

An Examination of Free Will in Tolstoy's *War and  
Peace*

by

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## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Chapter One – An Introduction to the Characters.....	8
Nikolai – Identification through the Collective.....	12
Andrei – An Intellectual, Rational Individual Constrained by Elite Society.....	16
Pierre – The “Natural Man”; an Outcast in Petersburg Elite Society.....	20
Chapter Two – The Overwhelming Force of Chaos in Battle and the Establishment of Order.....	27
The Battle of Schon Grabern – A Model of Successful Action Operating Under the Illusion of Order.....	31
The Battle of Austerlitz – The Negation of Free Will in Battle When Chaos Brings Unchecked Panic.....	41
Chapter Three – Traditional Ritual versus Modern Ritual.....	48
Iogel’s Ball – Natasha’s Exhibition of her Individual Self and Free Spirit Through Unique Dance.....	48
Freemasonry – Pierre’s Entrapment in Hollow, Modern Ritual.....	51
The Grand Ball – Natasha’s Second Exhibition of her Individual Self in Societal Ritual.....	57
Rituals in the Rostov Family – Finding Self-Expression and Initiative in Traditional Ritual.....	62
Chapter Four – The Escalation of History’s Crushing Force; Pierre’s Revelation as a Prisoner.....	69
Bald Hills – Succumbing to the Forces of History and Finding Revelation and Liberation in the Breakdown of Order.....	69
The Battle of Borodino – A “Moral Victory”.....	74
The Abandonment of Moscow – Chaos Ensues in the City; Pierre Finds Momentary Liberation.....	82
Pierre’s Experience as a Prisoner – The Loss of Self-Will; Inspiration from Karataev; a Philosophy of Self-Preservation in the Midst of Fatal Forces.....	88
Conclusion.....	95
Bibliography.....	98

## Introduction

Leo Tolstoy's masterpiece *War and Peace* was first introduced to the public in the years 1865 to 1869. While the novel expresses Tolstoy's response to contemporary issues of the 1860s, it takes place in the Napoleonic Era, beginning in 1805, culminating with Napoleon's flight from Moscow in the autumn of 1812, and concluding in 1820. The novel's initial release drew many criticisms and attacks. Nonetheless, *War and Peace* grew to attain wider admiration as a novel about history and society, and about the lives of various individuals and families, including the Rostovs, Bolkonskis, and Kuragins. The families of *War and Peace* generate a collection of significant protagonists, including Andrei Bolkonski, Nikolai and Natasha Rostov, and Pierre Bezukhov. The text shifts from battle scenes to scenes of peacetime, and back to battle. True understanding of the novel requires understanding of both spheres and how they are related.

Besides the juxtaposition of war and peace scenes, there is also an alternation in the novel between a narrator who tells the lives of his protagonists and of their society in detail (including the subjective experience of the protagonists) and an omniscient philosopher narrator who makes "absolute" statements about history and the role of the individual in history. Gary Saul Morson quotes several such passages from *War and Peace* in his book, *Hidden in Plain View*:

On the twelfth of June, the forces of Western Europe crossed the Russian border and war began, that is, an event took place counter to human reason and to all of human nature.

[*War and Peace*, p. 729]

If we concede that human life can be governed by reason, the possibility of life is destroyed.

[*War and Peace*, p. 1354]

There is, and can be, no cause of a historical event save the one cause of all causes. [*War and Peace*, pp. 1178-79]

The higher a man stands on the social ladder, the more connections he has with people, and the more power he has over other people, the more manifest is the predetermination and inevitability of his every act.

“The hearts of kings are in the hands of God.”

A king is the slave of history. [*War and Peace*, p. 732]

(10)

Scholars have puzzled over the conflicting reports given by such absolute statements about the role of the individual in history and Tolstoy’s long and detailed narrative of his protagonists. Do these absolutist generalizations remain consistent with the detailed story of the novel’s heroes – the Rostovs, the Bolkonskis, and Pierre Bezukhov? Boris Eikhenbaum, a leading Tolstoy scholar, traces the absolutist statements to the novel’s shift in genre to the epic (240). Gary Saul Morson argues that Tolstoy’s omniscient passages were an expression of his perverse originality, as they violated the 19<sup>th</sup> century novel’s convention of defining the author’s voice in relationship to the voice of its protagonists. For example, Morson contrasts the absolute pronouncement that begins *Anna Karenina* (“All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”) with Jane Austen’s opening to *Pride and Prejudice*:

It is instructive to contrast the first sentence of *Anna Karenina* with the apparently similar first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*: “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.” Although Jane Austen’s opening is also aphoristic, its function is not the same as Tolstoy’s. Austen’s statement is indirect discourse, and there is clearly a difference in point of view between the paraphrase and the writer who paraphrases. This sentence does not make an assertion, it reports one; and reported speech is already the beginning of dialogue. Considerable irony is implicitly directed at the group that might make such an assertion and identify itself with the universe. The second sentence of the novel,

moreover, points to the interests of those who acknowledge the “truth” and to their motives for acknowledging it: we are told it is the neighboring families with marriageable daughters who found this truth most incontestable. The opening sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* is just the sort of ironic and “double-voiced” sentence that Bakhtin says is conventional for novels; the opening sentence of *Anna Karenina*, a sentence that is unironic and spoken from outside the world of the novel, is not. *Anna Karenina* enters the conventional world of novels only with its second sentence: “All was confusion at the Oblonskys’.” (18)

Eikhenbaum’s and Morson’s interpretations are helpful for the reader looking to understand the role of the philosophizing narrator in the whole novel. However, they do not address the sense of contradiction that readers may feel in the final books of the novel as the absolute narrator negates the existence of individual free will in history with a louder voice. Reaching the Second Epilogue, the reader is confronted with a final absolutist statement:

As in the question of astronomy then, so in the question of history now, the whole difference of opinion is based on the recognition or nonrecognition of something absolute, serving as the measure of visible phenomena. In astronomy it was the immovability of the earth, in history it is the independence of personality – free will.

[...]

In the first case it was necessary to renounce the consciousness of an unreal immobility in space and to recognize a motion we did not feel; in the present case it is similarly necessary to renounce a freedom that does not exist, and to recognize a dependence of which we are not conscious. (1351)

Tolstoy’s comparison of history to astronomy makes the point that just as Newton’s and Kepler’s laws serve as an explanation of astronomical phenomena, a set of laws must exist that can explain why history progresses as it does. Tolstoy argues that once these laws are uncovered, humans will come to understand that free will is only an illusion of human power.

As the absolute author pulls away from his characters and produces omniscient statements in a detached voice, how does this affect the truths about individuals in history expressed in the detailed, involved narrative that exposes the social and personal lives of the characters?

This thesis will argue that as *War and Peace* progresses, history challenges the character's developed free spirits. Beginning with the battles of Schon Grabern and Austerlitz, the war narrative reveals the awesome power of history as it tries to destroy the self-will of Russian troops. In scenes of peacetime as well, the free spirit of various characters is challenged by stifling forces. The novel develops history's threats to free will, but also the characters' responses, including both physical actions and mental and spiritual acts of consciousness. As the novel culminates in Napoleon's invasion of Russia, the overwhelming power of history is augmented as it moves from isolated battlefields to Russia's metropolis. Every individual becomes engulfed in history's forces, and must then mentally and spiritually redefine his/her perception of reality.

## Chapter One – An Introduction to the Characters

In my efforts to integrate and find a common thread spanning the ideas presented in scenes of both warfare and peacetime, I conceptualized an abstract representation of movement within both realms. The historical flow of the novel, embedded in scenes of warfare and diplomatic events, continuously runs in a targeted direction. The peaceful scenes of the novel are, until late in the novel, predominantly uninvolved in historical developments. Like whirlpools along the more massive movement of history, scenes of life away from the battlefield follow individual characters as they experience major moments in the life cycle. These moments are escorted in by the performance of ritual. Pierre's young, rowdy lifestyle is presented within the context of Anatole's boisterous parties. Natasha's first society ball accompanies her transition away from childhood and into adolescence. Nikolai's hunt ushers him into mature adulthood. The life cycle continues in repeated turns, with the arrival of new life, the departure of old, and the maturity, peaking, and aging of human beings. Society replenishes itself with new gossip but remains unchanged by the history flowing around it.

