1890, while also working on *What is Art?* and other essays on aesthetics, Tolstoy composed *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. While the elaboration of Tolstoy’s theology is beyond the scope of this thesis, what is relevant for our purposes is that, in these theological writings, Tolstoy advances a version of the Christian faith that contrasts radically with its traditional interpretation, especially as established by the Russian Orthodox Church. As we have discussed, in *What is Art?*, Tolstoy describes the historical process of epochal religious consciousness, wherein an entirely new relation between humanity and the world is developed, and which ushers in novel art forms. I suggest that Tolstoy regarded his own religious view as a candidate for this new

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<sup>768</sup> PSS 30, 152. See Appendix A.213 for original.

<sup>769</sup> Ibid., p. 152. See Appendix A.214 for original.

relation between humanity and the world, one capable of inaugurating a new aesthetic sensibility.

As argued by Berman<sup>770</sup> and McLean,<sup>771</sup> Tolstoy's religious convictions in the latter portion of his life emphasized universal brotherhood rather than the values of any specific religion. This universalism is consistent with the historically situated and *narodnyi* notion of morality Tolstoy proposes in *What is Art?*, which is culturally diverse in its inclusion of Hinduism, Buddhism, and the psalms alongside Homeric epic, but is certainly not morally relativistic since, according to Tolstoy, despite their variety of expression, these various works are all advancing the same basic ethics of true Christianity, which is the 'consciousness of human brotherhood'<sup>772</sup> ('*soznanie bratstva liudei*'). The connection between Tolstoy's religious universalism established in his theological texts and his advocacy for artworks that convey universal ethics leads me to the following proposition: Tolstoy's reading of the *Iliad* as a Christian critique of marriage arises from his late-career belief that Homeric epic, like the religious texts and folk tales which he considers to be its counterparts, manages to articulate a Christian moral view.

Tolstoy again links Homeric epic with overtly religious material in a draft for Chapter Thirty of *What is Art?*: 'Among all people [*u vsekh narodov*] were valued those feelings which the artist experienced while contemplating his relationship to the infinite world, such were in poetry Homer, the Hebrew prophets, the Vedas, and others'.<sup>773</sup> *What is Art?* was composed while Tolstoy was radically re-interpreting Christianity in *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. It is, therefore, likely that the contemplative 'artist' whom Tolstoy has in mind is himself. He goes on to conclude: 'Art was valued not because it was art, and not because it was liked and afforded pleasure, but because it conveyed the most important and kind feelings, to which humanity lives up to at a certain time. And the most important and kind

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<sup>770</sup> Anna A. Berman, *Siblings in Tolstoy and Dostoevsky: The Path to Universal Brotherhood* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015), p. 134.

<sup>771</sup> Hugh McLean, *In Quest of Tolstoy* (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2008), p. 150.

<sup>772</sup> PSS 30, 86.

<sup>773</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 340. See Appendix A.215 for original.

feelings were those that we now call religious'.<sup>774</sup> Of course, Tolstoy knows, and proceeds to articulate, exactly what those 'important and kind feelings' are which both Homeric Greek and Christian artists experienced: 'All the highest art was always like this [...]. So it was for pagan peoples and so it must especially be with Christian peoples, among whom brotherhood and equality of people comprises the primary understanding of life'.<sup>775</sup>

Considering this reimagining of both history and religion to which he urged others to subscribe, while clarifying my approach to Tolstoy's position, I will replace the generous 'we' that Tolstoy uses in the penultimate quote with 'I', such that it reads: 'The most important and kind feelings were those that I now call religious'. In a circular move almost too subtle and elaborate to detect, Tolstoy first creates an ethics of brotherhood and *narodnost'*, then attributes its origin to the history of all cultures. He then locates its iteration in Homeric epic, various religious texts, and folk art, all of which must be excused from moral judgment because they are, despite their aesthetic and historical diversity, narratives which propagate brotherhood and *narodnost'*. For this reason, *Anna Karenina* became for Tolstoy a vulgar indulgence that merely increased the pleasure of the educated elite rather than expanding the spiritual horizon of the illiterate *narod*, as truly valuable art ought to do.

We now arrive at a full explanation for the fictional Murat's heroic violence. If the novel draws on elements of Homeric material, as Bloom, Orwin, and Kokobobo have observed, it is not because Tolstoy has neglected his religious commitments but because in the decade of the 1890s, Tolstoy regarded Homeric material as a direct reflection of those commitments. For the elderly Tolstoy, Homeric epic is a truly novel art form that promotes 'kind' and 'important' feelings of brotherhood while possessing the virtue of being accessible to the *narod*. In associating his final novel with traditional heroic epic rather than the contemporary writing of his day, Tolstoy expects that it will possess the same qualities as Homeric poetry, insofar as it, too, can convey the 'religious consciousness' of the epoch in a way that is accessible to all.

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<sup>774</sup> Ibid. See Appendix A.216 for original.

<sup>775</sup> PSS 30, p. 343. See Appendix A.217 for original.

It is unsurprising that Murat is historical and uneducated, a sort of folk hero whose Islamic religiosity, which Kokobobo has identified as consistent with Sufism, serves to underscore the 'kind' and 'important' feelings the narrative is meant to communicate: 'Tolstoy did not mind taking advantage of violence in art to deliver the right moral message. In *Hadji Murat* he relies on the Caucasian epic setting to convey the spiritual core of the protagonist's faith'.<sup>776</sup> To push this observation slightly, for Tolstoy, it is not *despite* its warlike epic ethos that the novel conveys a spiritual message, but because of it, since traditional epic already possesses within itself the proper religious orientation. It is not necessarily or exclusively the character of Murat that accomplishes the moral function, but Tolstoy's narrative as a whole, by means of participating in the genre of epic and folk narrative.

### *History and Folk Song*

Although Tolstoy had been thinking about *Hadji Murat* for many years, he began to gather historical material for the novel in earnest in the final years of 1890. In 1902, he wrote letters to those who had personally known the real Murat, such as Ivan Korganov (1842-1900s) and his mother, Anna Korganova (1816-1900s), in whose home the guerrilla leader had stayed. Tolstoy requested from Korganov detailed information about his hero: 'When I write historical [material], I love to be faithful to reality down to the smallest details'.<sup>777</sup> As I argued in my analysis of *War and Peace* in Chapter Three, if Tolstoy's primary aim was to be 'faithful down to the smallest details' as we would understand fidelity to historical reality, he would have written history, not fiction. It is helpful to approach his final novel, as I have approached *War and Peace*, as an instance of the *istoriia-iskusstvo* that Tolstoy identifies with epic writing and which he regards as truer than history precisely because it articulates those small details in a way that *istoriia-nauka* cannot.

In addition to gathering verbal testimony, Tolstoy consulted archival material in Tbilisi and frequently turned to the multiple editions of *Sbornik svedenii of kavkazskikh gortsakh* (*Collection of Information About the Caucasian Mountaineers*, 1870) which contained academic analyses of Caucasus history and

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<sup>776</sup> Kokobobo, 'Final Hero', p. 39.

<sup>777</sup> PSS 73, 353. See Appendix A.218 for original.



folklore. Displaying the same ethnographic interest that had once prompted him to transliterate Chechen songs in preparation for writing *The Cossacks*, Tolstoy's first note on the text concerns a section dedicated to 'propitiation for murder'<sup>778</sup> ('*o primireniĭ za ubištvo*'). That the themes of killing and revenge were relevant to him at this time and that he did not moralize about them is evidenced in further notes on the volume. Tolstoy praised the Caucasian 'songs of revenge and daring' for being '*chudnye*', 'marvelous', and he was taken particularly with a certain 'song of Khochbar' which he called '*udivitel'naia*', 'astonishing'.<sup>779</sup>

The *Song of Khochbar* (*Pesnia o Khochbare*) is the most famous production of Dagestani heroic folklore, set down in writing for the first time and translated from Avar into Russian by the Caucasologist P.K. Ushtar (1816-75) specifically for the 1870 edition of the *Sbornik* that Tolstoy referenced. It is an epic poem about the legendary Avar *abrek*, Khochbar, who is betrayed by his host, the prince of Khunzakh, and sentenced to death by fire; Khochbar snatches up the khan's two infant sons and leaps into the flames, where all three burn to death. The central themes of the historically situated poem, as indicated by V.O. Bobrovnikov, are power and violence among the Dagestani mountaineers, specifically, between the independent Gitadlin Avars (represented by Khochbar) and the Avar Khanate, which led to the criminalization of Muslim military chieftains.<sup>780</sup> Scholars traditionally date the crystallization of the epic to sometime between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, and its eponymous hero has passed into oral cultural memory as having fought bravely against the khanate's raids upon independent Avar tribes.<sup>781</sup>

Although he could not refuse the khan's invitation for fear of being accused of cowardice, Khochbar outwits him. By forcing the khan's sons to share his cruel and unjust death, Khochbar robs the khanate of heirs. Thereby, he asserts the Gitadlin's right to independence while punishing the great sin of disobeying guest-

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<sup>778</sup> PSS 35, p. 276.

<sup>779</sup> Ibid.

<sup>780</sup> V.O. Bobrovnikov, 'Istoricheskaia pamiat' gortsovskogo 'khishnichestva' v avarskoi "Pesne o Khochbare," *Istoricheskaia Ekspertiza* (2017), 3-33, (p. 7). Translation mine.

<sup>781</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

friendship etiquette.<sup>782</sup> Khochbar is a complicated figure, celebrated as an Odyssean trickster who steals from the khanate's subjects and possesses a fearsome reputation for violence. Like Achilles, who is the only Homeric hero that plays on the lyre and sings, Khochbar is a skilled singer and musician, playing the *chagan*, a string instrument similar to a violin.<sup>783</sup> These parallels have a strong historical precedent, since the orally-preserved folklore of the Caucasus – a region which, as Tolstoy knew, the ancient Greeks regarded as comprising part of Scythia – contains traces of Greek myths and legends.<sup>784</sup> In the translation of the poem Tolstoy consulted, Khochbar self-consciously performs an improvised song about his exploits before the khan, or *nutsal*, in a way that recalls the self-curated stories of 'city-sacking' Odysseus:

'Listen then, Avars, I'll tell you something, and you don't interrupt, *Nutsal* [ruler], I'll rise and sing. I crawled into your window and carried away your beloved wife's silver trousers; I cut up your tame aurochs. There, above, the sheepfold; who drove off the rams from them, why are they empty? There, below, the stables; who drove off the herd, why have they fallen apart? There, on the roofs, are widows; who made them widows, killing their husbands? Around us are orphans; who killed their fathers and made them orphans? You cannot count all those I killed in the field and in the forest [...] There, *Nutsal*, what feats are accomplished, but is it a feat to invite a man and kill him? [...] My sharp-edged spear, not once did you pierce the breast of the khan's vassals!'<sup>785</sup>

After jumping into the fire with the little boys, Khochbar cries, 'Why are you wailing, little *nutsals*; after all, I am burning with you; why are you squealing, piglets, after all, I love the light, too! [...] My mother ought not cry, her *molodets* did not die in

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<sup>782</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>783</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>784</sup> See Adrienne Mayor, 'Foreword' in *Nart Sagas from the Caucasus: Myths and Legends from the Circassians, Abazas, Abkhaz, and Ubykhs*, trans. and ed. by John Colarusso (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. xiiv-xviii.

<sup>785</sup> *Song of Khochbar* in P. Uslar, 'Narodnie Skazaniia Kavkazskikh Gortsev: Koe-chto o slovesnikh proizvedeniakh gortsev' in *Sbornik Svedenii o Kavkazskikh Gortsakh: Izbrannoe (Pereizdanie 19 Veka)*, vol 1., ed. by Roman V. Pashkov (Moscow, 2017) pp. 124-180, p. 154. Translation mine. See Appendix A.219 for original.

vain. My sister ought not sorrow, I died with glory'.<sup>786</sup> Khochbar's mock-friendly last words resonate with Achilles' logic in the latter's bitter response to Lykaon:<sup>787</sup> since the great Khochbar must die, the young princes should not mind dying, too.

Khochbar's guerrilla raids were regarded by the Avar mountaineers as a form of heroic resistance, and the figure ultimately became a unifier for Islamic mountaineer identity and struggle against Russian expansionism, with the latter taking the form of a *ghazavat*, or holy war: 'In the song, Khochbar behaves not like a captured bandit, but like a warrior without fear or reproach, finding himself in the land of deadly enemies. The hearer's memory retains not so much the thieving and killing of the enemies Khochbar names, but his daring before the unavoidable face of death, as juxtaposed with the cruelty and cowardice of the Khunzakhs'.<sup>788</sup>

Tolstoy's ethnographic and aesthetic interest in the *Song of Khochbar* and in the other Caucasian 'songs of revenge and daring', as he describes them, cannot be separated from his interest in Homeric epic, since both are performances arising from a heroic poetry tradition that celebrates the closely related values of kinship loyalty, military valour, and glorious death in combat. From the art historical critique in *What is Art?*, we can conclude that Tolstoy's praise for violent songs of revenge is due to the songs' embeddedness in a religiously informed sociocultural context. Tolstoy does not condemn Khochbar's violent heroism for the same reason that he refuses to condemn the violence of Homer's heroes, instead praising and linking these ancient epics along with the Bible and folk art. In arising organically from unmediated oral history, both Homeric poetry and the *Song of Khochbar* function as instances of religious consciousness. In other words, what is important for Tolstoy about the Avar song is that it is a way of life.

Khochbar as a cultural and literary character, and the poetic narrative of his exploits, exemplify the moral behaviour that Tolstoy praises in *What is Religion, of*

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<sup>786</sup> Uslar, *Khochbar*, p. 154. See Appendix A.220 for original.

<sup>787</sup> 'So, friend, you die also. Why all this clamor about it?

[...]

Do you not see what a man I am, how huge, how splendid and born of a great father [...]

Yet even I have also my death and my strong destiny'. (Hom. *Il.* 21.208-210)

<sup>788</sup> Bobrovnikov, 'Istoricheskaia pamiat'', p. 22.

*What Does Its Essence Consist?*, where he argues that complete faith in the infinite, regardless of the value system it endorses, is quite enough for spiritual wisdom. In disparaging the thought of philosopher Auguste Comte, Tolstoy again contrasts simple-minded faith with the false ethics cultivated by formal education: 'The most educated Comtist finds himself in a religious relationship that is incomparably lower than that of a simple person who believes in God, *whatever the god*, as long as it is infinite, and whose behaviour is derived from this faith'<sup>789</sup> (italics mine). Defining religion as the relationship between human beings and the infinite world, Tolstoy argues that this relationship develops historically, such that religions come into existence, develop to maturity, and then die. The Christian religion, he writes, was a response to the disappearance of Greco-Roman spirituality: '[D]ecline occurred in the Greek and Roman religions, with Christianity appearing after the lowest ebb of the decline had been reached'.<sup>790</sup> Given such a trajectory of Christian faith, it is not surprising that the Christian wisdom that is, for Tolstoy, implicit in Russian folk tales, would find resonance with ancient Greek epic, its religious predecessor.

What is important for Tolstoyan ethics in the decades of 1880 and 1890 is that behaviour is derived from submission to God rather than human knowledge, whether societal or subjective. The art forms that can express behaviour arising from faith, whether ancient Greek or Russian, are found in folk productions such as legendary Avar songs, Homeric epics, and Russian *bylini*, and are better moral guides than either formal education or institutional religion. This folk ethic is the aesthetic orientation of *Hadji Murat*, which has a hero and narrative that are Khochbarian as much as Homeric: the text is an epic tale of adventure that issues from a religious consciousness. Tolstoy's careful study of the mountaineer culture in preparation for writing his final novel could not but have led to the reflection that the well-known and beloved *Song of Khochbar* was foundational to Dagestani folklore. Therefore, it is likely to have served as an ethical model for the historical Dagestani warrior Murat, who would have internalized from a young age its values of political resistance, kinship vengeance, guest friendship, thievery, trickery, and

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<sup>789</sup> Tolstoy, *What is Religion?*, p. 89. See Appendix A.221 for original.

<sup>790</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

heroic death. It should not be surprising, then, that Tolstoy's fictional Murat exemplifies these values.

As I shall argue in the following sections, however, such blatantly un-Christian qualities are underwritten and justified in Tolstoy's Murat by religious submission. As we have seen, Tolstoy regards religious submission as informing all folk narratives, and includes it in his own novel. Put differently, because Tolstoy's Murat submits to the infinite, he therefore acts from faith. For Tolstoy, this means that the novel *Hadji Murat* instantiates religious consciousness that, in terms of its moral legitimacy and aesthetic qualities, functions as a folk production.