The novel is structured around several key groups: the elite society of St. Petersburg, the Rostov family of Moscow, and the Bolkonski family that belongs to the Petersburg elite but that has withdrawn to its private country estate where it can maintain its own special values, separate from those of elite society. These groups are explored through the interactions of the individuals within them. Their general values are expressed through the communication and behavior of their members. Social groups, as presented at Anna Pavlovna's soiree, are held together by members who



behave in a systematic fashion. The conversational flow is sustained through conformity of opinions and tone, uniting each guest under the same code of etiquette. In a less stringent manner, family groups remain cohesive through links of respect and love that exist between each member. As a loving relationship has cemented the member's affiliations with one another, conversation can move uninterruptedly.

The three key social groups embody traditional Russian elements that characterize each group. Elite society is mostly driven by conservative and conventional ideals. Anna Pavlovna's soiree introduces the political opinions popular within the pool of elite Petersburg gentry; the aristocrats clearly support the power of the autocrats, which then grants them power, and are outraged by bandits like Napoleon who attempt to challenge that political order.

The Bolkonski family is more exclusive and distant from elite society, valuing intellectual growth, rationality, and reform. An individualistic streak is visibly present in its members, although the group remains tightly bound through love and respect, but also their exclusivity. As Pierre's father, the late Count Bezukhov, was an esteemed figure in Catherine the Great's hall, the reforms she initiated in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century might allow us to infer that Count Bezukhov was similarly reform-minded. The Rostov family participates in another well-established aristocratic practice, which entails significant devotion to and nurturing of one's children. The bonds of love and respect that tie the family tightly together also find expression in the family's love for greater spheres, including society, the army, the tsar, and the country.

It is in Book One that the reader is introduced to the Kuragin family, the Rostov and Bolkonski family and the upper class society of St. Petersburg. The novel

opens with a soiree held by Anna Pavlovna Scherer, where a gathering of elite society members produces several important characters, including Pierre and Andrei.

Discussion at the soiree focuses primarily on the politics of the war with Napoleon, with the conventional, conservative-minded gentry pledging allegiance to the Russian autocracy and denouncing the barbarism of Napoleon. The vicomte's anecdote relating the cause behind Duc d'Enghien's death generates a positive response from the anti-Napoleon crowd, while Pierre's declaration of Napoleon's greatness in performing that deed brings shock:

The vicomte told his tale very neatly. It was an anecdote, then current, to the effect that the Duc d'Enghien had gone secretly to Paris to visit Mademoiselle George, that at her house he came upon Bonaparte, who also enjoyed the famous actress' favors, and that in his presence Napoleon happened to fall into one of the fainting fits to which he was subject, and was thus at the duc's mercy. The latter spared him, and this magnanimity Bonaparte subsequently repaid by death. [...] "Charming!" said Anna Pavlovna [...] "Charming!" whispered the little princess. (13)

"The execution of the Duc d'Enghien," declared Monsieur Pierre, "was a political necessity, and it seems to me that Napoleon showed greatness of soul by not fearing to take on him the whole responsibility of that deed"  
"Dieu! Mon Dieu!" muttered Anna Pavlovna in a terrified whisper.  
[...]  
"Oh! Oh!" exclaimed several voices. (19)

The reactions to both the vicomte and Pierre emphasize the unity of elite opinion as an expression of the greater aristocratic solidarity. Moreover, they are an example of a ritualistic routine, which functions to reinforce the group's values.

Anatole's drinking bout following Anna Pavlovna's soiree represents a ritualistic performance of the rich bachelor life. The abundance of alcohol attaches an importance to drunkenness. In addition, the acts of risky heroism, like drinking an

entire bottle of rum while sitting on a windowsill without holding on to anything for support, express the youthful, manly culture that incorporates values like proving oneself in extremely dangerous situations. Pierre easily falls into this crowd, drinking one glass of alcohol after another after entering (31). He then attempts to repeat Dolokhov's feat, and after being dissuaded, continues to act drunkenly and boisterously:

“I'll drink it! Let's have a bottle of rum!” shouted Pierre, banging the table with a determined and drunken gesture and preparing to climb out of the window. [...]  
“No, you'll never manage him that way,” said Anatole. “Wait a bit and I'll get round him... Listen! I'll take your bet tomorrow, but now we are all going to –‘s.”  
“Come on then,” cried Pierre. “Come on! ... And we'll take Bruin with us.”  
And he caught the bear, took it in his arms, lifted it from the ground, and began dancing round the room with it. (35)

After reaching a suitable level of drunkenness, Pierre's behavior matches the rowdiness and absurdity of the other men. Indeed, Anatole's gathering was as much of a ritual as Anna Pavlovna's, with the difference being that the values of the group and the events and behavior that represented them were vastly unlike the values of the gentry assembled at Anna Pavlovna's. Nonetheless, the participants of each group conformed to their unique code of ideals.

Shifting to Moscow, the Rostov family first appears in the novel on Natasha's, the younger daughter's, and her mother's name day, St. Natalia's day, bringing a festive feel to the family's introduction that accompanies the warm aura surrounding their household. The dynamics of the Rostovs are as quickly established and understood by the reader as those of the upper class at Anna Pavlovna's. The first

book pinpoints the early strands that will connect Nikolai and his family throughout the novel.

### Nikolai – Identification through the Collective

The Rostovs are represented as the ideal family throughout *War and Peace*. Many times over, guests visiting the Rostovs are described as instantly sensing and feeling themselves affected by the warm and, at times, amorous, atmosphere surrounding the household. The Rostov children contribute greatly to the distinguishably romantic sensations felt in the household. As most of them are nearing adolescence, their romances are visibly less trivial than more childish love. Sonya and Nikolai, one of the two young couples presented in the first book, display a more serious fondness for one another:

“Sonya! What is anyone in the world to me? You alone are everything!” said Nicholas. “And I will prove it to you.”  
“I don’t like you to talk like that.”  
“Well, then, I won’t; only forgive me, Sonya!” He drew her to him and kissed her.  
“Oh, how nice,” thought Natasha. (45)

The Rostov children are affectionate with one another and with their parents, while the parents’ responses betray amusement and thus, encouragement, of such behavior. One can clearly see that the children were raised in a loving environment, and that strict rules were subordinate to tenderness and nurturing. Nikolai surfaces in this family setting, fully immersed in the activity of the younger Rostovs. His introduction notes the connection he shares with his relatives. He first appears in Natasha’s daring entrance into the drawing room. In this scene, he is not only presented within a group, but he is implicated in Natasha’s naughtiness when she runs into the drawing room

and disturbs her mother and her visitor. The scene notes his involvement in their youthful games and the circle that bonds the younger Rostovs.

In the very first scene when Nikolai is introduced, the reader is immediately directed to the young group consisting of the Rostov children. Natasha, as the energetic leader of the pack, runs into the drawing room where her mother is sitting with a visitor. While this is happening, the remaining children look on:

Meanwhile the younger generation: [...] had all settled down in the drawing room and were obviously trying to restrain within the bounds of decorum the excitement and mirth that shone in all their faces. Evidently in the back rooms, from which they had dashed out so impetuously, the conversation had been more amusing than the drawing-room talk on society scandals, the weather, and Countess Apraksina. Now and then they glanced at one another, hardly able to suppress their laughter. (40)

The group aspects of the children's party are immediately noticeable. Their conversation in the back room is separate from the adult discussion in the drawing-room. It is more spontaneous and amusing. Secondly, the children are reluctant to adopt a respectable, social manner. Natasha bursts into a "loud, ringing fit of laughter" after she first enters, while Nikolai blushes and fails to find anything to say. It is only Boris who "finds his footing" and "related quietly and humorously how he had known that doll Mimi when she was still a young lady..." (41). He successfully streamlines the visitor's question about Mimi and Natasha's over-exuberance. Nikolai is lumped into this assemblage of children, as he too is implicated in the behavioral distinctions of the group. The childish but jovial mood of the small unit creates the simple setting that defines the children's company. Nikolai, although preparing to leave childhood and adolescence behind, shares the same emotions and glee as the rest of the children.

The younger Rostovs receive little reprimanding from either parent. The Countess is undaunted by Natasha's daring interruption of her conversation with the visitor:

The visitor's daughter was already smoothing down her dress with an inquiring look at her mother, when suddenly from the next room were heard the footsteps of boys and girls running to the door and the noise of a chair falling over, and a girl of thirteen, hiding something in the folds of her short muslin frock, darted in and stopped short in the middle of the room. It was evident that she had not intended her to flight to bring her so far. [...] She laughed, and in fragmentary sentences tried to explain about a doll which she produced from the folds of her frock.

"Do you see? ... My doll ... Mimi ... You see ..." was all Natasha [Nataly] managed to utter (to her everything seemed funny). She leaned against her mother and burst into such a loud, ringing fit of laughter that even the prim visitor could no help joining in.

"Now then, go away and take your monstrosity with you," said the mother, pushing her daughter with pretended sternness, and turning to the visitor she added: "She is my youngest girl." (40)

Countess Rostov scolds Natasha with 'pretended sternness' for her bold entrance but nonetheless, remains amused by her younger daughter. In promoting rather than forbidding their children's spontaneous behavior, they assert their approval of family social life expressive of such feelings.

The communal traits of the younger children and the larger Rostov family are emphasized in Tolstoy's treatment of one of the Rostov children (Vera) as anomalous. Following her mother's remark on Vera's childrearing, Vera states that she was raised differently from her younger siblings. Her comment, and the awkwardness that ensues, is one of the many incidences that exposes her incompatibility with the family. She hints that she might not have experienced the same affection as her younger siblings as her mother states that she was more strict with Vera. Moreover, the implication of this statement is that the choice of

childrearing taken by the parents did in fact anticipate the family's character and its group dynamics. Having not experienced the same nurturing attention from her parents, Vera develops into a colder, premature adult who does not experience the same sort of pleasure as the younger children and parents do from the loving gaiety and silliness of their interactions. Vera's isolation reinforces the group-aspect of the family by illuminating the communal spontaneous affection that bonds them, and by showing the group's ability to distinguish outsiders from its members.

A key term of Nikolai's affiliation with his family is his artistic temperament and his artistic performances. The Rostov dinner presents art as a key link between Natasha and Nikolai. It is briefly introduced when the two prepare to sing "The Brook" before their guests: "At the visitor's request the young people sang the quartette, 'The Brook,' with which everyone was delighted. Then Nicholas sang a song he had just learned" (71). Similarly, the Count delights the crowd with his own successful performance of an old-fashioned dance, the *Daniel Cooper*:

But if the count, getting more and more into the swing of it, charmed the spectators by the unexpectedness of his adroit maneuvers and the agility with which he capered about on his light feet, Marya Dmitrievna produced no less impression by slight exertions – the least effort to move her shoulders or bend her arms when turning, or stamp her foot – which everyone appreciated in view of her size and habitual severity. The dance grew livelier and livelier. The other couples could not attract a moment's attention to their own evolutions and did not even try to do so. All were watching the count and Marya Dmitrievna. (73)

Book One introduces Nikolai as a character who is attached to his family through its communal ties of love and affection, which were created in the earliest years of his childhood through the childrearing approach chosen by the parents. The book also anticipates how Nikolai's attachment to one group will stem out to future

connections with other groups. An example of the broadening of Nikolai's identification with groups is displayed at the Rostov's dinner. He shows off his patriotic gusto with the purpose of aligning himself with the adult men who are at the party. He answers the colonel's address with a passionate reply, stating "I am quite of your opinion. I am convinced that we Russians must die or conquer" (66). Nikolai's concurrence with the colonel's statement that the soldiers must fight to the last drop of their blood reflects a manly sentiment and anticipation to become one of the fearless hussars, courageously fighting for Russia. Nikolai's simple but forceful statement is rich in its display of the group-mentality of his character. In expressing his sentiment, he simultaneously allies himself with the male group of the party as a brave hussar, and, in broader terms, he identifies himself with the collective of the entire Russian army and its spirit.

#### Andrei – An Intellectual, Rational Individual Constrained By Elite Society

When Andrei Bolkonski is introduced at Anna Pavlovna Scherer's salon in the opening pages of the novel, he is a young man eager to break from the restrictive sphere of high society life and plunge into the historical events of his times, where he envisions the attainment of glory and the rise to become a great leader. When we see him in his father's household at the end of Book One, we understand family is again important as a source of value endowment. Andrei's ambitions and energy are partially a product of his father's character and his childrearing. The old prince had concluded a successful military career but his rationality and energetic drive are still remarkably visible in his old age. He stands out as an individualist in his disengagement from the frivolous elite society and his independent work solitarily



completed in the secluded Bald Hills estate. Towards his children he adopts a loving but tough countenance, and has clearly instilled in them the same appreciation and dedication to education.

Although the old prince is strict with his children, he leaves enough room for them to develop, like himself, into individuals in their own right. Andrei is given leave to join the military, while Marya, despite considerable taunting from both her father and brother, is nevertheless permitted to practice her religious devotions. Outwardly, the old prince appears strict and severe, sternly addressing guests and even family, while exercising self-discipline in his active, unchanging daily routine.

The old prince's attributes have visibly been transmitted to Andrei's character. As the novel continues, Andrei acquires an active position in almost every one of his scenes, whether it is for the purpose of proving himself on the battlefield, nihilistically removing himself from the greater world, or forgetting about his personal and romantic pains. He acts with energy as an individual; his military dreams are of single-handed action that leads to victory while his reforms at Bogucharovo reflect his father's independent accomplishments on Bald Hills. Andrei addresses upper class society with his father's severity and disdain. It comes out in his sarcasm and boredom at Anna Pavlovna's and in his harsh treatment of his wife. Like his father, Andrei needs to be engaged in some sort of activity that could channel his special virtues of intellectual curiosity and duty to improve society through his leadership. Unsurprisingly, elite society constrains him with its soirees and other fixed amusements that replace action and movement. Andrei decides to leave for the

military in search of the success his father had gained and in the hopes of using it as a powerful position from which he could act upon world affairs.

Andrei's entrance into the novel exhibits the conflicting values of his personality and of the elite society that surrounds him. For one thing, the unchanging nature of the upper class bores Andrei. From the very onset of his arrival at the soiree, Andrei's disposition towards the gathering is immediately apparent:

It was evident that he not only knew everyone in the drawing room, but had found them to be so tiresome that it wearied him to look at or listen to them. And among all these faces that he found so tedious, none seemed to bore him so much as that of his pretty wife. (14)

Andrei's lack of interest in the society that has gathered is also evidenced in his conversation. His replies are curt and sarcastic, and display a reluctance to enter into the banter of the gathering. Unlike his father's energetic routine that keeps the old prince on his toes, Andrei's social position in Petersburg society keeps him fixed in an inactive setting. Having little interest in engaging himself in the social gathering, Andrei remains removed and aloof.

By avoiding the chatter of the soiree, Andrei segregates himself from the group that has assembled at Anna Pavlovna's. His liveliness returns, however, when Pierre finds him. The transformation in Andrei's mood is narrated in one sentence, as his grimace changes to a smile when he realizes that it was Pierre who touched his arm. Only after Pierre arrives at Anna Pavlovna's does Andrei begin to display his positive characteristics. He delights in Pierre's outbursts and controversial opinions that disrupt the soiree's monotonous conversation. He also finally joins the conversation to temper Pierre's opinions by succinctly offering an explanation that moderately upholds some of Pierre's radical remarks. Nonetheless, Andrei remains

visibly stifled and exasperated by the gathering's unchanging features that focus on conversation and conservative discourse and its substitution of words for action.