### **Performance, Family, and Spirituality**

#### *Hadji Murat's Performance: Like Mother, Like Son*

It is easy to see the reasons for the critical consensus that Tolstoy's Hadji Murat is Homeric. As a successful warlord who is feared for his unmatched battle prowess and not above social manoeuvring and clever scheming, Murat's connection to both Achilles and Odysseus is obvious. I would like to suggest, however, that part of what makes Murat uniquely Achillean is not solely his renowned military might. Rather, it is, first, his closeness to his mother; second, his dreams of glory that initially hinder him from recognizing what is truly important; and third, his anticipation of his own death in battle. Simultaneously, I suggest that part of what makes Murat also Odyssean is not, or not merely, his quick mind, but his growing attachment to his wife and son. These family ties and the tensions they beget, which also make Murat both like and unlike Khochbar, are shown by the narrator to be what is most ethically significant about Tolstoy's final hero in the final analysis, precisely because they are the occasion for religious faith.

Rather than fighting for personal vengeance or for the glory of the nation, I shall show how Tolstoy's Murat dies calmly for the sake of his family because he acquires the spiritual insight that, due to the immortality of his soul, he cannot truly die. Thus, one of the effects resulting from adapting Homer's two heroes to a

profoundly religious figure such as Hadji Murat is the spiritualization of traditional heroism. As we have seen above, for Tolstoy, religious faith is closely associated with absence of modern education, and Murat is shown to possess the Tolstoyan brand of 'stupidity' that characterizes religious peasants and empowers him to receive spiritual truth. Of course, such stupidity is defined not by a slow or weak mind – Murat's intellect is both quick and sharp – but rather by a mind that is innocent. Such a mind is not intellectually tormented, sceptical, or divided, and its nature is trusting rather than suspicious, which means that it can achieve complete submission to traditional wisdom.

Although Murat's religious submission deepens throughout the novel, he starts out characterized by a certain openness and intellectual simplicity. His smile is described four times as being 'childlike'<sup>791</sup> ('*detskaia*'). He often judges situations by simply repeating received, traditional wisdom,<sup>792</sup> the most characteristic of which is his laconic observation that "A rope should be long but a speech short".<sup>793</sup> Murat is no conventional philosopher because he is primarily a man of action. He is illiterate and can neither speak nor understand Russian. However, these qualities are not disadvantages because his understanding does not depend upon the sort of knowledge that can be taught. The narrator implies that Murat's wordless communication – smiling, pointing, nodding, touching his heart – is more effective than spoken language. Indeed, lack of knowledge helps Murat see more clearly without the superfluity of language: 'Although he did not understand what was said, he understood what it was necessary for him to understand'.<sup>794</sup> In other words, what is expressed with language and what is important for action are not necessarily linked. The reader is frequently reminded of Murat's illiteracy; I shall suggest below that this illiteracy is juxtaposed with performed song that facilitates both human and divine wisdom.

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<sup>791</sup> Leo Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad*, trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude (1904) (State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University, *Electronic Classics Series*, ed. by Jim Manis, 2001), p. 30, p. 55, p. 60, p. 124.

<sup>792</sup> For example, in response to why Hamzad, his political enemy, killed the Khansha, Murat reduces a complicated political struggle to a traditional proverb: "Where the forelegs have gone the hind legs must follow!" Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad*, p. 65.

<sup>793</sup> Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>794</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

It is impossible that, when taking notes on the *Song of Khochbar* during his preparation for composing *Hadji Murat*, Tolstoy could have failed to notice that the relationship between Khochbar and the cruel Khan who sentences him to death parallels exactly that of Murat and the imam Shamil. Although both Khochbar and the Khan are united by common enemies – the Persians and Russians who wish to subjugate them – they nevertheless struggle for power over the Avar people. Similarly, despite their mutual determination to resist the Russians, the arbitrarily violent imam Shamil wishes to kill Murat, who in turn intends to lead a force of Avar fighters to overthrow the imam. Within this martial setting, it is perhaps unexpected that the *Song of Khochbar* begins and ends with an invocation to women: first, to Khochbar’s mother, and, finally, to both his mother and sisters. In Uslar’s prose translation, the song opens thus: ‘The Avar khan sent a messenger to summon the Ghedat!<sup>795</sup> Khochbar. “Shall I go, mother, to Khunzakh?” “Do not go, my darling, the bitterness of shed blood has not passed; the khans – may they be destroyed – torment the people with cunning”’.<sup>796</sup> Khochbar’s mother has seen through the khan’s deceit because she has intuited the revenge motive. Predictably, Khochbar does not listen. What stands out, however, is that Khochbar’s first action in the poem is to consult his mother, that her perspective is important to him, and that she effectively foretells his death; consistent with this, the hero’s final words are meant for his mother and sisters.<sup>797</sup>

The relationship between a doomed warrior and his prescient mother is, of course, evident in that of Achilles and Thetis, who warns her heroic son about his death in battle. These heroic precedents, in Khochbar and Achilles, may well have led Tolstoy to deepen and emphasize Murat’s attachment to his mother, Patimat. Given that Murat tells his male allies, “May thy sons live!”<sup>798</sup> without mentioning their daughters, dismisses the reasoning powers of women since “a woman has as much sense in her head as an egg has hair”<sup>799</sup> and believes that all women who

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<sup>795</sup> An Avar district in the south of the khanate.

<sup>796</sup> Uslar, *Khochbar*, p. 153. See Appendix A.227 for original.

<sup>797</sup> “May my mother not weep: her *molodets* did not die in vain. May my sisters not sorrow: I died with glory.” Uslar, *Khochbar*, p. 154. See Appendix A.228 for original.

<sup>798</sup> Tolstoy, *Hadji Murat*, p. 6.

<sup>799</sup> *Ibid*, p. 59.

are “not under control” are “weak, stupid, and conceited”,<sup>800</sup> it is surprising that Hadji Murat is receptive to, and inspired to heroic battle by, his own mother. We learn that Patimat had challenged her husband (who had urged her to nurse the khan’s son instead of the infant Murat) and was nearly killed for her audacity. She raised Murat with the reminder that, just as she had not feared death, neither shall he. Indeed, this memory is the most vulnerable moment for Hadji Murat in the text.

Positioned at the mid-point of the novel to signal that it is the pivot upon which the narrative turns, is a conversation between Murat and Loris-Melikov, an aide-de-camp who speaks Tatar and is tasked with writing down and translating Murat’s personal history. Murat cannot write, but when Loris-Melikov insists that he must tell “everything, deliberately from the beginning”<sup>801</sup> is so certain of his speech and memory that he promises readily, “I can do that, only there is much – very much – to tell! Many events have happened!”<sup>802</sup> This juxtaposition between written, translated history and oral history is especially relevant given one of Tolstoy’s most commonly-treated themes which was discussed at length in Chapter Three: the inability of historical writing to capture ‘everything’ in the life of even a single human being. Yet Murat does not doubt that his mode of telling – unmediated, personal, expressive – can convey ‘everything’ – if he is only given enough time. He prepares for his talk by a long, thoughtful silence followed by taking up a stick and dagger: he ‘started whittling the stick with [the dagger] and speaking at the same time’.<sup>803</sup> One cannot whittle a stick while one writes, which is partly what makes writing private and reflective while speech is essentially social and active. Murat’s stick, whittled while he is speaking, underscores that his story is performative, coming into being in the act of telling.

Almost immediately, Murat begins speaking about his mother and her courageous action. She composed a song on the subject of her husband’s attack, which Murat shares:

‘My white bosom was pierced by the blade of bright steel,

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<sup>800</sup> Ibid, p. 58.

<sup>801</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>802</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>803</sup> Ibid, pp. 55-56.



But I laid my bright sun, my dear boy, close upon it  
Till his body was bathed in the stream of my blood.  
And the wound healed without aid of herbs or of grass.  
And I feared not death, so my boy will ne'er fear it'.<sup>804</sup>

Two elements are important in considering this rather gruesome mother-son history. The first is the song's epic qualities. Patimat's 'white bosom' (*'belaia grud'*) is a verbatim reiteration of one of four 'epic' epithets Tolstoy had prepared when composing his *bylini*, as we saw above. Furthermore, Murat sings what he claims Patimat had composed: a poetic retelling in elevated, solemn language of how the infant Murat was saved and then how the very presence of his body led to his mother's miraculous recovery. In other words, the memory of Murat's almost supernatural survival and the healing power of his presence is contained and passed along by means of an epic song, adding to his legendary history.

The song serves to illuminate what is perhaps already obvious: *everything* Murat says to Loris-Melikov about himself is a performance. At the very least, the contradiction between Murat's offhand comments about women and the grandiloquent qualities he ascribes to his mother ought to give us pause. Indeed, Loris-Melikov suspects this, too: 'It occurred to him that [...] Hadji Murad's surrender and his tales of hatred of Shamil might be false [...]. "The others, and Hadji Murad himself, know how to hide their intentions" [...] thought he'.<sup>805</sup> While Murat is probably not lying, as an inheritor of the epic *Song of Khochbar*, he is certainly performing his history, which means that his narrative has been both polished and embellished. The story as he articulates it has a distinct beginning, climax, and suspenseful conclusion. He begins confidently, as though he has told this tale before, commanding Loris-Melikov: "Write: Born in Tselmess, a small aoul".<sup>806</sup> He speaks with a lyrical eloquence, using epithets and metaphors to introduce his narrative (the village of his birth is "the size of an ass's head"<sup>807</sup> and it is "two cannon-shots" distance from the home of the Khans) and communicates

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<sup>804</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

<sup>805</sup> Ibid, p. 63.

<sup>806</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

<sup>807</sup> Ibid.

colourful, almost improbable adventures (“There were thirty murids and we were only two. They killed my brother Osman, but I kept them at bay, leapt through the window, and escaped”<sup>808</sup>) that are enacted by carefully sketched characters (“His body was as strong as a bull’s and he was as brave as a lion, but his soul was weak as water”<sup>809</sup>). He ends his story on a boastful note which recollects the weapon in his hands and adapts Khochbar’s gloating about his ‘sharp-edged spear’ to the ‘sharpest sword’, a symbolic object that Murat believes entitles him to power: “[I]t happened that I was asked who will be imam after Shamil, and I replied, ‘He will be Imam whose sword is sharpest!’”<sup>810</sup>

The narrator provides other hints that Murat’s narrative has been told before. After a pause at a critical moment, Murat resumes speaking, and we are told that he ‘went on with his tale’<sup>811</sup> (*prodolzhal svoi rasskaz*). The term ‘*rasskaz*’ is used several times to describe Murat’s narrative, a noun best translated as ‘tale’ or ‘story’. The verb *skazat’* – to speak or tell – is related to the spoken *skaz*, a narrative that implies a teller, and also to *skazka*, a folktale or fairy tale. Recall how, in an 1856 journal entry, Tolstoy uses the term *rasskazyvat’* to indicate the act of singing.<sup>812</sup> Indeed, the imaginative quality of *rasskaz* is implicit in Loris-Melikov’s suspicion: that Murat is not being forthright. To underscore the distinction between a *rasskaz* and other forms of narrative, two chapters prior to Murat’s dictation to Loris-Melikov, a parallel scene of dictation takes place: the illiterate mother of the wounded soldier, Petia Avdeev, is dictating a letter to the local church clerk. Her speech, like all unpractised speech, contains ruptures, uncertainties, and descriptions that are not interesting to hear or to read, as she addresses her son:

In her letter Peter’s mother first sent him her blessing, then greetings from everybody and the news of his godfather’s death, and at the end she added that [Peter’s wife] had not wished to stay with them [...]. Then came a reference to the present of a ruble, and finally a message which the old

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<sup>808</sup> Ibid, p. 65.

<sup>809</sup> Ibid, pp. 57-58.

<sup>810</sup> Ibid, p. 67.

<sup>811</sup> Ibid, p. 58.

<sup>812</sup> PSS 47, p. 82.

woman, yielding to her sorrows, had dictated with tears in her eyes and the church clerk had taken down exactly, word for word:

“One thing more, my darling child, my sweet dove, my own Peterkin! I have wept my eyes out lamenting for thee, thou light of my eyes. To whom has thou left me?...” At this point the old woman had sobbed and wept, and said: “That will do!” So the words stood in the letter.<sup>813</sup>

Avdeev’s mother’s speech to her son, uncontrolled and full of clichés, is very different from Patimat’s beautiful and magical lament. In other words, the former is not a ‘tale’, yet the narrator emphasizes that the mother’s message is taken down ‘word for word’ (*‘slovo v slovo’*<sup>814</sup>) and ‘the words stood’ (*‘tak i ostalos’ v pis’me’*<sup>815</sup>) without alteration, showing what happens to living speech when it is captured in writing.<sup>816</sup>

I suggest that, unlike the dictation of Peter’s mother, Murat’s dictation to Loris-Melikov draws on epic performance, specifically, the framed epic song of Khochbar. Khochbar had performed his history before an audience by means of epic song, just as Achilles is shown to be a performer of epic songs. What Murat dictates to Loris-Melikov is consistent not with genuine human speech but is instead resonant with the songs of Khochbar and Achilles. It is the latter two who are unique in their status as both warriors and performers of song, and who are destined for a violent death in their prime at the hands of their enemies. If we link Hadji Murat to Khochbar and to Achilles, then his significance as not only a successful warrior, but as an illiterate performer of oral history, is rendered explicit. If Murat is a performer as much as he is a warrior, then his violence must be

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<sup>813</sup> Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad*, p. 43.

<sup>814</sup> *PSS* 35, p. 39.

<sup>815</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>816</sup> The repetitions, diminutives, and endearments (‘Peterkin’, ‘my sweet dove’) employed by Petia’s grieving mother draw on the genre of lament songs, or *plachi*, which feature hypocoristics and fixed expressions; see James Bailey, ‘On Analyzing the Verbal Rhythm of a Russian Folk Song’, *Poetics Today*, 16.3 (1995), 471-91 (p. 475). Natalie Kononenko has argued that, while the epic and lament genres resemble one another, until the turn of the twentieth century in Russia, laments were performed exclusively by women and epic songs were the domain of men; see ‘Women as Performers of Oral Literature: A Re-Examination of Epic and Lament’, in *Women Writers in Russian Literature*, ed. by Toby Clyman and Diana Greene (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1994), pp. 17-33 (p. 18). Kononenko’s observation supports my argument that Murat is performing epic song, while Avdeev’s mother’s dictation resonates with the genre of lament; in Murat’s retelling of his own mother’s lament, Patimat’s song becomes epic.

considered in connection with his status as an Achillean and Khochbarian participant in folk narrative, or *bylina*. This, for Tolstoy, is precisely what renders Murat's violence not only morally acceptable, but necessary. Put simply, it is part of the story, and the story is an instantiation of religious consciousness conveyed in the novel by both intradiegetic narration, as experienced by Murat, and extradiegetic narration, as conveyed by the narrator.

Murat's self-conscious representation in epic is evidenced further in the song he requests of Khanefi, one of his companions, about the blood-feud that had once existed between them. The song ends with the inevitability of death:

'Cold art Thou, O Death, yet I was thy Lord and thy  
Master!  
My body sinks fast to the earth, my soul to Heaven  
Flies  
faster.'"<sup>817</sup>

If we read Murat as Achillean, then the song indicates that he is no longer quite so arrogantly preoccupied with conquest and is becoming conscious of his approaching death: 'Hadji Murad always listened to this song with closed eyes and when it ended on a long gradually dying note he always remarked in Russian – "Good song! Wise song!"'<sup>818</sup> Murat's acknowledgment of the wisdom contained in epic songs parallels Tolstoy's own, since the song is capable of disclosing what is truly important. In this case, it is Murat's growing acceptance of death that parallels his developing awareness that his soul is immortal.

### *Religion and Family*

Murat's difference from Achilles and Khochbar becomes apparent a third of the way through Tolstoy's novel. Until Murat's second meeting with the Russian commander Mikhail Vorontsov in Chapter Ten, the reader can assume that Murat

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<sup>817</sup> Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad*, p. 105.

<sup>818</sup> *Ibid.*

has no family of his own. We are introduced to a famed and fearless warlord whose martial exploits are recounted, but whose home life is not mentioned. As Murat is discussed in Chapter Nine during dinner at the Vorontsovs', each guest tries to 'outdo' the other by recounting tales about the hero that are likely exaggerated:

'He came into the village at night, seized what he wanted, and galloped off again with the whole party'.

[...]

'The man's audacity is amazing! A remarkable man!'

'Why, in 1849 he dashed into Temir Khan Shura and plundered the shops in broad daylight'.

[...]

'He is a great man'.<sup>819</sup>

It is obvious that what makes Murat 'great' in the eyes of others is also what makes him great in his own eyes at the start of the novel: valour, violence, and cunning. The narrator does not convey the hero's devotion to his family because, at this stage, he does not seem to have any. The novel follows Murat's developing consciousness, and, in the first sections of the novel, Murat is not shown to give any thought to his relatives. Indeed, he seems to consider little other than pursuit of military glory and power. In our first insight into Murat's internal state, he is revealed to live up to the rumours about him insofar as he is a self-absorbed and callous hero destined for a lesson in humility, as indicated in the narration's ironic description of his great luck:

Hadji Murad always had great faith in his own fortune. When planning anything he always felt in advance firmly convinced of success, and fate smiled on him. It had been so, with a few rare exceptions, during the whole course of his stormy military life; and so he hoped it would be now. He pictured to himself how – with the army Vorontsov would place at his

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<sup>819</sup> Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad*, pp. 47-48.

disposal – he would march against Shamil and take him prisoner, and revenge himself on him; and how the Russian Tsar would reward him and how he would again rule not only over Avaria, but over the whole of Chechnya, which would submit to him [...] He dreamt how he and his brave followers rushed at Shamil with songs and with the cry, ‘Hadji Murad is coming!’ and how they seized him and his wives and how he heard the wives crying and sobbing. The song [...] and the cry ‘Hadji Murad is coming!’ and the weeping of Shamil’s wives, was the howling, weeping and laughter of jackals that awoke him.<sup>820</sup>

We know from the frame narrative, in which Murat is compared to a resurgent thistle, that he will die, and yet will survive that death. His faith in his good fortune, therefore, is queried for the reader. Bathetically, the narrator mocks Murat’s grandiloquent dreams by showing them to be nothing other than the cries of jackals who are, effectively, laughing at him. Only in Chapter Ten, a third of the way through the novel, does the reader learn for the first time that Murat is a family man. He has a wife and children whom Shamil is holding hostage, along with Murat’s elderly mother. It is remarkable that, in his reflections and dreams in the first third of the novel, Murat is wholly consumed with his ‘stormy military life’ to the exclusion of his home life. He does not consider his family or the necessity of rescuing them, instead focusing on ingratiating himself with the Russians, seeking violent revenge, and seizing his enemy’s lamenting women while his followers fanatically chant his name. What is important about Murat’s connection to the Iliadic Achilles and the Dagestani Khochbar is not just their military valour, but their lack of attachment to a family of their own, specifically, a wife and children.<sup>821</sup>

If we read Murat at the early stage of the novel as Achillean, it is significant that, while he has a deep connection to his mother and to his beloved companion, Eldar (who, like Patroklos, dies in a battle that prefigures Murat’s own death), he has no

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<sup>820</sup> Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad*, p. 25.

<sup>821</sup> While Achilles does have a son, Neoptolemus, Achilles seems to give little thought to him in the *Iliad*, even remarking that his own son’s death would hurt him less than the death of his companion, Patroclus (*Il.* 19.326), who is, significantly, his military companion and possibly lover, rather than a blood relation.

wife or children at home to whom he hopes to return. Military conquest and glory are Murat's great priority because there are no commitments at home that require his survival, or at least none that he acknowledges. The second time the reader is granted access to Murat's private reflections, in Chapter Six, just after he meets Vorontsov for the first time, the warrior is still thinking exclusively of himself: 'The pleased expression [...] vanished, and a look of anxiety showed itself [...]. He feared everything: that he might be seized, chained, and sent to Siberia, or simply killed; and therefore he was on his guard'.<sup>822</sup> At this point, there has still been no mention of his family, and it is instructive that fearing 'everything' means only that Murat is anxious for his own self while the safety of his wife and children does not enter his mind (he does nevertheless make sure to ask Eldar after the horses and the weapons).<sup>823</sup>

Finally, in Chapter Ten, during Murat's second meeting with Vorontsov, we hear for the first time that Murat has a wife and children and that they are in danger. It is the last matter that Murat raises to Vorontsov, almost as an afterthought. He first asks the interpreter to express to Vorontsov his fantasy of revenge against Shamil – 'Shamil lives and I will not die without taking vengeance on him'<sup>824</sup> – and then conveys his expectation of receiving an army so that he can 'raise the whole of Daghestan'.<sup>825</sup> Finally, Murat shares what will come to preoccupy him exclusively for the final third of the novel:

Hadji Murad pondered.

'Tell the Sirdar one thing more', Hadji Murad began again, 'that my family are in the hands of my enemy, and that as long as they are in the mountains I am bound and cannot serve him. Shamil would kill my wife and my mother and my children [...]'.<sup>826</sup>

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<sup>822</sup> Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad*, p. 34.

<sup>823</sup> Ibid.

<sup>824</sup> Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad*, p. 52.

<sup>825</sup> Ibid, p. 52-53.

<sup>826</sup> Ibid, p. 53.

If the situation is so dire, how is it possible that it is merely ‘one thing more’ and that it has not been raised before, either to Voronstov, to one of Murat’s own companions, or even in Murat’s own mind? In an ironic reversal, when Murat mentions his family to Vorontsov again, the commander avoids the matter: ‘Here at the ball Hadji Murad tried to speak to Voronstov about buying out his family, but Vorontsov, pretending that he had not heard him, walked away, and Loris-Melikov afterwards told Hadji Murad that this was not the place to talk about business’.<sup>827</sup> After this cruel dismissal, Murat shows less interest in armies and glory, and becomes increasingly more worried about his relatives. By Chapter Fourteen, he does not sleep at night, eats little, and, in Vorontsov’s words, ‘prays continually’.<sup>828</sup> Murat’s deepening faith parallels the gradual prioritization of his domestic commitments.

If Murat is Odyssean, it is not solely due to his cunning, but also to his developing consciousness of himself as husband, father, and son. These are the qualities that Tolstoy in the last decades of his life regarded as constituting a meaningful existence. It is telling that, in the passage of *Walk in the Light While There is Light* that urges a Christian reading of the *Iliad*, the list of ‘sinful’ Homeric characters does not include Hektor, Andromache, Odysseus, Penelope, or Telemachos (the characters representing immoral behaviour in that novella are, in order: Menelaos, Paris, Helen, Achilles, Agamemnon, and Chryseis). While it is true that not all the excluded Homeric characters figure prominently in the *Iliad*, Odysseus and Hektor certainly do, and have more considerable roles than, for example, Chryseis, whom Tolstoy mentions. The implication is that the major heroes – and their spouses and sons – who are not on the list escape Tolstoy’s critique because they practice ethical human attachment.

Let us remember that, as mentioned in Chapter One, Tolstoy was consistently reading the *Odyssey* to his daughters in 1890, the decade that he began serious work on *Hadji Murat*. Also, consider a passage in *On Shakespeare and Drama*,

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<sup>827</sup> Ibid, p. 54.

<sup>828</sup> Ibid, p. 70.



written in 1904 (the same year Tolstoy completed *Hadji Murat*) and published in 1906. Tolstoy argues that Homer was a far superior artist than Shakespeare, and to support his position, he selects scenes from Homeric epic that he describes as 'eternally touching' ('*vechno umiliaiushie*'):

Not to speak already of the astonishingly clear, living, and beautiful characters of Achilles, Hektor, Priam, Odysseus, and the eternally touching scenes of Hektor's farewell, Priam's embassy, the return of Odysseus, and others, the entire *Iliad* and especially the *Odyssey* is so authentic and close to us, as though we ourselves lived and live among gods and heroes.<sup>829</sup>  
(italics mine)

First, it is surprising that, in 1904, it is 'especially' ('*osobenno*') the *Odyssey* that is more praiseworthy for Tolstoy, because, until this comment, Tolstoy's direct references to Homer throughout his entire life consist almost exclusively of references to the *Iliad*, particularly as an example of superior art and as a text worth teaching in his own school at Yasnaya Polyana.<sup>830</sup> This indicates that, sometime between 1880 and 1904, a change has taken place regarding which of Homer's epics Tolstoy prefers, further evidenced in that it is the *Odyssey*, not the *Iliad*, that he chooses to read aloud to his own children in 1890. Second, the passages in Homeric epic that Tolstoy highlights as transhistorically valuable include neither combat nor triumph, but rather those 'peaceful' moments of deep familial affect. Specifically, they involve the love between spouses and the love between fathers and sons. The Achilles of the *Iliad* is neither husband nor devoted father. While Achilles' character is both 'living' ('*zhivoi*') and 'beautiful' ('*prekrasnyi*') for Tolstoy in 1904, his heroic struggle is not timelessly relevant. What Tolstoy selects from Homer as most poignant are Hektor's attachment to his wife, Andromache, and infant son, Astyanax; Priam's plea for the body of his beloved son, Hektor; and Odysseus' reunion with his wife, Penelope, and son, Telemachos. The first two scenes take place in the *Iliad*, yet it is the *Odyssey* that

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<sup>829</sup> PSS 35, p. 253. See Appendix A.222 for original.

<sup>830</sup> See pages 32-33.

is relevant for modern sensibilities because, for Tolstoy at this time, the ethical priority is family and home rather than historical glory.

Hadji Murat's own priorities shift from Iliadic to Odyssean throughout the novel, paralleling Tolstoy's own development: Murat ceases to pursue personal glory and vengeance and instead becomes wholly engrossed on returning home to his mother, wife, and son. This shift is accompanied by a growing spiritual awareness and is represented by means of epic song. The final song Murat witnesses is one he does not actively perform, but passively overhears. It is about the mountaineer, Hamzad, who steals horses from Russians and the bloody battle that results; the song is experienced by the reader only through Murat's consciousness. We do not learn the words that convey the doubtless exciting theft and battle, but instead are only privy to the words that Murat himself noticed and was affected by. The song is, again, about death:

'Fly on, ye winged ones, fly to our homes!  
Tell ye our mothers, tell ye our sisters,  
Tell the white maidens, that fighting we died  
For Ghazavat! Tell them our bodies  
Never will lie and rest in a tomb!'<sup>831</sup>

I suggest that Murat's consciousness filters, or ignores, the 'exciting' and 'heroic' parts of the song and focuses exclusively on death and resurrection, showing that his own priorities at this time consist of spiritual faith which leads to familial love. The overheard song (the ending of which is strikingly similar to Khochbar's, who calls on his mother and sisters to witness his death) is preceded by Murat's abrupt decision to rescue his family, and is followed by vivid recollections of them:

Kheneffi's song reminded him of the song his mother had composed [...].  
[He was reminded] of his beloved son, Yusuf [...]. He pictured him as he  
was when he last saw him [...]. 'Take care of thy mother and thy

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<sup>831</sup> Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad*, p. 119.

grandmother', said Hadji Murad. [...] Yusuf had replied that as long as he lived no one should injure his mother or grandmother. [...] And since then Hadji Murad had not seen his wife, his mother, or his son.<sup>832</sup>

In Chapter Twenty-Three, near the novel's conclusion, Tolstoy uses free indirect discourse to present, for the first time, Murat's thoughts about his wife and his son. The unthinkable violence that Murat fears will befall his wife at the hands of Shamil is exactly what Murat had fantasized about committing against Shamil's own wives at the beginning of the novel. This shows that Murat has learned compassion. He is no longer daydreaming about the glory of conquest but is instead participating in an Odyssean return quest. Murat's recollection of his final conversation with Yusuf, and their mutual concern for the safety of the women in their household, is qualitatively similar to Homer's passages of family love that Tolstoy praises in his article on Shakespeare. Thus, by means of Murat's religious awakening, Tolstoy shows human bonds made precious by spiritual faith, as he believes Homer had done, to convey the religious consciousness implicit in epic and folk narratives.

The novel's reliance on epic song, whether Murat is a performer or eavesdropper of it, emphasizes the connection between epic and spirituality made by Tolstoy. This connection is evidenced as early as 1862, in the same article on education that describes Tolstoy's efforts to teach peasant children the *Iliad* and the details of the Greek pantheon. During a walk in the forest with three peasant boys who attend his school, Tolstoy entertains his small audience with historical tales of warriors, including Hadji Murat: 'We talked about the Caucasus brigands. They remembered the Caucasus story which I had told them long ago, and I again began to tell stories about *abreks*, about Cossacks, about Hadji Murat'.<sup>833</sup> Tolstoy concludes his story with the description of a doomed warrior singing his death song, the logic of which is questioned by one of the boys: 'I finished the story with how the surrounded *abrek* began to sing and then threw himself on the dagger. All were quiet. "Why did he sing a song, if he was surrounded?" Semka asked'.<sup>834</sup> Helpfully for this analysis, the sceptical Semka asks Tolstoy to explain precisely

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<sup>832</sup> Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad*, p. 121.

<sup>833</sup> *PSS* 8, p. 44. See Appendix A.223 for original.

<sup>834</sup> *PSS* 8, p. 45. See Appendix A.224 for original.

that which is important for our consideration of the fictional Hadji Murat, a warrior who himself performs, requests others to perform, and overhears performances, of songs that foretell his death. Why, indeed, should death be an occasion for singing, and why should singing involve death? The other two boys immediately supply an answer Tolstoy approves of: “You were told – he prepared to die!” Fed’ka replied sadly. “I think he began to sing a prayer!” Pron’ka added. We all agreed’.<sup>835</sup>

From this brief exchange (which may very well not have taken place as Tolstoy relates it) it is again evident that, for Tolstoy, performed song is not primarily a means of entertainment, but an activity that can convey the most significant concerns of human life, namely, religion and death, and that this applies specifically in a case like that of Murat. The warrior sings because he is dying, and by expressing his faith in the eternity of the soul, the song is both consolation and spiritual lament. I suggest that this nameless, final, religious song is, for Tolstoy, essentially the same as *The Song of Khochbar*, Homeric epic, Russian folk songs, and the songs in *Hadji Murat*. They are oral productions expressing the timeless wisdom of religious consciousness and family love. In the final song about death that Murat overhears, we see that the novel is inseparable from the epic performances that ground and mirror Murat’s evolving religious consciousness. The part of the overheard song that the hero is affected by shows us the state of his religious awareness, which, for Tolstoy, is the function of epic art: the warrior’s dying body will not lie in a tomb not only because it will be consumed by animals, but also because its real substance – the soul – will outlive death. Just before he hears the song, Murat learns from messengers that no help is forthcoming from the mountaineers to rescue his family or himself. Like the nameless *abrek* Tolstoy describes to his students, Murat surrenders himself to God:

Having heard the messengers he sat with his elbows on his crossed legs, and bowing his turbaned head remained silent a long time.

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<sup>835</sup> PSS 8, p. 45. See Appendix A.225 for original.

He was thinking and thinking resolutely. He knew that he was now considering the matter for the last time and that it was necessary to come to a decision. At last he raised his head [...].

‘What answer will there be?’

‘The answer will be as God pleases... Go!’<sup>836</sup>

With his head bowed, Murat is physically and spiritually in a submissive state, and his reply to the messengers is the simple attitude of true faith: ‘as God pleases’. The implication is that his actions hereafter will be what Tolstoy defines as religious: they will be informed by Murat’s relationship to the infinite rather than the human, to the will of God rather than himself. This is further evidenced in Chapter Twenty during Murat’s response to a sudden attack from Arslan Khan, a mountaineer tasked with avenging the death of one of his relatives whom Murat had apparently killed. The narrator does not dwell on this subplot, and Arslan Khan is not mentioned again. The abrupt assault, which Murat expertly repels, seems to take place exclusively for us and the other characters to witness Murat’s reaction: “Well, if he kills me it will prove that such is Allah’s will”.<sup>837</sup> This repetition of ‘as God wills’ is a striking contrast to Murat’s earlier desire to assert his own will for vengeance.

Afterwards, others discuss the unexpected assault, mirroring the discussion of Murat that had taken place at the start of the novel during the Vorontsovs’ dinner. Even in the testimony of onlookers, it is made clear that Murat has changed. What is praiseworthy about the hero now is neither his skill in war nor his cleverness. These qualities are mentioned only to be superseded by ethical virtues which, as a hero of epic, he is able to model for the Russian people:

‘Plucky fellow! He rushed at Arslan Khan like a wolf! His face quite changed!’

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<sup>836</sup> Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad*, p. 117.

<sup>837</sup> *Ibid*, p. 108.