Andrei displays the same sort of distance and detachment from his wife as he has with the other guests at Anna Pavlovna's. Unlike Andrei, Lise is a woman of society whose personality is fulfilled by the demands of the socially-tuned nobility. She easily falls into the flow of structured conversation, agreeing with the standard opinions expressed at the soiree and adopting a socially acceptable coquettishness that delights everyone except her husband. Considering Andrei's general vexation with St. Petersburg society, it is not surprising that she too, as an element of that society, is an object of annoyance to him in their marriage. Nonetheless, she is also his wife, and by alienating himself from her with his apathetic feelings, Andrei disengages himself from the family sphere he had begun with her. The dynamics of their relationship are exposed when Pierre visits Andrei. In response to Lise's exclamations of fear at being sent to live with Andrei's father and daughter as Andrei leaves for the war, Andrei retorts with frigid politeness that he does not comprehend her feelings. Detectable in his response is an audible note of coldness and aloofness. Andrei and his wife, effectively, are speaking in different dialects. Her tone is initially coquettish as it was at the soiree, and eventually becomes desperate and pitiful.

The final scenes of the first book, set in Bald Hills, introduce the family circle in which Andrei had matured and which had thus influenced the young man. A clear presentation of the Bolkonskis portrays the old prince's strictness but private love towards the family, and helps explain Andrei's austere reactions to situations and people he patronizes. Andrei and Marya's admiration and love for their father are

evident at Bald Hills. The final scenes also portray Andrei's affection towards his sister, best seen in his repentance of the sarcastic comment he makes after she asks for his promise that he'll wear his grandfather's icon into battle. Putting on the icon, his face appears both ironic and tender, illustrating his love and ideological difference from her. He does not mock her religious beliefs the way he scorns upper class society, because mixed into his ironic reaction is the love and respect he feels towards his sister's autonomy and integrity in arriving at her own truth. Thus, Andrei's reverential and caring manner towards his father and sister reflect the family's intense love and commitment to intellectual independence.

These scenes develop the group aspects of the Bolkonskis as earlier scenes had elaborated on the Rostov family, with the difference that although members of both families are presented as being interconnected through links of love and respect that bond the family, the values of the Bolkonski family also emphasize strictness, intellectual independence, and an active lifestyle, while the Rostovs rely primarily on affection and joviality. Andrei is thus a product of a family legacy that focuses on strength, power, and a greater role in the world beyond the family estate. He enters the military having learned the importance of smart action and intellectual pride from his father, while Nikolai has the attributes of a group member capable of binding himself to a collection of people through masculine and patriotic declamations and other forms of sentiment.

#### Pierre – “The Natural Man”; an Outcast in Petersburg Society

Pierre enters Anna Pavlovna's salon, and the greater sphere of Russian elite society, as an outsider to the country and to the culture of the gentry. He had spent his

student years in France, where the political climate following the French Revolution drastically differed from the conservative ideals of the Russian elite. In addition, he had not been raised in Russian society to have been able to comprehend and follow the rules of social conduct. Nor has he been reared within the nurturing setting of a loving family. The only familial bond that can be inferred in the novel is the mysterious link between him and his father that had been established in his father's choice of Pierre as the illegitimate son who would inherit his fortune.

Not only is Pierre inspired by the political ideals of the French Revolution, he is also, as a character, an embodiment of several of Rousseau's ideal notions of the "natural man" and the social ideals of Rousseau effectively outline Pierre's character. Pierre is unfettered by the constraints of social conventions. He seems to embody a great innate capacity for love and compassion. He has difficulty hiding his emotions and redirecting his tone or his opinions to fit society's mold. His political beliefs are largely a result of his French education. Rousseau's enlightenment ideals resonate in Pierre's language and principles: the love of liberty and inalienable rights.

Pierre possesses extraordinary physical energy and power which he inherits from his father. At Anna Pavlovna's gathering, Pierre cannot adopt the elegance of the group and clumsily carries his large body. The constraints of the party, where individuals stand and talk in circles, give little opportunity for physical movement. Pierre finds difficulty in conforming to the complete conversational emphasis of the group. Because of his energy and power, Pierre is more comfortable at Anatole's rowdy bash, where action dominates talk.

Pierre's clumsiness serves as another force of deviation from the society of Anna Pavlovna's soiree. Pierre himself is uncomfortable with his size and cannot find a suitable position to adopt. His large body signifies a source of strength that has yet to be cultivated and effectively channeled. Throughout the novel, Pierre mistakenly finds power within his body during moments of uncontrollable rage. Although his frame can act as a vessel of force, Pierre has not yet learned how to control and utilize it. Instead, he feels awkward with himself at Anna Pavlovna's. It is not until Pierre finds a physical outlet for his strength as a prisoner that his large frame will prove constructive. In addition, Pierre's physical appearance is symbolic of not only a self disconnection, but a disconnection from elite society as well. Much as Andrei feels restricted in the conformity of conversation, Pierre feels physically constrained in the small gathering, signifying the suffocating effects of the social group's narrow boundaries.

Pierre's political beliefs come to the forefront at Anna Pavlovna's soiree. Following the philosophical principles of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Pierre proclaims the superiority of the ideals of liberty and equality. He supports the liberal message of the French Revolution and Napoleon's rise to power and his role as leader and guardian of the revolution's core ideas. His revolutionary idealism is clearly at odds with the upper class society that has gathered at Anna Pavlovna's:

“No,” cried he, becoming more and more eager, “Napoleon is great because he rose superior to the Revolution, suppressed its abuses, preserved all that was good in it – equality of citizenship and freedom of speech and of the press – and only for that reason did he obtain power.”

“Yes, if having obtained power, without availing himself of it to commit murder he had restored it to the rightful king, I should have called him a great man,” remarked the vicomte.

“He could not do that. The people only gave him power that he might rid them of the Bourbons and because they saw that he was a great man. The Revolution was a grand thing!” continued Monsieur Pierre, betraying by this desperate and provocative proposition his extreme youth and his wish to express all that was in his mind.

“What? Revolution and regicide a grand thing? ... Well, after that ... But won't you come to this other table?” repeated Anna Pavlovna. (20)

The extremism and enthusiasm with which Pierre expresses his conviction of the “grandness” of the revolution and of liberal ideals, without surprise, provoke retaliatory comments from the elite crowd that supports autocracy. Pierre's behavior and tone, and his radical ideas, find little sympathy in the conservative gathering. Pierre's extremism also prevents him from taking a fruitful role in Russian society, since it is in such conflict with the Russian political climate. As Pierre tells Andrei, his principles prevent him from joining the army.

As a guest at Anna Pavlovna's soiree, Pierre is disconnected like Andrei from the larger gathering. Conversation can again be employed as an illuminating vantage point. While it is Andrei's curt tone that does not resonate with the gathering's nature of communication and reveals his removal from the conversational flow, Pierre's overt enthusiasm is seen as a potential risk to the “proper setting”, as assessed by Anna Pavlovna. The controversial nature of his opinions, however, is the greatest source of his segregation from the gathering. There is a vast gap between Pierre's and the Russian gentry's ideological ideas on government and power. Anna Pavlovna sincerely believes in Napoleon's illegitimacy and baseness while Pierre sincerely views him as a great man. The forces that assemble in an attack on Pierre's declarations paint a picture of one man at odds with an entire group, illuminating the reality of Pierre's isolation.

In the scene following the soiree, Pierre visits Andrei and the two begin a discussion that emphasizes both characters' misfit positions in society. Andrei can imagine fulfilling action for himself outside civilian society as an officer in the Russian army. Pierre's hesitation and indecision are revealed when he tells Andrei that a position as a guardsman or a diplomatist does not interest him and when the narrator notes that Pierre has been choosing a career for three months and has not decided on anything. Pierre comments that he is a free man, but he is disinclined to join the war effort because as he states, it would be joining England and Austria to fight the greatest man in the world.