‘But he’ll be up to tricks – he’s a terrible rogue, I should say’, remarked Petrovsky.

‘It’s a pity there aren’t more Russian rogues of such a kind!’ suddenly put in Marya Dmitrievna with vexation. ‘He has lived a week with us and we have seen nothing but good from him. He is courteous, wise, and just’, she added.<sup>838</sup>

Murat has learned submission to God’s will and has therefore become both wise and just. That Murat’s heroism is no longer limited to his physical prowess and success in war, but rather to his spiritual connection to the infinite, is demonstrated in his final battle. After being wounded multiple times, Murat continues fighting. Just when he seems to have finally died, he suddenly rises by means of an almost supernatural power that recollects the meaning of the novel’s final song wherein death is not the end of existence: ‘But the body that seemed dead suddenly moved. First the uncovered, bleeding, shaven head rose; then the body with the hands holding to the trunk of a tree. He seemed so terrible, that those who were running towards him stopped short’.<sup>839</sup>

After this pseudo-resurrection, the narrator momentarily follows Murat’s consciousness after he has died to show that what is most precious in him – his soul – cannot be injured and has survived: ‘He did not move, but still he felt. [...] [!]t seemed to Hadji Murad that someone was striking him with a hammer and he could not understand who was doing it or why. That was his last consciousness of any connection with his body. He felt nothing more and his enemies kicked and hacked at what had no longer anything in common with him’.<sup>840</sup> Murat’s final moments have the solemn grandeur of both epic and Biblical narrative and are therefore, for Tolstoy, able to convey a sense of religious consciousness. Heroic death has been suffused with religious meaning, and heroic violence has been spiritualized.

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<sup>838</sup> Ibid, p. 109.

<sup>839</sup> Ibid, p. 133.

<sup>840</sup> Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad*, p. 134.

## *Conclusion: The Final Song*

As we have seen, in Tolstoy's final decade, death and spirituality are inseparable from song.<sup>841</sup> This association already exists in Tolstoy's first novel, *The Cossacks*: recall how the doomed Chechens sing to distract themselves from their impending death, and how the Cossack Eroshka performs a song about a warrior *molodets* who grieves the deaths of his family members. As I argued in the first chapter of this thesis, Tolstoy's understanding of epic song includes its ability to soothe by means of estrangement; in his final novel, epic song takes on religious qualities, celebrating not only the hero's bravery, but, more importantly, his immortal soul. In this chapter, I have argued that Tolstoy's final novel does not revisit or celebrate youthful violence, as critics have supposed. Instead, *Hadji Murat* spiritualizes the epic heroism found in the Avar *Song of Khochbar* and the Homeric poems by means of refiguring that heroism within a religious context; the songs that Murat performs, hears, and overhears echo this refiguration at the level of intradiegetic narration.

Consistent with the foregoing argument, the final line of the framed narrative (and the penultimate line of the novel) contains a song: 'The nightingales, that had hushed their songs while the firing lasted, now started their trills once more: first one quite close, then others in the distance'.<sup>842</sup> This concluding performance by the nightingales is significant. It is a reiteration of their two earlier appearances in the novel: first, their song accompanied Murat's decision to return to his family and, second, their song precedes the final death song that he had overheard when preparing to pray. Consider the following sections from Chapter Twenty-Three:

By midnight, his decision has been formed. He decided that he must [...] either die or rescue his family. [...] As soon as he entered the hall, the outer door of which stood open, he was at once enveloped by the dewy freshness

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<sup>841</sup> See pp. 38-39, or how Eroshka performs a song for Olenin about the *molodets* who grieves the death of his family (see pp. 36-37).

<sup>842</sup> Tolstoy, *Hadji Murat*, p. 134.

of the moonlit night and his ears were filled by the whistling and trilling of several nightingales [...].<sup>843</sup>

And:

Before daybreak Hadji Murad again came out into the hall to get water for his ablutions. The songs of the nightingales that had burst into ecstasy at dawn were now even louder and more incessant [...]. Hadji Murad got himself some water from a tub and was already at his own door when [...] he heard from his murids' room the high tones of Khanefi's voice singing a familiar song. He stopped to listen.<sup>844</sup>

As in the story Tolstoy related to peasant children in the forest in 1862, *Hadji Murat* ends with death, and a song that is like a prayer. Although it is the nightingales and not the dying Murat who perform the final song in the text, in some sense, it is Murat's song. He overheard and received its message from three sources: his mother, his military companion Khanefi, and, finally, the nightingales, which is when he internalized its meaning and made it his own.

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<sup>843</sup> Ibid, p. 118.

<sup>844</sup> Ibid, p. 119.



## Conclusion

### Continuity in Flux: Tolstoy in the Twentieth Century

In the last days of September 1910, a little over a month before his abrupt departure from his home at Iasnaya Poliana and subsequent sudden death, one of Tolstoy's final journal entries contains his last, written literary-critical observation:

What horrible intellectual poison is contemporary literature, especially for young people from the *narod* [...] The main particularity and harm of this chatter is that it entirely consists of [...] citations [...] from the newest and the most ancient authors. They cite little phrases from Plato, Hegel, Darwin, of whom they have not the slightest understanding, beside the little phrases of [...] those whom it is not worthwhile to have any understanding [...] by filling their head with this chatter, they do not leave themselves the luxury or the space in their mind for reading the old writers, whose value has been verified not for ten, but for hundreds, for thousands of years.<sup>845</sup>

While there is no direct reference to Homer in this passage, nevertheless, we see that at the conclusion of his life, Tolstoy continued to advocate the importance of reading the ancient ('*drevnikh*') authors whose wisdom had, for him, stood the test of millennia. That Homer's poetry was, for Tolstoy, among the treasures of not just antiquity, but world culture, is incontrovertible. This reflection is found among Tolstoy's final observations, which are otherwise devoted exclusively to the contemplation of God and the afterlife; this again confirms that the authors of antiquity were, during Tolstoy's final years, intimately linked with spiritual wisdom. From one of his earliest stories, 'The Raid', which advances a Platonic view of courage, to this final note, Tolstoy maintained throughout his life the conviction that the works of classical antiquity form a valuable part of educational and ethical practice.

I have endeavoured to demonstrate Tolstoy's fidelity to Homeric epic, even as he identified and re-identified the nature of Homer's poetry from varying platforms of interest that shifted considerably throughout his life. Relying on Tolstoy's

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<sup>845</sup> PSS 58, p. 228. See Appendix A.226 for original.

published fiction and didactic articles along with his unpublished journals, letters, and draft manuscripts, I have shown what Homer meant for Tolstoy at different moments in his career and what Tolstoy's deliberate adaptation and refiguration of Homeric material can tell us about his theoretical, aesthetic, religious, and literary priorities. The Introduction and Chapter One situated Tolstoy's appropriation of Homer within the narrative of Russia's encounter with Greco-Roman antiquity, and how Tolstoy re-imagined the traditional definition of epic production, as supplied by Homer and Hesiod, in his early work. Given his youthful preoccupation with Russia's recent military history and privileging of traditional heroic qualities, I argued that Tolstoy's early writing celebrated Russian national heroism by referencing its Homeric counterpart, and helped shape Russian collective memory along epic heroic lines. In Chapter Two, I developed the notion of historical regression to compare how its Homeric and Hesiodic formulation influenced Tolstoy's novella *Two Hussars* and first novel, *The Cossacks*, resulting in a subtle critique of the Europeanized aristocracy of Tolstoy's day.

Chapters Three took a theoretical turn, exploring Tolstoy's problematisation of his Homeric inheritance. Both chapters applied the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche to shed light on the intellectual category developed by Tolstoy in his journal, *istoriia-iskusstvo*, and its historical and psychological implications. I argued that Tolstoy used the aesthetic category to appropriate the formal properties of the *Iliad* while simultaneously critiquing the poem's alleged historiographical approach in order to develop what I term Tolstoy's 'historical nihilism'. Deploying these theoretical insights in Chapter Four, I undertook a comparative analysis and close reading of Tolstoy's Andrei Bolkonskii and Homer's Achilles as deviations from traditional warrior archetypes, to demonstrate how Tolstoy utilized Homeric characterization in *War and Peace*. The fourth chapter proposed that the text's refiguration of Achilles' existential insights in Andrei's wrathful self-destructiveness can be read as Tolstoy's answer to the possibility of psychological nihilism that accompanies the insights of historical nihilism, especially during wartime. In Chapter Five, I followed Tolstoy's shifting interest from national to familial concerns as evidenced in *Anna Karenina*, and endeavoured to make a case for reading the novel as influenced by the narrative design of the *Odyssey*. More controversially, I applied Lewis Hyde's

notion of the trickster archetype to argue that the transgressive character of Anna can be read as an Odyssean figure for the purpose of moving past the ethical discussions that typically characterize critical analyses of the novel.

In Chapter Six, I argued that, in the final decades of his career, Tolstoy identified Homeric epic with Christian ethics, Russian and Caucasian folklore, and nonliterate song cultures. By drawing on the family dynamics in the Dagestani *Song of Khochbar* and the *Odyssey*, I suggested that Tolstoy's final novel, *Hadji Murat*, spiritualizes Homeric epic heroism and articulates that the ideal hero's most important commitment is to his family. I suggest that Tolstoy's appropriation, adaptation, and refiguration of Homeric material takes the form of an arc that begins with celebrating Homeric epic in his earliest stories, to its problematization and reconsideration in *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, to ultimate reconciliation with Homer's poetry in *Hadji Murat*. This 'arc', though neatly arranged, is destined to remain incomplete: doubtless, Tolstoy would have continued to evolve as a thinker and writer, which means that the spiritualization of epic heroism found in *Hadji Murat* cannot be regarded as the 'final word' on Tolstoy's use of Homeric epic.

In his famous essay, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History*, Isaiah Berlin reflects on a poetic fragment attributed to the Greek poet Archilochus: 'The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog one big thing'.<sup>846</sup> Applying this observation to intellectual activity, Berlin writes that if hedgehogs are methodical, systematic thinkers who have faith in centralized, universalizing principles, foxes are explorers of disconnection and rupture, contradicting themselves in their pursuit of many truths. Unable to discover whether Tolstoy was hedgehog or fox, Berlin posits that 'Tolstoy was by nature a fox, but believed in being a hedgehog'.<sup>847</sup> I suggest that Berlin's hermeneutics of faith as applied to Tolstoy sheds light on Tolstoy's approach to Homer. In his changeable, contradictory appropriation of Homer, which begins with advancing a celebration of national heroism in violent battle, to expounding a Christian notion of religiosity,

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<sup>846</sup> Quoted in Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History*, ed. by Henry Hardy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 1-90 (p. 1).

<sup>847</sup> Berlin, *Hedgehog*, p. 4.

and back again to battle heroics, Tolstoy was indisputably vulpine. In his continued allegiance to the Homeric texts, even when distancing his thought from classical 'pagan' antiquity and what he perceived to be its privileging of violence, Tolstoy remained a hedgehog throughout his life. The ancient Greek authors generally, and Homeric epic specifically, were, for Tolstoy, central, grounding reference points to which he turned again and again throughout his life to facilitate and nourish his multiplicity of competing visions – and his writing became a reference point for subsequent generations of writers.

It is well established that Tolstoy's impact on Russian literature was very substantial; thus, many Russian novels of the historical literary genre, through Tolstoy's influence on them, owe something to Homer. The work of writers like Dmitri Merezhkovskii (1886-1941) and Mark Aldanov (1886-1957, born Mark Landau) treated many of the historical themes Tolstoy had been interested in, from Greco-Roman antiquity to the Napoleonic wars, consciously responding to Tolstoy's historical and historiographical theories. For example, Merezhkovskii's historical trilogy, *Christ and Antichrist* (*Khristos i Antikhrisť*, 1896-1905), which was precipitated by Merezhkovskii's travels in Greece and set in the fourth-century Roman Empire, sought to 'succeed where he thought Tolstoy had failed – at the concrete recreation of distant times and places'.<sup>848</sup> Aldanov regarded himself as Tolstoy's literary pupil<sup>849</sup> and produced a tetralogy in the 1920s, *The Thinker* (*Myslitel'*, 1921-1926), about the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars.

During World War II, and in the decades following it, the national heroism Tolstoy had adapted from Homer and refigured in *War and Peace* became uniquely, poignantly relevant. The generals who defended Stalingrad read and re-read the text during the brutal siege, comparing their martial performance to that of Tolstoy's protagonists, while an audio version of the novel was broadcast continuously on

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<sup>848</sup> Peter G. Christensen, "'Christ and Antichrist' as Historical Novel', *Modern Language Studies*, 20.3 (1990), 67-77 (p. 63). For a discussion of how Merezhkovskii's first novel facilitates the view of Russia as the Third Rome, see Kalb, *Russia's Rome*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>849</sup> Andrew Guershon Colin, 'Mark Aldanov: An Appreciation and a Memory', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 36 (1957), 37-57, (p. 38). For a discussion of Aldanov's reception of Tolstoy, see Olesia Lagashina, *Mark Aldanov i Lev Tolstoi: k probleme recepcii* (Tallinn: TLU Press, 2010).

the radio.<sup>850</sup> At the height of the war, in 1942, Anna Antonovskaia became the first woman to be awarded the Stalin Prize in literature<sup>851</sup> for her six-volume epic novel about a seventeenth-century Georgian warlord, Georgii Saakadze (1570-1629). Red Army soldiers and commanders eagerly read Antonovskaia's novel,<sup>852</sup> which owes much to the epic heroes of Greco-Roman antiquity as well as to Tolstoy's historical fiction, particularly *Hadji Murat*.

It is significant that, in this catastrophic historical moment, the stricken nation and its defenders turned to war narratives set in the past for examples of valour and resilience. Writing about traumatic experiences, especially those that took place during World War II, trauma theorist Cathy Caruth observes: '[S]ince the traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time [...] a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence'.<sup>853</sup> This inability to know the devastating event might explain the turn to a historical past – perhaps Tolstoy's and Antonovskaia's war narratives served as a medium for experiencing and assimilating a conflict that was too traumatic to be experienced directly. In some sense, then, epic narrative of war helped to know the historical war, bringing us back to a Tolstoyan definition of the epic genre that opened this thesis: a recollection of the historical past that prompts self-estrangement by means of aesthetic language.

Several years after the Siege of Stalingrad, the Soviet writer Vasily Grossman (1905-1964) began crafting *Stalingrad* (1952) followed by the sequel, *Life and Fate* (*Zhizn' i sud'ba*, 1980), perhaps the definitive narratives about the Battle of Stalingrad; neither was published in its uncensored version in Grossman's lifetime. Like the generals defending the city, Grossman was absorbed exclusively in Tolstoy's epic retelling of the Napoleonic invasion during the entire military conflict,

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<sup>850</sup> Robert Chandler, 'Introduction' in Vasily Grossman, *Stalingrad*, ed. by Robert Chandler and Yury Bit-Yunan, trans. by Elizabeth Chandler and Robert Chandler (New York, NY: New York Review Books, 2019), vii-xxix, (p. xi).

<sup>851</sup> The year prior, in 1941, Mikhail Sholokhov received the Stalin Prize for *And Quiet Flows the Don* (Tikhii Don, 1928-1940), which also drew on Tolstoy's historical literary precedent in its depiction of Don Cossacks during World War I.

<sup>852</sup> [Anon.], 'O natsional'nom geroe Gruzii' in Anna Antonovskaia, *Velikii Mouravi: Probuzhdenie Barsa* (Tbilisi: Merani, 1977), 5-46 (p. 12).

<sup>853</sup> Cathy Caruth, 'Trauma and Experience: Introduction', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore, MD and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 3-11 (p. 8).

observing: 'During the whole war, the only book that I read was *War and Peace*, which I read twice'.<sup>854</sup> Invariably, Grossman's prose was compared to Tolstoy's, no doubt in part because Grossman deliberately drew on *War and Peace* in his novels, even commenting about his protagonist, who was modelled on Andrei Bolkonskii: "You alone, Prince, are a fragment of those who were Tolstoy's main characters."<sup>855</sup> As Merezhkovskii had sought to transcend Tolstoy's influence to write about events that were more distant, Grossman chose a recent war in part to show just how much had changed in Russia since Tolstoy's day. Importantly, Grossman's heroes deliberately recollect 'fragments' of Tolstoy's personages, who are themselves deliberate adaptations of Homeric figures. This shows Homer's continued relevance for writing and understanding twentieth-century Russian literature, which, through Tolstoy, deployed elements of Homeric material to help make sense of the deadliest conflict in human history.

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<sup>854</sup> Vasily Grossman, *A Writer at War: Vasily Grossman with the Red Army, 1941-1945*, ed. and trans. by Anthony Beevor and Luba Vinogradova (London: Harvill Press, 2005), p. xiii.

<sup>855</sup> Alexandra Popoff, *Vasily Grossman and the Soviet Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), p. 200.

## Appendix A: Original Cyrillic text

1. 'Перевод Гнедича был не просто переводом, но и манифестом определенного направления русской литературы того времени вообще [...]. [П]редпочтение греческой античности, восприятие греческого наследия как основанного на идее народности, близость его в этом смысле традициям русской культуры, риторический характер такой программы'. Knabe, *Russian Antiquity*, p. 137.
2. 'Цивилизация — благо; варварство — зло; свобода — благо; неволя — зло. Вот это-то воображаемое знание уничтожает инстинктивные, блаженнейшие первобытные потребности добра в человеческой натуре'. PSS 5, p. 25.
3. 'Будущность России казачество — свобода, равенство и обязательн[ая] воен[ная] служба каждого'. PSS 47, p. 204.
4. 'Вы ясно поймете, вообразите себе тех людей [...] теми героями, которые в те тяжелые времена не упали, а возвышались духом и с наслаждением готовились к смерти, не за город, а за родину. Надолго оставит в России великие следы эта эпопея Севастополя, которой героем был народ русский...'. PSS 4, p. 16.
5. '[В]о всей Европе Гомера и Гёте перечитывать не будут больше'. PSS 60, p. 234.
6. '[Я]вись только теперь Гомер --и мы имели бы превосходнейший эпос'. 'Germanskaia Literatura v 1843 Godu' in *Botkin V.P. Literaturnaia kritika. Publitsistika. Pis'ma*. ed. by B.F. Egorov (Russia, Biblioteka russkoi kritiki, 1984)  
<[http://az.lib.ru/b/botkin\\_w\\_p/text\\_1843\\_germanskaya\\_literatura.shtml](http://az.lib.ru/b/botkin_w_p/text_1843_germanskaya_literatura.shtml)>  
[accessed 1 January 2018]
7. '[К]азак — дик, свежъ, как библейское предание'. PSS 47, p. 146.
8. 'Читал Илиаду. Вот оно! Чудо! [...] Переделывать надо всю Кавк[азскую] повесть'. PSS 47, p. 152.

9. 'Илиада заставляет меня совсем передумывать [Казаков]'. *PSS 47*, р. 152.
10. 'Читал Гомера. Прелестно'. *PSS 47*, р. 153.
11. 'Прошу читателя заметить, что Гомер, Сократ, Аристотель, немецкие сказки и песни, русский эпос, и наконец Библия и Евангелие, не нуждались в книгопечатании для того, чтобы остаться вечными'. *PSS 8*, 342.
12. 'Всемирно народная задача России состоит в том, чтобы внести в мир идею общественного устройства без поземельной собственности. [...] Эта истина не есть мечта — она факт — выразившийся в общинах крестьян, в общинах казаков. [...] Эта идея имеет будущность'. *PSS 48*, 85.
13. 'Самые добросовестные политические деятели, веровавшие в прогресс равенства и свободы, разве не убедились [...] что в древней Греции и Риме было более свободы и равенства, чем в новой Англии с китайской и индийской войнами, в новой Франции [...] и в самой новой Америке с ожесточенной войной за право рабства? [В]ерующие в прогресс искусства, разве не убедились, что нет в наше время Фидиасов, Рафаэлей и Гомеров?'. *PSS 8*, 334-35.
14. 'Эпический род мне становится один естественен'. *PSS 48*, р. 48.
15. 'Вся история России сделана казаками. Недаром нас зовут европ[ейцы] казаками. Народ казаками желает быть'. *PSS 48*, р. 123.
16. '[...] очень хорош для грека 5 века; но для нас, [...] он не имеет смысла [...]'. *PSS 48*, pp. 111-12.
17. 'А мы [...] стараемся подражать греческим приемам искусства!' *PSS 48*, pp. 111-12.
18. 'Восхищение европейцев перед греческой поэзией подобно восхищению умного раскольника словом бессмысленной



раскольничьей песни, восхищению Апокалипсисом. — Простота'. *PSS* 48, pp. 111-12.

19. 'Сколько я теперь уж могу судить, Гомер только изгажен нашими, взятыми с немецкого образца, переводами. Пошлкое, но невольное сравнение — отварная и дистиллированная теплая вода и вода из ключа, ломящая зубы — с блеском и солнцем и даже со щепками и соринками, от которых она еще чище и свежее. Все эти Фосы и Жуковские поют каким-то медово-паточным, горловым подлым и подлизывающимся голосом, а тот чорт и поет, и орет во всю грудь, и никогда ему в голову не приходило, что кто-нибудь его будет слушать'. *PSS* 61, pp. 247-48.
20. '[Б]ез знания греческого нет образования'. *PSS* 61, p. 248.
21. 'Чувствую себя приходящимъ в скифское состояние [...]. Ново и интересно многое: и Башкиры, от кот[орых] Геродотом пахнет, и русские мужики, и деревни, особенно прелестные по простоте и доброте народа. [...] Я читаю погречески, но очень мало [...] мужик [...] на днях мне сказалъ, что мы на траве, — как лошади. [...] Я встаю в 6 [...] потом читаю немного, хожу по степи в одной рубашке, все пью кумыс, съедаю кусок жареной баранины, и, или идемъ на охоту, или едем'. *PSS* 88, 182.
22. 'Край здесь прекрасный, по своему возрасту только что выходящий из девственности'. *PSS* 61, p. 256.
23. 'Читаю и Геродота, который с подробностью и большой верностью описывает тех самых галакто-фагов-скифов, среди которых я живу'. *PSS* 61, p. 256.
24. 'Если ты занимаешься Греками, то брось их. Наверно это на тебя больше всего действует. Брось, пожалуйста [...] эти занятия тебе вредны', *PSS* 83, p. 177; 'Если ты всё сидишь над Греками, ты не вылечишься. Они на тебя нагнали эту тоску и равнодушие к жизни настоящей. Недаром это мертвый язык, он наводит на человека и

мертвое расположение духа. Ты не думай, что я не знаю, почему называются эти языки мертвыми, но я сама им придаю это другое значение'. PSS 83, р. 180.

25. 'Живу весь в Афинах. По ночам во сне говорю по-гречески'. PSS 61, р. 249.

26. 'Друзья твои Фет и Урусов оба уверены, что ты болен от Греков, и я с ними согласна [...]'. PSS 83, р. 197.

27. 'К чему занесла меня туда (в Самару) судьба — не знаю; но знаю, что я слушал речи в англ[ийском] парламенте (ведь это считается очень важным), и мне скучно и ничтожно было, но что там — мухи, нечистота, мужики, башкирцы, а я с напряженным уважением, страхом проглядеть, вслушиваюсь, вглядываюсь и чувствую, что всё это очень важно'. PSS 62, р. 199.

28. 'Римская и особенно Греческая история могут составить иллюстрацию зарождения зла и борьбы его с истиной'. PSS 63, р. 390.

29. 'Я бы мог забыть Илиаду, которую мы вместе с тобой учили и читали, но тебе, живущему в среде мудрецов и поэтов, нельзя забыть. Что же вся Илиада? — Это повесть о нарушении воли Бога по отношению к браку. И Менелай, и Парис, и Елена, и Ахиллес, и Агамемнон, и Хризеида — всё это описание всех страшных бедствий, вытекающих для людей и теперь происходящих от этого нарушения'. PSS 26, р. 269.

30. '[3]ачем учишь их языческой мудрости, когда ты христианин'. PSS 90, р. 129.

31. 'Я как заведенные часы — так же встаю, гуляю, пишу, опять гуляю, читаю про себя и вслух Илиаду. Разница только в том, что пишу много и охотно'. PSS 84, р. 68.

32. 'Страдания людей, вытекающие из ложного понимания жизни'. PSS 29, р. 198.

33. 'Сами же греки были так мало нравственно развиты'. PSS 30, р. 76.

34. '[Г]рубые, дикие и часто бессмысленные для нас произведения древних греков: Софокла, Эврипида, Эсхила, в особенности Аристофана'. *PSS 30*, p 125.
35. '[Б]ыли всегда одинаково доступны, как властвующим и богатым, так подчиненным и бедным'. *PSS 30*, p. 258.
36. 'Как ни далек от нас Гомер, мы без малейшего усилия переносимся в ту жизнь, которую он описывает. А переносимся мы, главное, потому, что, какие бы чуждые нам события ни описывал Гомер, он верит в то, что говорит, и серьезно говорит о том, что говорит, и потому никогда не преувеличивает, и чувство меры никогда не оставляет его. От этого-то и происходит то, что, не говоря уже об удивительно ясных, живых и прекрасных характерах Ахиллеса, Гектора, Приама, Одиссея и вечно умиляющих сценах прощанья Гектора, посланничества Приама, возвращения Одиссея и др., вся «Илиада» и особенно «Одиссея» так естественна и близка нам, как будто мы сами жили и живем среди богов и героев'. *PSS 35*, p. 253.
37. 'Всякая религия есть установление отношения человека к бесконечному существованию, которому он чувствует себя причастным и из которого он выводит руководство своей деятельности'. *PSS 35*, 162.
38. 'Так у всех народов ценились те чувства, которые испытывал художник при созерцании своего отношения к бесконечному миру, таковы были в поэзии Гомер, пророки еврейские, Веды и др'. *PSS 30*, 340.
39. 'Христ[ианское] мировоззрение произвело только ту разницу, что дало оцен[ку] греческому безр[елигиозному] искусству'; 'Выделить чувственное от духовн[ого] — в этом задача'. *PSS 53*, pp. 314-15.
40. 'Мы часто смотрим на древних, какъ на детей. А дети и мы передъ древними, передъ их глубоким, серьезным, не засоренным пониманием жизни. [...] Если русск[ий] народ — нецивилизован[ные] варвары, то у нас есть будущность. Западные же народы — цивилизованные

варвары, и им уже нечего ждать. Нам подражать западн[ым] народам все равно, как здоровому, работающему, неиспорченному малому завидовать Парижск[ому] плешивому молод[ому] богачу, сидящему в своемъ отеле. Ah, que je m'embête! Не завидовать и подражать, а жалеть'. PSS 55, p. 233.

41. 'Вот эпический талант громадный'. PSS 47, p 81.

42. 'Читалъ Н[иколинькин?] рассказ, опять заплакал. Рассказывая казачью песнь — тоже. Начинаю любить эпический легендарный характер. Попробую из казачей песни сделать стихотворение'. PSS 47, p. 82.

43. 'Не орел под облаками

Высоко летает,

Там стандарт над казаками

Гордо, гордо развевает'.

'Как на горе жито,

Под горою быто,

Под белою под березой

Казачок убитый.

У этого казаченьки

Нет отца, ни матери,

Некому по нем жалковати,

Головку связати'.

*Pesni Tereka: Pesni Grebenskikh i Sunzhenskikh Kazakov*, ed. by B.N. Putilov

(Grozny: Checheno-Ingushskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1974), p. 30.

44. 'Алалу вададай шилюка шай-ина баба вай — анни

Ай Аай — ай ай ай! не приятно, родимая матушка, в тёсовой

бажелера сёць онашле и хунда балейна хаи хунъ

конюшне молодецкаго коня зачемъ привели, ты знаешь ли?

Вай да да дай! ваим берчиръ арджемажеръ и хунде

Аяй аяй ай, чье крымское ружье висить у нас на стене

еина хащ хунъ? хо лахо воучу гюрджи еле еина.

зачем его принесли, знаешь ли?

Пришел тебя сватать

груз[инскій] Князь, он и принес его. —

Са нана сеидегуо теце еуцо ассайна лахна буисинахъ де день

кантъ. —

Матушка! Не лежит к нему сердце; я сама себе сыскала

такого молодца, который из ночи день делает'.

*PSS 46, pp. 89-90.*

45. 'Вдруг со стороны чеченцев раздались странные звуки заунывной песни, похожей на ай-да-ла-лай дяди Ерошки. Чеченцы знали, что им не уйти, и, чтоб избавиться от искушения бежать, они связались ремнями, колено с коленом, приготовили ружья и запели предсмертную песню'. *PSS 6, p. 144.*

46. 'Крупные мысли! План истории Напо[леона] и Алек[сандра] не ослабел. Поэма, героем к[оторо]й б[ыл] бы по праву человек, около к[отор]ого все группируется, и герой — этот человек'. *PSS 48, p. 61*

47. 'И как певец или скрипач, который будет бояться фальшивой ноты, никогда не произведет в слушателях поэтического волнения, так писатель или оратор не даст новой мысли и чувства, когда он будет бояться недоказанного и неоговоренного положения'. *PSS 48*, р. 106.
48. 'Взятие Корсуни Владимира эпопея. Меншиков женит Петра II на дочери, его изгнание и смерть — драма'. *PSS 48*, р. 344.
49. 'Эпический род мне становится один естественен'. *PSS 48*, р. 48.
50. 'Я совершенно убежден, что я должен приобрести славу [...]. Несколько времени сряду я вижу во сне нападение Татар'. *PSS 46*, р. 196.
51. '[С]нова атаковали мы и снова были разбиты. [...] Ужасное убийство. [...] Велика моральная сила Русского народа. Много политических истин выйдет наружу и разовьется в нынешние трудные для России минуты. Чувство пылкой любви к отечеству, возставшее и вылившееся несчастий России, оставят надолго следы в ней'. *PSS 47*, р. 27.
52. 'Главное, отрадное убеждение, которое вы вынесли, это — убеждение в невозможности взять Севастополь и не только взять Севастополь, но поколебать где бы то ни было силу русского народа, — и эту невозможность видели вы [...] в том, что называется духом защитников Севастополя. [В]ы убеждены, они еще могут сделать во сто раз больше... они всё могут сделать'. *PSS 4*, р. 16.
53. 'С некоторых пор я полюбил исторические книги [...] мои литературные занятия идут понемножку [...]. Одну вещь, которую я начал уже давно, я переделал три раза и намерен еще раз переделать, чтобы быть ею довольным; пожалуй это в роде работы Пенелопы'. *PSS 59*, р. 177.
54. 'Наконец то, милый мой, работе Пенелопы наступил конец'. *PSS 59*, р. 197.
55. 'Только теперь рассказы о первых временах осады Севастополя [...] когда этот герой, достойный древней Греции, — Корнилов, объезжая войска, говорил: "[У]мрем, ребята, а не отдадим Севастополя," и наши

русские, неспособные к фразерству, отвечали: “[У]мрем! ура!” — только теперь рассказы про эти времена перестали быть для вас прекрасным историческим преданием, но сделались достоверностью, фактом’. *PSS 4, p. 16.*

56. ‘Вы отчалили от берега. Кругом вас блестящее уже на утреннем солнце море [...] Вы смотрите и на полосатые громады кораблей, близко и далеко рассыпанных по бухте, и на черные небольшие точки шлюпок, движущихся по блестящей лазури, и на красивые светлые строения города, окрашенные розовыми лучами утреннего солнца, виднеющиеся на той стороне, и на пенящуюся белую линию бона и затопленных кораблей [...] вы слушаете равномерные звуки ударов вёсел [...] и величественные звуки стрельбы, которая, как вам кажется, усиливается в Севастополе. Не может быть, чтобы при мысли, что и вы в Севастополе, не проникло в душу вашу чувство какого-то мужества, гордости, и чтоб кровь не стала быстрее обращаться в ваших жилах...’. *PSS 4, p. 4.*
57. ‘Странно, что мой детский взглядъ — молодечество — на войну, для меня самый покойный’. *PSS 46, p. 91.*
58. ‘Эта предсмертная мечта о доме удивительно хороша’. *PSS 47 pp. 9-19.*
59. ‘[Я] начинаю любить Кавказ, хотя посмертной, но сильной любовью’. *PSS 47, p. 10.*
60. ‘Действительно хорошъ этот край дикий, в которомъ такъ странно и поэтически соединяются две самыя противоположныя вещи — война и свобода’. *PSS 47, p. 10.*
61. ‘Дух в войскахъ свыше всякаго описания. В времена древней Греции не было столько геройства’. *PSS 59, p. 281.*
62. ‘Бомбардированье 5-го числа останется самымъ блестящимъ славнымъ подвигомъ не только въ Русской, но во всемірной Исторіи’. *PSS 59, p. 282.*

63. 'Отчего Гомеры и Шекспиры говорили про любовь, про славу и про страдания, а литература нашего века есть только бесконечная повесть "Снобсов" и "Тщеславия"?'. *PSS 4*, p. 24.
64. 'Те люди, которые теперь жертвуют жизнью, будут гражданами России и не забудут своей жертвы. Они с большим достоинством и гордостью будут принимать участие в делах общественных, а энтузиазм, возбужденный войной, оставит навсегда в них характер самопожертвования и благородства'. *PSS 47*, pp. 27-8.
65. '[У] него была одна из тех простых, спокойных русских физиономий, которым приятно и легко смотреть прямо в глаза'. *PSS 3*, pp. 18-19.
66. '[О]собенная и высокая черта русской храбрости'. *PSS 3*, p. 37.
67. 'Я всегда и везде, особенно на Кавказе, замечал особенный такт у нашего солдата во время опасности умалчивать и обходить те вещи, которые могли бы невыгодно действовать на дух товарищей. Дух русского солдата не основан так, как храбрость южных народов, на скоро воспламеняемом и остывающем энтузиазме: его так же трудно разжечь, как и заставить упасть духом. Для него не нужны эффекты, речи, воинственные крики, песни и барабаны: для него нужны, напротив, спокойствие, порядок и отсутствие всего натянутого. В русском, настоящем русском солдате никогда не заметите хвастовства, ухарства, желания отуманиться, разгорячиться во время опасности: напротив, скромность, простота и способность видеть в опасности совсем другое, чем опасность, составляют отличительные черты его характера'. *PSS 3*, pp. 70-71.
68. "Ведь в России воображают Кавказ как-то величественно, с вечными девственными льдами, бурными потоками, с кинжалами, бурками, черкешенками, — всё это страшное что-то, а в сущности ничего в этом нету веселого. Ежели бы они знали по крайней мере, что в девственных льдах мы никогда не бываем, да и быть-то в них ничего веселого нет". *PSS 3*, p. 55.