His position is clearly established in this scene as a young man whose idealism prevents him from being incorporated into conventional adult social roles. As Pierre had declared Napoleon a great man at the soiree, Andrei similarly picks up on the topic when explaining to Pierre the freedom Napoleon had in his pursuits. Following his statement on Napoleon's freedom to attain his goals, Andrei complains of the confinement he faces as a married man in Petersburg civilian society. His impassioned tone and flashing eyes during his speech reflect the effect that images of greatness have on him. By incorporating a remark on his own marital situation after commenting on Napoleon's freedom, Andrei exposes the thoughts that have influenced his decision to enter the war. Like Napoleon, he hopes to attain glory by unbinding himself from his wife and the elite social group and entering the historic events unfolding in the novel.

Both Pierre and Andrei's admiration of Napoleon is key in understanding their identities. First, they view Napoleon as a man who has risen above the masses to play



a more significant role in the world. He has single-handedly had a dramatic effect on history. In accordance with the values of social equality that both Pierre and Andrei approve, Napoleon also uses his power to reform society.

Andrei and Pierre grasp the greatness that follows this leader, and in their fervent speeches, the reader can detect an aspiration to achieve similar distinction. Andrei's ambitious goals that later surface in the novel are consistent with Napoleon's as represented by his dreams of glory. His admiration of Napoleon reflects his secret desire to follow the same path and eventually, to impact history as Napoleon had done. Pierre's distinctive nature is similarly reflected in his appraisal of Napoleon. At various points in the novel, Pierre resolves to take action for himself and for the general good, mentally motivating himself to change the conditions of life and the course of history, whether through reform on his estates or through assassinating Napoleon.

Book One of *War and Peace* introduces the novel's protagonists according to the role each plays within his or her social and family sphere. Nikolai's close ties with his family will persist in his interactions with other groups. Because his entire young life was incorporated within an affectionate unit that surrounded him, Nikolai is drawn to the group aspect of his military unit. In transitioning to his regiment, Nikolai will accept the conventions that allow him to be part of the military unit because of his natural attachment to groups. His goal in battle is not to behave in singular distinction, but to fight in accordance with the military's chivalric code of bravery. In effect, his goals are to follow the traditional code of the military collective.

Andrei's situation is drastically different. Andrei carries with him the values of strength, intelligence, power, and activity that his father had bestowed on him, and his family legacy of action in historic events, into the war. He begins his service with ambitious goals. Dreaming of glory and with a desire to emulate Napoleon's success, Andrei leaves the social circles that constrain him for the greater flow of history, as it is represented by the war. Andrei hopes to leave his mark on history as Napoleon is leaving his mark.

Pierre dreams of momentous action as well, but he has yet to clearly define his aspirations. Andrei's eccentricities and abnormal social characteristics do not disqualify him from an elite position in the army. Pierre, however, is handicapped by his radical ideas that disconnect him from society and create barriers for diplomatic and military employment. It is not until the epilogue that Pierre can put into practice his idealistic values.

## Chapter Two – The Overwhelming Force of Chaos in Battle and the Establishment of Order

Books Two and Three narrate the war as it is experienced by two male protagonists, Andrei and Nikolai. An overall view of the war is initially adopted and remains in tune with Andrei's intellectual desire to see the bigger picture. The opening of Book Two introduces the entire army as they prepare for a review, while also going through the entire hierarchical structure of the military, beginning with Kutuzov and his general staff, and ending with the lowest soldiers. In addition, the narrator expands the significance of the earliest engagement to the effects it has on the Austrian theatre of war and on the diplomatic relations between Russia, Austria, and France. The broader perspective enables Andrei to appreciate the highly significant decisions that Kutuzov must make, including sending Bagration back to the rear to halt the advancing French. As the battle of Schon Grabern begins, the narrator's eye piece narrows to a more detailed account of the action. Andrei observes the progression of the battle with a focus on the small actions accomplished by various leaders, which then answers his great questions on the effectiveness of leaders in battle.

Book Two opens with an account of the Russian troops preparing for a review near Braunau. The men had assembled themselves in orderly ranks to present a stunning image of a structured mass: “[...] by morning the regiment presented a well-ordered array of two thousand men each of whom knew his place and his duty, had every button and every strap in place, and shone with cleanliness” (117). The total vision of the army is carried into the book when Bilibin enlightens Bolkonski with a

more comprehensive sketch of the war's progress. Bolkonski had allowed himself to be carried away by the victory at the Danube but had been ignorant of the greater loss experienced by Russia and her allies when Vienna was abandoned. Bilibin brings Bolkonski's attention back to the general course of the war: "Besides, suppose you did gain a brilliant victory, if even the Archduke Karl gained a victory, what effect would that have on the general course of events? It's too late now when Vienna is occupied by the French army!" (165) Bilibin's broader military and diplomatic perspective gives Andrei a clearer understanding of the situation he is in. In addition, after hearing about the French capture of the Thabor Bridge making it likely that the Russian troops will be cut off by the French, his rational nature tells him that the Russian army's position is hopeless. Nonetheless, his desire to make an individual mark on history is so strong, that his other response is the hope that his Toulon lies in the futility of the situation:

"And now they go and take the bridge, cross it, and now with their whole army are on this side of the Danube, marching on us, you, and your lines of communication."

"Stop jesting," said Prince Andrew sadly and seriously. This news grieved him and yet he was pleased.

As soon as he learned that the Russian army was in such a hopeless situation it occurred to him that it was he who was destined to lead it out of this position; that here was the Toulon that would lift him from the ranks of obscure officers and offer him the first step to fame! (172)

Andrei retains a broader view of the army's position when he scans their location prior to the commencement of Schon Grabern. Likewise, he perceives the imprint that he will make on the battle in broad terms, dreaming of single-handedly changing the fortune of the entire army:

Listening to Bilibin he was already imagining how on reaching the army he would give an opinion at the war council which would be the

only one that could save the army, and how he alone would be entrusted with the executing of the plan. (173)

As the narrative unfolds, however, it narrows to focus on specific regiments and further narrows to examine the individual leaders within each regiment and how they influence the outcome of the battle. Andrei abandons his ambitious impulse to control the whole battle, and, instead, observes these leaders and to comprehend the framework through which they can exercise their power and the consequences that follow.

While Andrei continues to play with the idea that he can single-handedly affect the course of the war, Nikolai's first experiences in the army in Book Two illustrate his shift in both mentality and behavior towards the military code of ethics propagated by the military collective. His exchange with Telyanin results from his military inexperience. Following his moral impulse, Nikolai accuses Telyanin of stealing Denisov's purse. He ignores Denisov's attempts to restrain him:

“Denisov, let him alone, I know who has taken it,” said Rostov, going toward the door without raising his eyes.  
Denisov paused, thought a moment, and, evidently understanding what Rostov hinted at, seized his arm.  
“Nonsense!” he cried, and the veins on his forehead and neck stood out like cords. “You are mad, I tell you. I won't allow it. The purse is here! [...]” (139)

As the incident unfolds, Denisov's intentions are understood. He had tried to hold back Rostov because as a captain with prior military experience, he knew that accusing an officer of higher standing would only lead to trouble, as one affair can blotch the reputation of an entire regiment:

“The case is this: you ought to have thought the matter over and taken advice; but no, you go and blurt it all straight out before the officers.

Now what was the colonel to do? Have the officer tried and disgrace the whole regiment? Disgrace the whole regiment because of one scoundrel? [...] You value your own pride and don't wish to apologize, but we old fellows, who have grown up in and, God willing, are going to die in the regiment, we prize the honor of the regiment, and Bogdanich knows it. [...]" (142)

This incident forces a confrontation between Nikolai and military organization.

Abandoning his personal motivations for his prior action, Nikolai eventually submits to the men urging him to consider the honor of the regiment above personal pride: "I ... for me ... for the honor of the regiment I'd ... Ah well, I'll show that in action, but for me the honor of the flag ... Well, never mind, it's true I'm to blame, to blame all around" (143). Nikolai agrees to apologize and in that instant, by accepting to do what is "honorable" in the ranks, establishes himself as an individual following a larger military code of conduct.

Nikolai's aspirations for his performance in battle are centered on fulfillment of a code of bravery in combat that largely ignores the overall significance of the battle. As more vividly emphasized in the traditional hussar characteristics, bravery and strength are glorified traits that every soldier attempts to embody. Narratives of combat present war as a ritual where soldiers perform these values of strength and valor. Indeed, Nikolai himself recounts his story at Schon Grabern in this manner:

His hearers expected a story of how beside himself and all aflame with excitement, he had flown like a storm at the square, cut his way in, slashed right and left, how his saber had tasted flesh and he had fallen exhausted, and so on. And so he told them all that. (260)

Nikolai enters battle with dreams of fulfilling his soldierly duty by fighting bravely and gallantly. However, these glorified militaristic conventions are difficult to follow in the reality of disorder and chaos in war. Disorder thwarts the construction of battle

as a ritual and a soldier's opportunity to perform with ritualized courage. Schon Grabern and Austerlitz bring this reality down onto Nikolai.

The Battle of Schon Grabern – A Model of Successful Action Operating Under the Illusion of Order

Schon Grabern is narrated primarily from Andrei's point of view. In viewing the position of the army through his eyes, we can follow his observations and his response:

In the center, where Tushin's battery stood and from which Prince Andrew was surveying the position, was the easiest and most direct descent and ascent to the brook separating us from Schon Grabern. On the left our troops were close to a copse, in which smoked the bonfires of our infantry who were felling wood. The French line was wider than ours, and it was plain that they could easily outflank us on both sides. Behind our position was a steep and deep dip, making it difficult for artillery and cavalry to retire. Prince Andrew took out his notebook and, leaning on the cannon, sketched a plan of the position. He made some notes on two points, intending to mention them to Bagration. His idea was, first, to concentrate all the artillery in the center, and secondly, to withdraw the cavalry to the other side of the dip. Prince Andrew, being always near the commander in chief, closely following the mass movements and general orders, and constantly studying historical accounts of battles, involuntarily pictured to himself the course of events in the forthcoming action in broad outline. (188)

This quotation condenses Andrei's need to be aware and informed and actively involved in the planning and implementation of the line of attack. His line of vision extends over the entire battleground, because as an adjutant, he is not subsumed within the sphere of one regiment. Rather, he envisions himself as active and influential in the entire battle, a reflection of his ambitious nature. Despite his bold aspirations, Andrei is also a skeptic of individual influence. He is not fully convinced that one man can make the sort of mark on history that he continues to dream of. As Schon Grabern begins, his intellectual impulses come into play: he subordinates his

ambitious desire to himself play the key role in the battle, and, instead, monitors the roles of other leaders. In doing so, he observes how various individual officers determine the course of the battle through words, gestures, and actions.

His attention is drawn first to Bagration's style of command on the right flank:

Prince Andrew listened attentively to Bagration's colloquies with the commanding officers and the order he gave them and, to his surprise, found that no orders were really given, but that Prince Bagration tried to make it appear that everything done by necessity, by accident, or by the will of subordinate commanders was done, if not by his direct command, at least in accord with his intentions. Prince Andrew noticed, however, that though what happened was due to chance and was independent of the commander's will, owing to the tact Bagration showed, his presence was very valuable. Officers who approached him with disturbed countenances became calm; soldiers and officers greeted him gaily, grew more cheerful in his presence, and were evidently anxious to display their courage before him. (193)

The quotation betrays a level of curiosity and an incomplete confidence in the type of individual effectiveness he hoped to achieve in his first methodical reaction.

Bagration's manner surprises him because it is unlike his own inclination to analyze and strategize. Andrei's interest in the role of a military individual allows for a narrative that looks into the usefulness of one individual, and effectively, it constructs an example of one feature of successful individual action. Bagration productively utilizes his role as a leader not by issuing orders, but by creating a feeling of order through positive responses to everything that had been done, be it accidentally or deliberately. In effect, both Andrei and the reader witness the outcomes of individual impact on troop morale and the greater portion of the army which can then influence the battle, rather than direct impact on battle strategy.

Bagration does little to initiate a set course of action on the battlefield and instead uses the current situation that is already under way to uplift the troop's spirits.



His strategy is thus twofold; first, he responds to the events occurring rather than depending on a preconceived strategy, and second, he demonstrates his understanding that by creating the impression of order, confidence, and control, he bolsters the morale of the group of men whose actions will determine the outcome of the battle. The efficiency of the right flank hence reinforces the idea that a group entering battle with confidence, supported by a commander who joins and heightens the regiment's esprit de corps, may produce more results on the battlefield than one leader who attempts to order the overall chaos of battle through tactical decisions and commands. The Sixth Chasseurs of the right flank are held in accord through the regularity of their marching, creating the appearance of harmony:

“Left... left... left...” he seemed to repeat to himself at each alternative step; and in time to this, with stern but varied faces, the wall of soldiers burdened with knapsacks and muskets marched in step, and each one of these hundreds of soldiers seemed to be repeating to himself at each alternative step, “Left... left... left...” (196)

The strength of the soldiers is reinforced by the harmony that holds the mass of men together, and they are thus presented as a “wall” with each soldier maintaining the same tempo. In addition, both Bagration and the troops adapted to the harmonious movements that guided the flank as a whole. The men are stepping in time in synchrony, expressing their immediate sense of their order and purpose on their part of the battlefield as well as the general sense that their efforts are contributing to the overall effect of the Russian side. The success of the right flank grew out of their resolve that propelled them forward and onto the enemy.

In the picture of combat that Tolstoy paints, maintenance of this esprit de corps can require individual repression of the battlefield reality. Literally, soldiers

might need to not look at wounded or killed fellow soldiers. The Sixth Chasseurs, in order to remain steadfast in their sense of their own successful forward movement, had to overlook the fallen soldiers who were shot:

The soldiers passed in a semicircle round something where the ball had fallen, and an old trooper on the flank, a noncommissioned officer who had stopped besides the dead men, ran to catch up his line, and falling into step with a hop, looked back angrily, and through the ominous silence and the regular tramp of feet beating the ground in unison, one seemed to hear *left... left... left*. (196)

The reader, who experiences the scene as the noncommissioned officer does, is first distracted by the fallen soldiers, and then quickly reverts to the unified marching. The reversal is the soldier's return from shock to order, which is necessary for the maintenance of uninterrupted and regular forward movement of the Russian troops on the right flank. Witnessing the death of fellow troops exposes soldiers to disorientation and confusion that are natural responses to the chaotic reality of war. In this case, to overlook fallen soldiers is to maintain an illusion of collective forward momentum. Thus, disregarding reality and rejoining the marching troops will restore a perception of order that reinforces the flank's confidence.

Bagration's role as a leader displays the effectiveness of an individual when he acts to encourage the group morale of the mass of troops. His key act at this juncture of the battle is a mere gesture: he dismounts in perfect time to join the advancing regiment and shout hurrah as the French begin to fire. The movements in this scene are harmonious, signifying the harmonious forward movement of his men. He joins the rhythmic stride of the troops rather than directing or modifying it.

Rhythmic movement and harmony are essential in battle because they create a locus of order within the greater chaos that prevails in warfare. The Sixth Chasseurs

are presented as a strong unit, and indeed, Napoleon himself spoke of the fearlessness of the Russians in this attack. They move as a “wall” because they remain unified through rhythmic marching. Their regularity in the face of havoc creates a sense of order and movement.

Next, Tolstoy narrates the growing sense of confusion among officers and soldiers on the Russians’ left flank. A multitude of events combined to culminate in a desperate situation for the left flank, which fell into a panic and consequently, into disorder. Zherkov, who was sent by Bagration to the left flank with the order to retreat, was taken with fright and did not deliver the command. In addition, the infantry and the hussars of the left flank were not expecting an attack and were engaged in peaceful activities. In the meantime, the German colonel of the hussars and the Russian general of the infantry were caught up in a squabble over issues of seniority. Facing the enemy, the troops listening to the colonel’s order rested in place.