69. “Это испытывали ли вы когда-нибудь? Как читать стихи на языке, который плохо знаешь: воображаешь себе гораздо лучше, чем есть?..”  
*PSS 3, p. 54.*
70. [Т]от самый бомбардир Антонов, который еще в 37-м году, втроем, оставшись при одном орудии, без прикрытия, отстреливался от сильного неприятеля и с двумя пулями в ляжке продолжал итти около орудия и заряжать его’. *PSS 3, p. 46.*
71. ‘Когда я понял, что это был против нас выстрел неприятеля, всё, что было на моих глазах в эту минуту, всё вдруг приняло какой-то новый величественный характер [...] всё это как будто говорило мне, что ядро, которое вылетело уже из дула и летит в это мгновение в пространстве, может быть, направлено прямо в мою грудь.
- “Вы где брали вино?” лениво спросил я Болхова [...].
- “Вот, если бы я был Наполеон или Фридрих,” сказал в это время Болхов, совершенно хладнокровно поворачиваясь ко мне, “Я бы непременно сказал какую-нибудь любезность.”
- “Да вы и теперь сказали,” отвечал я, с трудом скрывая тревогу, произведенную во мне прошедшей опасностью.
- “Да что ж, что сказал: никто не запишет.”
- “А я запишу.”
- “Да вы ежели и запишете, так в критику [...],” прибавил он улыбаясь.
- “Тьфу ты проклятый!” сказал в это время сзади нас Антонов, с досадой плюя в сторону, “трошки по ногам не задела.”. *PSS 3, p. 56.*
72. ‘На этой-то плодородной, лесистой и богатой растительностью полосе живет с незапамятных времен воинственное, красивое и богатое староверческое русское население, называемое гребенскими казаками. Очень, очень давно предки их, староверы, бежали из России [...]. Живя между чеченцами, казаки перероднились с ними и усвоили себе

обычаи, образ жизни и нравы горцев; но удержали и там, во всей прежней чистоте, русский язык и старую веру. [...] [Л]юбовь к свободе, праздности, грабежу и войне составляет главные черты их характера. [...] Лучшее оружие добывается от горца, лучшие лошади покупаются и крадутся у них же'. PSS 6, pp. 15-16.

73. '[В]сё, что не было Кавказ, было достойно презрения, да и почти недостойно вероятия'. PSS 3, p. 64.

74. 'Где друзья минувших лет [...]?

Деды! помню вас и я,  
Испивающих ковшами  
И сидящих вокруг огня  
С красно-сизыми носами!  
На затылке кивера,  
Доломаны до колена,  
Сабли, шашки у бедра,  
И диваном — кипа сена.  
Ни полслова... Дым столбом.  
Ни полслова... Все мертвецки  
Пьют и, преклонясь челом,  
Засыпают молодецки.  
[...]  
Конь кипит под седоком,  
Сабля свищет, враг валится...  
[...]  
А теперь что вижу? — Страх!

И гусары в модном свете,  
В вицмундирах, в башмаках,  
Вальсируют на паркете!  
Говорят умней они...  
Но что слышим от любува?  
Жомини да Жомини!  
А об водке — ни полслова!

Denis Davydov, Pesnia starogo gusara, Culture.ru  
<<https://www.culture.ru/poems/25582/pesnya-starogo-gusara>> [accessed  
11 April 2021].

75. '[В] те времена, когда не было еще ни железных, ни шоссейных дорог, ни газового, ни стеаринового света, ни пружинных низких диванов, ни мебели без лаку, ни разочарованных юношей со стеклышками, ни либеральных философов-женщин [...] которых так много развелось в наше время, — в те наивные времена [...] когда [...] наши отцы были еще молоды не одним отсутствием морщин и седых волос, а стрелялись за женщин [...] наши матери носили коротенькие талии [...] наивные времена [...] во времена Милорадовичей, Давыдовых, Пушкиных'. PSS 3, p. 145.
76. "В другой раз я бы сам тебя обыграл [...] Я, брат, сам по этой дорожке бегал, так все шулерские приемы знаю". PSS 3, p. 156.
77. '[Е]го прекрасной и открытой наружностью [...]'. PSS 3, p. 146.
78. 'И кавалерист рассказал своему собеседнику такой лебедянский кутеж с графом, которого не только никогда не было, но и не могло быть [...] желание [...] сначала он перенес в действительность, потом в воспоминание и сам уже стал твердо верить в свое кавалерийское прошедшее'. PSS 3, p. 148.

79. 'Молодой граф Турбин морально вовсе не был похож на отца. Даже и тени в нем не было тех буйных, страстных и, говоря правду, развратных наклонностей прошлого века'. *PSS 3*, р. 174.
80. 'В деревнях редко стараются давать воспитание и потому нечаянно большею частью дают прекрасное'. *PSS 3*, р. 178.
81. 'Спокойную душу полной физической и моральной красоты'. *PSS 3*, р. 179.
82. 'Хорошо и весело жить тому на свете, у кого есть кого любить и совесть чиста. [...] [Н]а краях губ и в блестящих глазках, привыкших улыбаться и радоваться жизнью [...]'. *PSS 3*, р. 179.
83. 'Она не слышала от него предполагаемых ею очень умных вещей, не видела той изящности во всем, которую она смутно ожидала найти в нем [...] и скоро нашла, что не только ничего не было в нем особенного, но он нисколько не отличался от всех тех, кого она видела'. *PSS 3*, р. 188.
84. "Нет, что-то не то теперь, люди не те. Тот в огонь за меня готов был. Да и было за что. А этот, небось, спит себе дурак дураком". *PSS 3*, р. 195.
85. "Известно, теперь, конечно, люди умнее стали". *PSS 3*, р. 186.
86. "Времечко-то, времечко как летит! [...] Давно ли, кажется? Как теперь гляжу на него. Ах, шалун был!" И у нее слезы выступили на глаза." Теперь Лизанька... но всё она не то, что я была в ее года-то... хороша девочка, но нет, не то...". *PSS 3*, р. 184.
87. "Нет, не то," говорила она сама себе. Идеал ее был так прелестен! *PSS 3*, р. 195.
88. 'Прошло лет двадцать. Много воды утекло с тех пор, много людей умерло, много родилось, много выросло и состарелось, еще больше родилось и умерло мыслей; много прекрасного и много дурного старого погибло, много прекрасного молодого выросло, и еще больше

недоросшего уродливого молодого появилось на свет Божий'. PSS 3, р. 174.

89. 'Когда я увидел, как голова отделилась от тела, и то, и другое врозь застучало в ящике, я понял — не умом, а всем существом, — что никакие теории разумности существующего и прогресса не могут оправдать этого поступка.'. PSS 23, р. 8.
90. 'Вы говорите, например, что человек имеет право быть свободным, судиться на основании только тех законов, которые он сам признает справедливыми, а историческое воззрение отвечает, что история выработывает известный исторический момент, обуславливающий известное историческое законодательство и историческое отношение к нему народа. Вы говорите, что вы верите в Бога, — историческое воззрение отвечает, что история выработывает известные религиозные воззрения и отношения к ним человечества. Вы говорите, что Илиада есть величайшее эпическое произведение, — историческое воззрение отвечает, что Илиада есть только выражение исторического сознания народа в известный исторический момент. На этом основании историческое воззрение не только не спорит с вами о том, необходима ли свобода для человека, о том, есть или нет Бога, о том, хороша или не хороша Илиада, не только ничего не делает для достижения той свободы, которой вы желаете, для убеждения или разубеждения вас в существовании Бога, или в красоте Илиады, а только указывает вам то место, которое ваша внутренняя потребность, любовь к правде или красоте, занимает в истории.'. PSS 8, р. 326.
91. "Хорош прогресс!" Нет, очень дурен, — я только про это и говорил. Я не держусь религии прогресса, а кроме веры, ничто не доказывает необходимости прогресса. "Неужели мир всё хилел да хилел?" Я только это и старался доказывать, с тою только разницею, что хилеет не всё человечество, а та часть его, которая подлежит деятельности того образования, которое защищает г. Марков'. PSS 8, pp. 328-29.

92. '[М]ного людей умерло, много родилось, много выросло и состарелось, еще больше родилось и умерло мыслей; много прекрасного и много дурного старого погибло, много прекрасного молодого выросло, и еще больше недоросшего уродливого молодого появилось на свет Божий'. PSS 3, p. 174.
93. 'Прошу читателя заметить, что Гомер, Сократ, Аристотель, немецкие сказки и песни, русский эпос, и наконец Библия и Евангелие, не нуждались в книгопечатании для того, чтобы остаться вечными'. PSS 8, p. 342.
94. 'Только читал Илиаду [...] Илиада заставляет меня совсем передумывать беглеца'. PSS 47, p. 152.
95. '[В]о всех красноречивых словах его, во всех певучих, самоуверенных интонациях'. PSS 6, p. 189.
96. 'Говорил ли он про свои набеги в горы, про воровство табунов в степях, про гомерические попойки, про девок, которых он с ума сводил, какой-то внутренний голос говорил молодому человеку: ты можешь, ты все это можешь'. PSS 6, p. 189.
97. "Да, попался бы ему, спуска бы не дал.". PSS 6, p. 38.
98. "А ты как думал? Ты думал, он дурак, зверь-то? [...] [Т]ы ее убить хочешь, а она по лесу живая гулять хочет. У тебя такой закон, а у нее такой закон.". PSS 6, p. 58.
99. 'Глаза казака смеялись, глядя на Оленина. Он, казалось, понял всё, что тот хотел сказать ему, но стоял выше таких соображений. "А что ж? И не без того! Разве нашего брата не бьют?". PSS 6, p. 83.
100. 'Каждый из этих рыжих чеченцев был человек, у каждого было свое особенное выражение'. PSS 6, p. 145.

101. 'Дочел невообразимо прелестный конец 'Илиады'. Все мысли о писанье разбегаются, и 'Казак', и 'Отъезжее поле', и 'Юность', и 'Любовь'. Хочется последнее, вздор. На эти три есть серьезные материалы. Ложусь в 9. [...] Читал Евангелие, чего давно не делал. После 'Илиады'. Как мог Гомер не знать, что добро – любовь! Откровение. Нет лучшего объяснения'. PSS 47, р. 154.
102. "Ну, что пишешь, пишешь! Что толку?" PSS 6, р. 107.
103. '[К]акой-нибудь дух сидит между им и бумагой'. PSS 6, р. 106.
104. "Гуляй лучше, будь молодец!"
- "Что писать, добрый человек! Ты вот послушай лучше, я тебе спою. Сдохнешь, тогда песни не услышишь. Гуляй!" PSS 6, 107.
105. 'Что бы ни производил поэт или мыслитель, он должен знать, что в то время, как он пишет, уже с разных сторон сидят сотни людей, пытавшихся неудачно на том поприще, к[оторое] избрал поэт или мыслитель, с обмокнутыми в свою желчь перьями, наготове растерзать всё то, что произведет мыслитель.'. PSS 48, р. 121.
106. 'Составить истинную правдивую Историю Европы нынешн[его] века. Вот цель на всю жизнь'. PSS 46, р. 304
107. 'Эпический род мне становится один естественен'. PSS 48, р. 48.
108. 'В Кремле [...] воспоминания войны и молодости и силы. Полководец — римский нос, сухой, и только успех дела и никаких других соображений.'. PSS 48, р. 50.
109. '[С]очинение это не есть роман и не есть повесть и не имеет такой завязки, что с развязкой у нее [уничтожается] интерес. Это я пишу вам к тому, чтобы просить вас в оглавлении и, может быть, в объявлении не называть моего сочинения романом. Это для меня очень важно, и потому очень прошу вас об этом.'. PSS 61, р. 67.

110. 'Я боялся писать не тем языком, которым пишут все, боялся, что мое писанье не подойдет ни под какую форму, ни романа, ни повести, ни поэмы, ни истории, я боялся, что необходимость описывать значительных лиц 12-го года заставит меня руководиться историческими документами, а не истиной'. PSS 13, p. 53.

111. 'История хочет описать жизнь народа — миллионов людей. Но тот, кто не только сам описывал даже жизнь одного человека, но хотя бы понял период жизни не только народа, но человека, из описания, тот знает, как много для этого нужно'. PSS 48, p. 125.

112. 'Нужно знание всех подробностей жизни, нужно искусство — дар художественности, нужна любовь...

Искусства нет и не нужно, говорят, нужна наука...

Любви нет и не нужно, говорят. Напротив, нужно доказывать прогресс, что прежде всё было хуже.

Как же тут быть? А надо писать историю. Такие истории писали и пишут, а такие истории называются: —наука.

Как же тут быть?!' PSS 48, p. 125.

113. 'Читаешь эту историю и невольно приходишь к заключению, что рядом безобразий совершилась история России.

Но как же так ряд безобразий произвели великое, единое государство? — Уж это одно доказывает, что не правительство производило историю. Но кроме того, читая о том, как грабили, правили, воевали, разоряли (только об этом и речь в истории), невольно приходишь к вопросу: что грабили и разоряли? А от этого вопроса к другому: кто производил то, что разоряли? Кто и как кормил хлебом весь этот народ? Кто делал парчи, сукна, платья, камки, в к[оторых] щеголяли цари и бояре? Кто ловил черных лисиц и соболей, к[оторыми] дарили послов, кто добывал золото и железо, кто выводил лошадей, быков, баранов, кто строил дома, дворцы, церкви, кто перевозил товары? Кто



воспитывал и рожал этих людей единого корня? Кто блюл святыню религиозную, поэзию народную, кто сделал, что Богд[ан] Хмельн[ицкий] передался Ро[ссии], а не Т[урции] и П[ольше]? Народ живет'. PSS 48, p. 124.

114. 'Но художник не должен забывать, что представление об исторических лицах и событиях, составившееся в народе, основано не на фантазии, а на исторических документах, насколько могли их сгруппировать историки; а потому, иначе понимая и представляя эти лица и события, художник должен руководствоваться, как и историк, историческими материалами'. PSS 26, p. 13.

115. 'Остается одно: в необъятной, неизмеримой скале явлений прошедшей жизни не останавливаться ни на чем, а от тех редких, на необъятном пространстве отстоящих друг от друга памятниках — веках протягивать искусственным, ничего не выражающим языком воздушные, воображаемые линии [...].

Но искусство это состоит только во внешнем: в употреблении бесцветного языка и в сглаживании тех различий, к[оторые] существуют между живыми памятниками и своими вымыслами. [...] Чтобы всё было ровно и гладко и чтобы никто не заметил что под этой гладью ничего нет' (*italics mine*). PSS 48, p. 125.

116. 'Что делать истории?

[...]