This is the context in which Nikolai has his first full experience of combat. He is under Denisov’s command on the left flank. At the sound of Denisov’s command, the Pavlograd hussars attacked the French. First overcome by joy, Rostov gallops forth, but is disoriented when he is wounded and his leg is pinned under his fallen horse:

Rostov also tried to rise but fell back, his sabretache having become entangled in the saddle. Where our men were, and where the French, he did not know. There was no one near. Having disentangled his leg, he rose. “Where, on which side, was now the line that had so sharply divided the two armies?” he asked himself and could not answer. (200)

When he gets up, he is briefly in disbelief that the men approaching him are Frenchmen, and momentarily remembers his family’s affection. However, seeing the

approaching Frenchman, Nikolai turns and runs like a “hare fleeing from the hounds” (201). At the point where Nikolai’s narrative ends, the author picks up on his narration of the events surrounding him on the left flank. We are told that when the French attacked the men in the copse, neither the commanders nor the men were prepared for battle, and with a pervasive feeling of uncertainty, the men fall into a panic, disobey orders, and flee in disorderly masses. Only Timokhin’s company remains organized, and attacking the French unexpectedly, takes them by surprise and holds them off while the reserve units appear to end the fight.

The situation that the left flank found itself in was desperate enough, but the failure of the colonel and general to organize the men left little chance for Russian success. In the scene of the French attack, all the chaos and confusion of war is presented in the devastation suffered by the infantry of the left flank. However, there was confusion and disarray among the Russian troops on the left flank even before they were attacked. They were exposed to the natural panic and havoc of war without the benefit of a group sense of orientation, order and purpose that might enable them to hold their ground in the chaotic midst of the French attack:

The infantry regiments that had been caught unawares in the outskirts of the wood ran out of it, the different companies getting mixed, and retreated as a disorderly crowd. One soldier, in his fear, uttered the senseless cry, “Cut off!” that is so terrible in battle, and that word infected the whole crowd with a feeling of panic. (202)

In this situation, the general loses all authority over his troops. The authority he is supposed to have dissolves in the face of panic:

Would this disorderly crowd of soldiers attend to the voice of their commander, or would they, disregarding him, continue their flight? Despite his desperate shouts that used to seem so terrible to the soldiers, despite his furious purple countenance distorted out of all

likeliness to his former self, and the flourishing of his saber, the soldiers all continued to run, talking, firing into the air, and disobeying orders. The moral hesitation which decided the fate of battles was evidently culminating in a panic. (202)

The futility of the general's position of power in a situation of havoc is underlined by the ineffectiveness of his shouts which "used to seem so terrible to the soldiers".

Evidently, the battlefield can become so chaotic that no individual, no matter how highly placed in the military hierarchy, can turn the developing tides on the battleground.

Tolstoy's narration of the battle of Schon Grabern shows that a group of soldiers can either reinforce one another through creating a feeling of order, with the result of turning into an orderly unit empowered by its esprit de corps, or it might be forced into battle without preparation time, in which case the overwhelming force of chaos intrinsic to war sparks a natural reaction leading to disorder. On the left flank, disorder began when the group was infected by discord among its officers. Their failure resulted not from committing tactical mistakes, but from not taking the steps necessary to construct a spirit of order among their troops. They did not create the sort of psychological shield that the Sixth Chasseurs had and were therefore exposed, without the support of an illusion of order against the chaotic reality of war. Tolstoy demonstrates convincingly that the situation among the panicked, fleeing infantry of the left flank was hopeless: there was no way that an individual or a group within that group of infantry could have stopped them from fleeing. Help would have to come from elsewhere.

Tolstoy tells how the Russian left flank is saved by the humble, red-nosed officer, Timokhin. He is able to pull off a counterattack for a number of reasons. For

one thing, his company acts under more advantageous conditions, since their counterattack was a surprise ambush that drove back the unsuspecting French. They had time to assemble and view the conditions from a safe hideout that gives Timokhin time to evaluate the situation and respond to it effectively:

It was Timokhin's company, which alone had maintained its order in the wood and, having lain in ambush in a ditch, now attacked the French unexpectedly. Timokhin, armed only with a sword, had rushed at the enemy with such a desperate cry and such mad, drunken determination that, taken by surprise, the French had thrown down their muskets and ran. (203)

Timokhin's good position was a beneficial circumstance that the infantry lacked, and that led to their overwhelming panic. In this advantageous position, Timokhin had the opportunity to wait for the moment that, using his rational and intuitive perception, he judged most opportune. Timokhin's bravery, as illustrated in his "mad, drunken determination" is a note on the importance of confidence, and the significance of its presentation. The French largely reacted to the furious tenacity of Timokhin's men. Timokhin's lucky position, his good timing, and the effect of these conditions on his troops' spirit combined to illustrate an instance of beneficial circumstances and good leadership coming together to effectively influence the battle.

Tolstoy and his hero Andrei observe that the most important cause of the Russian success at Schon Grabern was to be found in the inspired actions of an artillery battery located at the center of the Russian position. Just as the regularity of the right flank's marching created a rhythmic harmony which signaled order within a unit, Tushin's battery is similarly seen as an orderly unit, but the degree to which his battery remains cohesive surpasses Bagration's. Tushin's battery is unified through Tushin's imposition of a trance-like state upon himself and his men. This inspired,

trance-like state endows Tushin and his men with spiritual strength that enables them to continue firing their guns even as they are being decimated by fire from the French guns. Once again Tolstoy shows the mental or spiritual phenomenon of *esprit de corps* which overcomes reality. The sort of daze that envelops the group links them together so that all the men are possessed by the same mood that propels them to continue their work in the face of danger:

In their childlike glee, aroused by the fire and their luck in successfully cannonading the French, our artillerymen only noticed this battery when two balls, and then four more, fell among our guns, one knocking over two horses and another tearing off a munition-wagon driver's leg. (204)

The narrative reflects Tushin's subconscious, it shows directly the mental effects of the fantastic mood that encloses the battery. This mood effectively stalls a total awareness of reality as it is occurring on the battlefield, and transfers the men to a more cheerful, animated, and energetic illusionary perception of their actions, and the effects of their actions. Operating under this perception, the vigor of the men spikes to such an extent that "the energetic action of that battery led the French to suppose that here – in the center – the main Russian forces were concentrated" (204).

The battery's absorption in their mood and their unconsciousness of the reality of danger around them is all the more perceptible when Andrei rides up to it and the narrative begins to record his observations. His first observations are drastically different from the narrative that had been guided by Tushin's perceptions and the group mood:

The first thing he saw on riding up to the space where Tushin's guns were stationed was an unharnessed horse with a broken leg, that lay screaming piteously beside the harnessed horses. Blood was gushing from its leg as from a spring. Among the limbers lay several dead men.

One ball after another passed over as he approached and he felt a nervous shudder run down his spine. (206)

He notices each cannon ball that passes over him and feels the terror of war and death affect him. Switching to Andrei's perceptions, the reader finally sees the reality of the situation, which shows with more clarity the dreamlike state Tushin's battery must have been in to remain oblivious of the conditions observed by Andrei. Tushin's battery is another example of troops operating efficiently in the chaos of war by creating a fantastical mood that disconnects the troops from the pervading feeling of disorder that infects other men entering battle without a psychological crutch.

The battle of Schon Grabern begins under Andrei's watchful eye. He scrutinizes Bagration as a man curious to understand the role individuals can play in leading a battle. Bagration initially demonstrates that the effectiveness of leaders depends most of all on their success in affecting the sense of orientation, spirit, and cohesion of the mass of troops he is leading; the greatest service that he can provide is to assist in creating a perception of order by remaining calm and making the occurring events appear in the troop's favor. A perception of order is a necessary element in a successful attack; the Sixth Chasseurs entered battle with confidence because their rhythmic marching sustained a feeling of order and regularity within the unit. Timokhin's company successfully repulsed the French because conditions allowed them to assemble and attack on their own time, which put control into their hands, creating a sense of order. Besides a perception of order, a fantastical mood that can distance a group from the psychological effects of war's chaos can be equally effective. Both are instrumental in creating a mood that prevents men from falling into panic and enables them to hold their ground or advance. Disorder and havoc are



thus realities of warfare. Terror and flight are natural reactions to this reality. Firmness and resolve in the face of this terror can only be overcome by enveloping one's troops in a mood that will disconnect them from war's chaos. The initial reaction of infantry regiments of the left flank was to flee from the enemy in disorderly crowds in a panic that overwhelmed any chance of creating order. Because they had not constructed any sort of spirit for the regiment, the troops of the left flank were exposed to the panic of war. In effect, their reaction demonstrates war's intrinsic chaotic quality.