Браться описывать то, что она может описать, и то, что она знает — знает посредством искусства. Ибо история, долженствующая говорить необъятное, есть высшее искусство.

Как всякое искусство, первым условием истории должна быть ясность, простота, утвердительность, а не предположительность. Но зато история-искусство не имеет той связанности и невыполнимой цели, к[оторую] имеет история-наука. Ист[ория]-иск[усство], как и всякое искусство, идет не в ширь, а в глубину, и предмет ее может быть

описание жизни всей Европы и описание месяца жизни одного мужика в XVI веке'. *PSS 48*, р. 125.

117. 'Составить истинную правдивую Историю Европы нынешн[его] века. Вот цель на всю жизнь'. *PSS 46*, р. 304.

118. 'Разногласие мое в описании исторических событий с рассказами историков. Оно не случайное, а неизбежное. Историк и художник, описывая историческую эпоху, имеют два совершенно различные предмета'. *PSS 16*, р. 9.

119. 'Историк обязан иногда, пригибая истину, подводить все действия исторического лица под одну идею, [...] Художник, напротив, в самой одиночности этой идеи видит несообразность с своей задачей и старается только понять и показать не известного деятеля, а человека'. *PSS 16*, р. 10.

120. 'Для историка [...] есть герои; для художника [...] не может и не должно быть героев, а должны быть люди'. *PSS 16*, р. 10.

121. 'Древние были сильнее и умнее нас, потому что всё то, что мы называем философией, историей, юриспруденцией, богословием, они называли ораторским искусством. Первое есть признание возможности объективных выводов, второе — один субъективный взгляд. Объективна только форма. Всё субъективное, и одно субъективное имеет содержание'. *PSS 48*, р. 111.

122. 'Есть поэзия романиста: 1) в интересе сочетания событий — Braddon, мои казаки, будущее; 2) в картине нравов, построенных на историческом событии — Одиссея, Илиада, 1805 год; 3) в красоте и веселости положений — Пиквик — Отъезжее поле, и 4) в характерах людей — Гамлет — мои будущие'. *PSS 48*, р. 64.

123. 'Для историка (продолжаем пример сражения) главный источник есть донесения частных начальников и главнокомандующего. Художник из таких источников ничего почерпнуть не может, они для него ничего не говорят, ничего не объясняют. Мало того, художник отворачивается от

них, находя в них необходимую ложь. [...] [П]ри каждом сражении оба неприятеля почти всегда описывают сражение совершенно противоположно один другому; в каждом описании сражения есть необходимость лжи, вытекающая из потребности в нескольких словах описывать действия тысячей людей, раскинутых на нескольких верстах, находящихся в самом сильном нравственном раздражении под влиянием страха, позора и смерти'. PSS 16, p. 10.

124. 'Упрек в том, что лица говорят и пишут по-французски в русской книге, подобен тому упреку, который бы сделал человек, глядя на картину и заметив в ней черные пятна (тени), которых нет в действительности. Живописец не повинен в том, что некоторым — тень, сделанная им на лице картины, представляется черным пятном, которого не бывает в действительности [...] [Т]е, которым покажется очень смешно, как Наполеон говорит то по-русски, то по-французски, [пусть знают], что это им кажется только оттого, что они, как человек, смотрящий на портрет, видят не лицо с светом и тенями, а черное пятно под носом'. PSS 16, pp. 8-9.

125. '[Я] должен склониться на сторону народа, на том основании, что, 1-е, народа больше, чем общества, и что потому должно предположить, что большая доля правды на стороне народа; 2-е и главное — потому, что народ без общества прогрессистов мог бы жить и удовлетворять всем своим человеческим потребностям, как-то: трудиться, веселиться, любить, мыслить и творить художественные произведения. (Илиады, русские песни.)' PSS 8, p. 346.

126. '(Венера Милосская, Библия, Илиада, русские песни...)'. PSS 8, p. 453.

127. 'Без Библии немыслимо в нашем обществе, так же, как не могло быть мыслимо без Гомера в греческом обществе, развитие ребенка и человека'. PSS 8, p. 89.

128. 'Что касается меня, я знаю, чем обязан другим [...] Стендаль? [...] Я обязан ему более, чем кто-либо: я обязан ему тем, что понял войну. Перечитайте в «Пармской обители» рассказ о битве при Ватерлоо. Кто до него так описал войну, то есть такой, какой она бывает на самом деле? [...] Вскоре в Крыму я получил полную возможность убедиться во всем этом собственными глазами. Но, повторяю, во всем том, что я знаю о войне, мой первый учитель— Стендал.”. Paul Buaïe, 'Tri dnia v lasnoi Poliane' in *L. N. Tolstoi v vospominaniakh sovremnikov v dvukh tomakh*, ed. by V. E. Vatsuro and others, vol 2 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia Literatura, 1978), pp. 266-70 (p. 269).
129. 'Он говорил на том изысканном французском языке, на котором не только говорили, но и думали наши деды'. *PSS* 9, p. 4.
130. 'Жизнь купцов, кучеров, семинаристов, каторжников и мужиков для меня представляется однообразною, скучною... жизнь этих людей некрасива'. *PSS* 13, p. 239.
131. 'Я аристократ потому, что воспитан с детства в любви и уважении к высшим сословиям и в любви к изящному, выражающемся не только в Гомере, Бахе и Рафаеле, но и во всех мелочах жизни'. *PSS* 13, p. 239.
132. 'Мы, русские, вообще не умеем писать романов в том смысле, в котором понимают этот род сочинений в Европе'. *PSS* 8, p. 54.
133. 'Пишу о том времени, которое еще цепью живых воспоминаний связано с нашим, которого запах и звук еще слышны нам'. *PSS* 13, p. 70.
134. 'После потери Севастополя начальник артиллерии К[...] прислал мне донесения артиллерийских офицеров со всех бастионов и просил, чтобы я составил из этих более чем 20-ти донесений — одно. Я жалею, что не списал этих донесений. Это был лучший образец той наивной, необходимой, военной лжи, из которой составляются описания. [...] Все испытавшие войну знают, как способны русские делать свое дело на войне и как мало способны к тому, чтобы его описывать с необходимой

в этом деле хвастливой ложью. Все знают, что в наших армиях должность эту, составления реляций и донесений, исполняют большей частью наши инородцы'. *PSS 15, р. 12.*

135. 'Дух в войсках свыше всякаго описания. В времена древней Греции не было столько геройства'. *PSS 59, р. 281.*

136. 'Древние оставили нам образцы героических поэм, в которых герои составляют весь интерес истории, и мы всё еще не можем привыкнуть к тому, что для нашего человеческого времени история такого рода не имеет смысла'. *PSS 11, р. 185.*

137. 'Древние историки говорили, что герои одни по воле божества руководят действиями масс'. *PSS 15, р. 215.*

138. 'Свободная воля исторических лиц[...] бессознательно решена [...] древними [...] для древних [историков], весь интерес истории сосредоточивается в деятельности исторических деятелей'. *PSS 15, р. 187.*

139. 'Давая и принимая Бородинское сражение, Кутузов и Наполеон поступили произвольно и бессмысленно. А историки под совершившиеся факты уже потом подвели хитро-сплетенные доказательства предвидения и гениальности полководцев, которые из всех произвольных орудий мировых событий были самыми рабскими и произвольными деятелями. Древние оставили нам образцы героических поэм, в которых герои составляют весь интерес истории, и мы всё еще не можем привыкнуть к тому, что для нашего человеческого времени история такого рода не имеет смысла'. *PSS 11, р. 185.*

140. 'Сквозь жесткую, столетнюю кору пробились без сучков сочные, молодые листья, так что верить нельзя было, что этот старик произвел их. "Да, это тот самый дуб," подумал князь Андрей, и на него вдруг нашло беспричинное, весеннее чувство радости и обновления'. *PSS 10, р. 158.*

141. 'Истина только относительна. Отношения и зависимость могут быть верны (геометрия), но истины нет'. *PSS 48*, p. 89.
142. 'Что значит то, когда мы говорим, что небесные тела движутся по эллипсам (зак[он] Кеплера). Разве это значит, что они так движутся? Это значит только то, что мне представляются они в движении, и время, и пространство, и эллипсы только формы моего ума, мои представления. [...] Движение, пространство, время, материя, формы движения — круг, шар, линия, точки — всё только в нас'. *PSS 48*, p. 117.
143. 'Декарт отвергает всё сильно, верно, и вновь воздвигает произвольно, мечтательно. [...] Кант то же. [...] — Но зачем воздвигать? Работа мысли приводит к тщете мысли'. *PSS 48*, p. 118.
144. 'Объективный мир есть только мир неизвестного [...]. [О]сновывать на нем, как это делают, жизненные и исторические выводы есть источник всех заблуждений людей'. *PSS 48*, p. 111.
145. 'Возвращаться к мысли не нужно. Есть другое орудие — искусство [...]. одно искусство, всегда враждебное симметрии — кругу, дает сущность'. *PSS 48*, p. 118.
146. 'Всё, что разумно, то бессильно. Всё, что безумно, то творческо-производительно. [...] Что значит то, что всё, что разумно, то непроизводительно, а что безумно, то производительно?' *PSS 48*, p. 122.
147. 'Возьмитесь разумом за религию, за христианство, и ничего не останется, останется разум, а религия выскользнет с своими неразумными противуречиями. То же с любовью, с поэзией, с историей'. *PSS 48*, 122.
148. 'Но если я понимаю недостаточность моего разума для постигновения сущности, то чем же я понимаю то, что есть сама сущность с своими законами? Чем? Сознанием себя — части непостижимого целого [...]

[Л]юби себя, люби в себе то, что есть Бог, т. е. всё, что в тебе неразумно (разумное есть признак дьявола)'. PSS 48, pp. 122-23.

149. 'Даль видна на 25 верст.

Дымы густые от мороза.

Черные тени от лесов и строений на восходе и от курганов. Солнце встает влево, назади'. PSS 13, p. 40.

150. '[Я] напишу такое бородинское сражение, какого еще не было'. PSS 88, p. 153.

151. 'Солнце стояло несколько влево и сзади Пьера'. PSS 11, p. 193.

152. 'Надо уничтожить живость редких памятников, доведя их до безличности своих предположений. Чтобы всё было ровно и гладко, и чтобы никто не заметил, что под этой гладью ничего нет'. PSS 48, p. 125.

153. 'Движение народов начинает укладываться в свои берега. [...] Но затихшее море вдруг поднимается. [...] Совершается последний отплеск движения [...] который должен [...] положить конец воинственному движению этого периода [...]. Пчела, сидевшая на цветке, ужалила ребенка. И ребенок боится пчел и говорит, что цель пчелы состоит в том, чтобы жалить людей'. PSS 12, pp. 244-45.

154. "Я тебя с Аустерлица помню [...]. Помню, помню, с знаменем помню [...]. Я знаю, твоя дорога — это дорога чести." PSS 11, p. 173.

155. "Ты всем хорош, André, но у тебя есть какая-то гордость мысли [...] и это большой грех." PSS 9, p. 129.

156. 'Багратион, зная Болконского за любимого и доверенного адъютанта, принял его с особенным начальническим отличием и снисхождением'. PSS 9, p. 210.

157. 'С выражением нервного раздражения [...] начал говорить [...] Его сухое лицо всё дрожало нервическим оживлением каждого мускула; глаза [...] блестели лучистым, ярким блеском'. PSS 9, p. 34-35.
158. '[Князь Андрей] видел [...] чего он боялся больше всего в мире, того, что называется ridicule, но инстинкт его говорил другое. [...] [К]нязь Андрей с изуродованным от бешенства лицом подъехал к нему и поднял нагайку'. PSS 9, p. 203.
159. 'Князь Андрей находился во время сражения при убитом в этом деле австрийском генерале Шмите. Под ним была ранена лошадь, и сам он был слегка оцарапан в руку пулей. В знак особой милости главнокомандующего он был послан [...] к австрийскому двору [...]. В ночь сражения, взволнованный, но не усталый (несмотря на свое несильное на вид сложение, князь Андрей мог переносить физическую усталость гораздо лучше самых сильных людей), [...] князь Андрей был в ту же ночь отправлен курьером в Брюнн. Отправление курьером, кроме наград, означало важный шаг к повышению'. PSS 9, pp. 182-83.
160. 'Князь Андрей, несмотря на быструю езду и бессонную ночь [...] чувствовал себя еще более оживленным, чем накануне. Только глаза блестели лихорадочным блеском, и мысли сменялись с чрезвычайною быстротой и ясностью'. PSS 9, p. 183.
161. 'Радостное чувство князя Андрея значительно ослабело, когда он подходил к двери кабинета военного министра. Он почувствовал себя оскорбленным, и чувство оскорбления перешло в то же мгновенье незаметно для него самого в чувство презрения, ни на чем не основанного'. PSS 9, p. 184.
162. 'Находчивый же ум в то же мгновение подсказал ему ту точку зрения, с которой он имел право презирать и адъютанта и военного министра. [...] Но в то же мгновение, как он обратился к князю Андрею, умное и твердое выражение лица военного министра, видимо, привычно и сознательно изменилось: на лице его остановилась глупая,



- притворная, не скрывающая своего притворства, улыбка [...]'. PSS 9, р. 185.
163. “[Я] дал себе слово, что служить в действующей русской армии я не буду. И не буду, ежели бы Бонапарте стоял тут, у Смоленска, угрожая Лысым Горам, и тогда бы я не стал служить в русской армии.”. PSS 10, р. 113.
164. 'Князь Андрей чувствовал [...] присутствие совершенно чуждого для него, особенного мира, преисполненного каких-то неизвестных ему радостей, того чуждого мира, который еще тогда, в отраденской аллее и на окне, в лунную ночь, так дразнил его. Теперь этот мир уже более не дразнил его, не был чуждый мир'. PSS 10, pp. 211-12.
165. 'Она была в домашнем синем платье, в котором она показалась князю Андрею еще лучше, чем в бальном. Она и всё семейство Ростовых приняли князя Андрея, как старого друга [...]. Всё семейство, которое строго судил прежде князь Андрей, теперь показалось ему составленным из прекрасных, простых и добрых людей'. PSS 10, р. 211.
166. '[Графиня] протянула ему руку и с смешанным чувством отчужденности и нежности прижалась губами к его лбу, когда он наклонился над ее рукой. Она желала любить его, как сына; но чувствовала, что он был чужой и страшный для нее человек. [...]. Наташа не помнила, как она вошла в гостиную. [...]. 'Неужели этот чужой человек сделался теперь всё для меня?' PSS 10, pp. 226-27.
167. 'Я постараюсь сказать, кто такой мой Андрей. В Аустерлицком сражении [...] мне нужно было, чтобы был убит блестящий молодой человек [...]. Потом он меня заинтересовал [...] и я его помиловал, только сильно ранив его вместо смерти. Так вот вам [...] совершенно правдивое, хотя от этого самого и неясное объяснение того, кто такой Болконский'. PSS 61, pp. 80-81.

168. '[У]дивление к гениальному герою, чувство оскорбленной гордости и надежду славы. "А ежели ничего не остается, кроме как умереть? думал он. Чтò же, коли нужно! Я сделаю это не хуже других"'. PSS 9, p. 201.
169. "[Н]о ежели хочу этого, хочу славы, хочу быть известным людям, хочу быть любимым ими, то ведь я не виноват, что я хочу этого, что одного этого я хочу, для одного этого я живу. Да, для одного этого! [...] [Я] ничего не люблю, как только славу, любовь людскую. Смерть, раны, потеря семьи, ничто мне не страшно. И как ни дороги, ни милы мне многие люди — отец, сестра, жена, — самые дорогие мне люди, — но, как ни страшно и [ни] неестественно это кажется, я всех их отдам сейчас за минуту славы [...]". PSS 9, pp. 323-24.
170. "Помни одно, князь Андрей: коли тебя убьют, мне старику больно будет... [...] [А] коли узнаю, что ты повел себя не как сын Николая Болконского, мне будет... стыдно!". PSS 9, p. 135.
171. 'Ему так ничтожны казались в эту минуту все интересы, занимавшие Наполеона, так мелочен казался ему сам герой его, с этим мелким тщеславием и радостью победы [...] Да и всё казалось так бесполезно и ничтожно [...] Глядя в глаза Наполеону, князь Андрей думал о ничтожности величия, о ничтожности жизни, которой никто не мог понять значения, и о еще бòльшем ничтожестве смерти'. PSS 9, pp. 358-59.
172. '[П]еред князем Андреем восторженность, мечты, надежды на счастье и на добро не приличны'. PSS 10, p. 108.
173. '[К]нязь Андрей [...] не участвуя в войне и в тайне души сожалел о том'. PSS 10, p. 93.
174. "Отчего же несправедливо? [...] то, чтò справедливо и несправедливо — не дано судить людям.". PSS 10, p. 110.
175. "А любовь к ближнему, а самопожертвование? [...] Ах это ужасно, ужасно! [...] Я не понимаю только — как можно жить с такими мыслями.

[...] Будешь сидеть не двигаясь, ничего не предпринимая...”. PSS 10, pp. 110-13.

176. ‘[В]ыходя с парома [...] и в первый раз, после Аустерлица [...] что-то лучшее что было в нем, вдруг радостно и молодо проснулось в его душе’. PSS 10, p. 118.

177. “Так она здесь еще?” сказал князь Андрей. “А князь Курагин?” спросил он быстро.’. PSS 10, p. 371.

178. “Очень сожалею об ее болезни,” сказал князь Андрей. Он холодно, зло, неприятно [...] усмехнулся.

[...]

“А где же он теперь находится, ваш шурин, могу ли я узнать?” сказал он.

“Он уехал в Петер... впрочем я не знаю,” сказал Пьер.

“Ну, да это всё равно,” сказал князь Андрей.’. PSS 10, p. 371.

179. ‘[О]н искал личной встречи с Курагиным, в которой он намерен был найти новый повод к дуэли’. PSS 11, p. 33.

180. ‘Не найдя Курагина в Турции, князь Андрей не считал необходимым скакать за ним опять в Россию; но, при всем том, он знал, что сколько бы ни прошло времени, он не мог, встретив Курагина [...] он не мог не вызвать его, как не может голодный человек не броситься на пищу. И это сознание того, что оскорбление еще не вымещено, что злоба не излита, а лежит на сердце, отравляло то искусственное спокойствие [...]’. PSS 11, pp. 33-34.

181. “Ежели тебе кажется, что кто-нибудь виноват перед тобой, забудь это и прости.”. PSS 11, p. 37.

182. ‘[В]ся невымещенная злоба вдруг поднялась в его сердце [...] он стал думать теперь о той радостной, злобной минуте, когда он встретит Курагина, который (он знал) находится в армии’. PSS, p. 37.

183. “Мальчик мой растет и радуется жизни, в которой он будет таким же, как и все, обманутым или обманывающим. Я еду в армию, зачем? — сам не знаю, и желаю встретить того человека, которого презираю, для того, чтобы дать ему случай убить меня и посмеяться надо мной!” [...] [Т]еперь всё рассыпалось. Одни бессмысленные явления, без всякой связи, одно за другим представлялись князю Андрею.’. *PSS 11*, р. 38.
184. “Да, опять просить ее руки, быть великодушным, и тому подобное?... Да, это очень благородно”. *PSS 10*, р. 371.
185. “Ложись!” крикнул голос адъютанта, прилегшего к земле. Князь Андрей стоял в нерешительности. Граната, как волчок, дымясь вертелась между ним и лежащим адъютантом, на краю пашни и луга, подле куста полыни.
- “Неужели это смерть?” думал князь Андрей, совершенно новым, завистливым взглядом глядя на траву, на полынь и на струйку дыма, вьющуюся от вертящегося черного мячика. “Я не могу, я не хочу умереть, я люблю жизнь, люблю эту траву, землю, воздух...” Он думал это и вместе с тем помнил о том, что на него смотрят.’. *PSS 11*, р. 254.
186. “Я не могу быть несчастлив оттого, что презренная женщина сделала преступление [...] не говоря об исторических примерах, начиная с освеженного в памяти всех Прекрасною Еленою Менелая [...]”. *PSS 18*, р. 295.
187. “Каренон – у Гомера – голова. Из этого слово у меня вышла фамилия Каренин.” Не потому ли он дал такую фамилию мужу Анны, что Каренин – головной человек, что в нем рассудок преобладает над сердцем, т.-е. чувством?’ Sergei Tolstoy, ‘Ob Otrazhenie Zhizni v “Anne Kareninoi,”’ in *Iz Vospominanii* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1939) pp. 566-590 (p. 569).
188. “Опять они пришли, отчего они не уходят?... Да снимите же с меня эти шубы!”. *PSS 18* р. 434.

189. 'Она [...] знала не столько то, что ему было нужно, сколько то стекло, въ которое онъ въ известный момент хотель смотреть на жизнь и на нее, и тотчас же незаметно принимала на себя тотъ тон, в котором он хотел видеть ее и всю жизнь.

Первое время она видѣла, что он хотел, чтобы он был молодым, беззаботно счастливым, вырвавшимся на волю молодым [...]. И она делала их жизнь такую. Потом было время, когда они были въ Риме, он хотел, чтобы они были знатными туристами, и такими они были. Потом он хотел, чтобы они были во Флоренции людьми, желающими только свободы для тихой семейной и артистической жизни, и такими они были. Потом весною, при переезде въ Палаццо, он хотел, чтобы они были покровители искусства, меценаты, и такую она делала их жизнь'. *PSS*, 20, р. 396.

190. '[P]усские, менее других цивилизованные, то есть менее умственно развращенные и удерживающие еще смутное представление о сущности христианского учения, русские, преимущественно земледельческие люди, поймут, наконец, где средство спасения, и первые начнут применять его'. *PSS* 37, р. 176.

191. 'Благодаря книгопечатанию, публичности и угрозам ее, последняя естественность нашей жизни уничтожается'. *PSS* 68, р. 129.

192. 'Сколько раз я завидовал мужикам за их безграмотность и неученость'. *PSS* 23, р. 52.

193. '[И]стории о спасшихся безграмотных, глупых и не знающих ничего об учениях церкви'. *PSS* 23, р. 52.

194. 'Истинное религиозное понимание жизни было и есть еще у русского безграмотного, мудрого и святого мужицкого народа'. *PSS* 37, р. 277.

195. 'Я, благодаря бога, нынешнее лето глуп, как лошадь. Работаю, рублю, копаю, кошу и о противной лит-т-тературе и лит-т-тераторах, слава богу, не думаю'. *PSS* 61, pp. 236-237.

196. 'Я давно не был так равнодушен к философским вопросам, как нынешний год, и льщу себя надеждой, что это хорошо для меня'. *PSS* 62 р.308.
197. 'Я два месяца не пачкал рук чернилами и сердца мыслями, теперь же берусь за скучную, пошлую Каренину с одним желанием поскорее опростать себе место — досуг для других занятий, но только не педагогических, которые люблю, но хочу бросить. [...] Надо пожить, как мы жили в Самарской здоровой глуши, видеть эту совершающуюся на глазах борьбу кочевого быта (миллионов на громадных пространствах) с земледельческим, первобытным — чувствовать всю значительность этой борьбы, чтобы убедиться в том, что разрушителей общественного порядка [...] это болезнь паразита живого дуба, и что дубу до них дела нет. [...]
- К чему занесла меня туда (в Самару) судьба — не знаю; но знаю, что я слушал речи в англ[ийском] парламенте (ведь это считается очень важным), и мне скучно и ничтожно было, но что там — мухи, нечистота, мужики, башкирцы, а я с напряженным уважением, страхом проглядеть, вслушиваюсь, вглядываюсь и чувствую, что всё это очень важно.'. *PSS* 62, pp. 198-199.
198. 'Характер смелости горбоносой. Наслаждение риска жизнью и костями'. *PSS* 48, р. 90.
199. 'Сад с виноград[ником] и идет жена Плакиды за водой. Остановись они и спросили: Какая ты жена? Я мужа не имаю и 2-х детей. Оглянись на меня. Она оробела.'. *PSS* 48, р. 209.
200. 'Буде кто придет -- εί αυ  
Белы груди.  
Сыра-земля.  
Пшеница рожь-матушка'. *PSS* 48, р. 219.

201. ‘Я бы мог забыть Илиаду, которую мы вместе с тобой учили и читали, но тебе, живущему в среде мудрецов и поэтов, нельзя забыть. Что же вся Илиада? — Это повесть о нарушении воли Бога по отношению к браку. И Менелай, и Парис, и Елена, и Ахиллес, и Агамемнон, и Хризеида — всё это описание всех страшных бедствий, вытекающих для людей и теперь происходящих от этого нарушения.

“Да в чем же нарушение?”

“Нарушение в том, что человек любит в женщине свое наслаждение [...]”. *PSS 26*, p. 269.

202. “Но есть же между людьми то чувство, которое называется любовью и которое длится не месяцы и годы, а всю жизнь?”

“Нет, нету. Менелай, может быть, и предпочитал Элену всю жизнь, но Елена предпочла Париса, и так всегда было и есть на свете. [...] Да кроме того, тут не невероятность одна, а, наверное, пресыщение Элены Менелаем или наоборот.” *PSS 27*, p. 409.

203. ‘[И]сключает ту любовь к женщине, которую испытывал Парис’. *PSS 26*, 269.

204. ‘Не могу писать и тоскую и принуждаю себя. Как глупо! Точно жизнь в писаньи. Она даже не во внешней деятельности [...]. Еще полнее и значительнее без писанья. Вот и учусь жить без писанья. И можно’. *PSS 53*, p. 181.

205. ‘Ничего не могу писать, хотя не перестаю думать о Х[аджи]-М[урате]’. *PSS 53*, p.184.

206. ‘При каждом шаге вперед, который делает человечество, — а шаги эти совершаются через всё большее и большее уяснение религиозного сознания, — испытываются людьми всё новые и новые чувства. И потому только на основании религиозного сознания, показывающего высшую степень понимания жизни людей известного периода, и могут возникать новые, не испытанные еще людьми, чувства’. *PSS 30*, p.86.

207. 'Нет ничего более старого и избитого, чем наслаждение'. *PSS 30*, р. 85.
208. 'Из религиозного сознания древнего грека вытекали действительно новые и важные и бесконечно разнообразные для греков чувства, выраженные и Гомером, и трагиками. [...] Разнообразие чувств, вытекающих из религиозного сознания, бесконечно, и все они новы, потому что религиозное сознание есть не что иное, как указание нового творящегося отношения человека к миру'. *PSS 30*, р. 86.
209. 'Какие произведения исключительны, какие нет? Как отличить? Нет из произведений безразличных общим всем. Эти общие всем — в области высшей. [...] Картины — опять пейзажи, портреты, животные, музыка вся народная и простая, поэзия народная — Гомер'. *PSS 30*, 346.
210. 'И таким было всегда хорошее, высшее искусство: Илиада, Одиссея, история Иакова, Исаака, Иосифа, и пророки еврейские, и псалмы, и евангельские притчи, и история Сакиа-Муни, и гимны Ведов — передают очень высокие чувства и, несмотря на то, вполне понятны нам теперь, образованным и необразованным, и были понятны тогдашним, еще менее, чем наш рабочий народ, образованным людям.'. *PSS 30*, 109.
211. '[Н]е понимая того, что для греков борьба и страдания их героев имели религиозное значение'. *PSS*, 35, р. 265.
212. 'Искусство, кроме своих ничтожных, неважных проявлений, служило религии, не в том смысле, что искусство облекло в художественные формы религиозные суеверия (как это любят представлять люди, не понимающие значения религии), а в том смысле, что искусство выражало те чувства, которые вытекали из наивысшего, доступного тому времени понимания смысла жизни'. *PSS 30*, р. 341.
213. 'Остальное же всё искусство, передающее все самые разнообразные чувства, посредством которых люди общаются между собой, не



осуждалось и допускалось, если только оно не передавало чувств, противных религиозному сознанию'. *PSS 30, 152.*

214. 'Так, например, у греков выделялось, одобрялось и поощрялось искусство, передававшее чувства красоты, силы, мужества (Гесиод, Гомер, Фидиас)'. *PSS 30, р. 152.*

215. 'Так у всех народов ценились те чувства, которые испытывал художник при созерцании своего отношения к бесконечному миру, таковы были в поэзии Гомер, пророки еврейские, Веды и др.'. *PSS 30, р. 340.*

216. 'Искусство ценилось не потому, что оно было искусство, и не потому, что оно нравилось и доставляло удовольствие, а потому, что оно передавало чувства самые важные и добрые, до которых в известное время дожило человечество. И наиболее важные и добрые чувства эти были чувства, которые мы теперь называем религиозными'. *PSS 30, р. 340.*

217. 'Таково было всегда высшее искусство [...]. Так это было у языческих народов и так это тем более должно было бы быть у христианских народов, среди которых братство и равенство людей составляет основное положение понимания жизни'. *PSS 30, р. 343.*

218. '[К]огда я пишу историческое, я люблю быть до малейших подробностей верным действительности.'. *PSS 73, 353.*

219. "Слушайте же, аварцы, расскажу вам кое-что, и ты не мешай мне, Нуцал, стану и петь. Влез я к тебе в окно и унес шелковые шалвары любимой жены твоей; снял я серебряные запястья с белых рук любезных сестер твоих; зарезал я ручного тура твоего. Вот, наверху – овчарни; кто угнал из них баранов, отчего они опустели? Вот, внизу – конюшни; кто угнал табун, отчего они развалились? Вот, на крышах вдовы; кто сделал их вдовами, убив мужей? Вокруг нас сироты; кто убил их отцов и сделал их сиротами? Не перечить всех, кого убил я и в поле и в лесу. Разве не я убил шестьдесят человек из вашего

общества? Вот, Нуцал, какие совершаются подвиги, а то, что за подвиг, обманом зазвать к себе человека и умертвить его! [...] Остроконечное копье, не раз пробивало ты грудь ханским нукерам!” Song of Khochbar in P. Uslar, ‘Narodnie Skazaniia Kavkazskikh Gortsev: Koe-chto o slovesnikh proizvedeniakh gortsev’ in *Sbornik Svedenii o Kavkazskikh Gortsakh: Izbrannoe* (Pereizdanie 19 Veka,) vol 1, ed. by Roman V. Pashkov (Moscow, 2017) pp. 124-180 (p. 154).

220. “Что вы стонете, нуцалыта, ведь и я горю вместе с вами; что вы пищите, поросята, ведь и мне мил был белый свет!” Uslar, *Khochbar*, p. 154.
221. ‘Так что самый образованный контист стоит в религиозном отношении несравненно ниже самого простого человека, верующего в Бога — какого бы то ни было, но только — бесконечного, — и из этой веры выводящего свои поступки’ (*italics mine*). *PSS* 35, p. 163.
222. ‘[Н]е говоря уже об удивительно ясных, живых и прекрасных характерах Ахиллеса, Гектора, Приама, Одиссея и вечно умиляющих сценах прощанья Гектора, посланничества Приама, возвращения Одиссея и др., вся “Илиада” и особенно “Одиссея” так естественна и близка нам, как будто мы сами жили и живем среди богов и героев’. *PSS* 35, p. 253.
223. ‘Мы разговорились о кавказских разбойниках. Они вспомнили кавказскую историю, которую я им рассказывал давно, и я стал опять рассказывать об абреках, о казаках, о Хаджи-Мурате’. *PSS* 8, p. 44.
224. ‘Я кончил рассказ тем, что окруженный абрек запел песню и потом сам бросился на кинжал. Все молчали. “Зачем же он песню запел, когда его окружили?” спросил Сёмка’. *PSS* 8, p. 45.
225. “Ведь тебе сказывали — умирать собрался!” отвечал огорченно Федька. “Я думаю, что молитву он запел!” прибавил Пронька. Все согласились.’. *PSS* 8, p. 45.

226. 'Какой ужасный умственный яд современная литература, особенно для молодых людей из народа. [...] Главная особенность и вред этой болтовни в том, что вся она состоит из [...] цитат из самых [...] самых нов[ых] и самых древних писателей. Цитируются словечки из Плат[она], Гегеля, Дарвина, о которых пишуший не имеет ни малейшего понятия, и рядом словечки [...] о к[оторых] не стоит иметь какое нибудь понят[ие] [...] наполняя себе голову этой болт[овней], не оставляют себе ни досуга, ни места в голове для того, чтобы прочесть старых, выдержавших поверку не только десяти, но ста, тысячи лет'. PSS 58, p. 228.
227. 'От аварского хана пришел посланный звать гидатлинского Хочбара. "Идти ли мне, матушка, в Хунзак?". "Не ходи, милый мой, горечь пролитой крови не пропадает; ханы, – да истребятся они, – коварством изводят людей." Uslar, *Khochbar*, p. 153.
228. "Пусть не плачет мать моя: не даром погиб ее молодец. Пусть не тоскуют сестры мои: умер я со славою." Uslar, *Khochbar*, p. 154.

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