#### The Battle of Austerlitz – The Negation of Free Will in Battle When Chaos Brings Unchecked Panic

Most of Book Three of *War and Peace* narrates the battle of Austerlitz. Again Tolstoy creates a panoramic sense of the battle and massive sweeps of troop movements on the Russians' left flank, their center, their right flank, and, at the same time, focuses on individuals' experience, particularly the individual experience of Andrei Bolkonski and Nikolai Rostov. Austerlitz is narrated as a terrible defeat, a rout for the Russian army. Rather than isolating positive examples of leadership in battle, the Austerlitz narrative provides negative examples of failed leadership and of chance circumstances that lead to demoralization and defeat. It shows how Russia's leaders lose control of their troops, how group morale breaks down, and how individuals are left to confront the chaos alone.

The battle of Austerlitz begins with the left flank initiating their movement towards the French forces. Their greatest impediment that Napoleon was able to use to his advantage was the fog that enfolded them. As disorientation sets in from the

fog, the mood of the left flank changes from gaiety to confusion and vexation. Napoleon, on the other hand, follows their movement from a higher plane in the village of Schlappanitz, and with the advantage of visibility, he sees that the center of the Russian army in Pratzen Heights was being weakened as the Russians were leaving that position, and decides that the center would in fact be his point of attack. In the center flank, Kutuzov is irritated with the progression of events, aware that the imminent battle will prove unsuccessful. Nonetheless, he signals for the flank to begin their movement at the tsar's request, but in the next moment, the French unexpectedly attack. The scene turns to chaos as men run back in disorder, and in a panic similar to the left flank's at Schon Grabern, orders from superior commanders and Kutuzov to turn back are ignored. In shame and anger, Prince Andrei leaps toward a fallen Russian standard and shouting "hurrah", runs at the French, managing to turn around a battalion that joins him. In his narrative, Andrei witnesses the disorder and senselessness of battle when a French and Russian soldier pull at different ends of a mop rather than running away from one another. He is then struck down. Rostov experiences the battle in his own narrative, which follows him as he passes from the right flank and along the line of combat, across the entire battlefield. He does not himself engage in battle; instead, his one mission is delivering a message to the commander in chief or the tsar. As a result, he has a full, first-hand experience of the destruction of the Russian army and the loss at Austerlitz as a pure observer. Final scenes of the battle, narrated omnisciently, reinforce the picture of the overwhelming rout of the Russians: Dolokhov's soldiers attempt to retreat over a frozen lake that collapses and drowns the men, while Andrei lies on Pratzen Heights,

severely wounded and bleeding, and pondering the insignificance of everything around him.

As he begins his description of the battle of Austerlitz in the third book of *War and Peace*, Tolstoy introduces an insightful simile to represent the widening field of interest of every man as he marches to his regiment's position before a battle:

A soldier on the march is hemmed in and borne along by his regiment as much as a sailor is by his ship. However far he has walked, whatever strange, unknown, and dangerous places he reaches, just as a sailor is always surrounded by the same decks, masts, and rigging of his ship, so the soldier always has around him the same comrades, the same ranks, the same sergeant major Ivan Mitrich, the same company dog Jack, and the same commanders. The sailor rarely cares to know the latitude in which his ship is sailing, but on the day of the battle – heaven knows how and whence – a stern note of which all are conscious sounds in the moral atmosphere of an army, announcing the approach of something decisive and solemn, and awakening in the men an unusual curiosity. On the day of battle the soldiers excitedly try to get beyond the interests of their regiment, they listen intently, look about, and eagerly ask concerning what is going on around them. (290)

The formation of troop morale hinges on the perception of the group's surrounding circumstances. An unclear sense of where and how they are to enter the battle may undermine the morale of a group of soldiers as they march into battle. Removed from their camps and placed into an imminent battlefield, these soldiers become sailors looking beyond their encompassing vessel. In the fog scene of the battle of Austerlitz, uncertainty about the arrangement and position of the regiment generated an expanding feeling of confusion. As Tolstoy writes:

But when they had marched for about an hour in the dense fog, the greater part of the men had to halt and an unpleasant consciousness of some dislocation and blunder spread through the ranks. How such a consciousness is communicated is very difficult to define, but it certainly is communicated very surely, and flows rapidly, imperceptibly, and irrepressibly, as water does in a creek. (290)

Such disorientation may undermine soldiers' esprit de corps. As the troops were not provided reassurance and familiarity with their position by the commanding officers, the delay that resulted from the confusion further hurt the troop morale: "The troops meanwhile stood growing listless and dispirited" (292). On the other hand, a clear sense of location and position can work for the benefit of the army, as it did for Napoleon, who is described as overlooking the Russian's movement and planning his strategic attack on their exposed center.

Tolstoy next describes the experience of Andrei and Kutuzov and the general staff at the center of the Russian lines. The Russian troops at the center flank are struck helpless by a number of conditions that bear resemblance to the circumstances of the left flank in the battle of Schon Grabern. For one thing, the disadvantage of a surprise attack is again overwhelmingly damaging to the Russians. In addition, Kutuzov is involved in a confusion of command as he rides into battle with several others, including Alexander, with claim to the role of commanding general. Prior to the attack, he was irritated with the progression of events and was unwilling to commence action. As the Russian troops turn around and flee from the French in disarray, Kutuzov's orders are overpowered by the ensuing panic. Tolstoy depicts the reaction of the soldiers: "confused and ever-increasing crowds were running back to where five minutes before the troops had passed the Emperors" (299). The regiment was effectively transformed into a crowd, described as "flying mobs" and "a dense mass". The tide is briefly turned at the center when Andrei seized the staff of the standard and dashing at the enemy, inspired some other soldiers to follow him. Nonetheless, within the description of Andrei's counterattack, chaos prevails. The

two men that Andrei sees pulling at each end of a mop represent the confusion and chaos of battle that prevents rational thought and action. Neither man is conscious of his actions, nor is he aware that it would be advantageous to attack or run away. This scene is especially significant in its delivery of the natural mood of battle. The lack of rationality displayed by the two men clearly outlines the chaos that has subsumed all sensibility, and thus shows the natural havoc of war. The scene of Andrei's attack does not unfold in the heroic way he had hoped it would. Instead, the battle continues chaotically and senselessly, without influence from Andrei's action.

Both the scene of the left flank becoming lost in the fog and the scene of rout at the center demonstrate the horrific consequences of a loss of control in battle. Nikolai's review of the entire battlefield as he rides from the right flank across the front lines provides a survey of the Russian army's destruction. His narrative picks up on key episodes of the battle while keeping Nikolai uninvolved. Nikolai's growing confusion and mounting fear as he rides further from the right flank and closer to the areas where the Russians were hit the hardest reach a pinnacle when he sees the French troops on the Pratzen Heights, where the Russian commander in chief was to be found. His bewilderment and disbelief of the reality of the situation is an appropriate response to the utter debacle suffered by the Russian army. Finally, he rides onto the field where the majority of men fleeing from Pratzen were killed. Moving past the corpses and dying men, Nikolai spots Alexander, who after crossing a ditch, begins to weep in solitude with only Captain von Toll by his side.

Rostov's ride summarizes the devastation of the battle of Austerlitz. No one commanding officer was able to boost troop morale in the face of the superior enemy

whose advantageous position was secured from the very onset of the battle, when Napoleon was able to visibly spot the weak point of the Russian army while the Russians were caught in a fog. Scenes from the battle of Austerlitz support the understanding that besides the actors involved in battle, there are a multitude of conditions which contribute to a battle's outcome. Neither an individual leader nor a group of men can sway the outcome of a battle when circumstances are so against them. In the battle of Austerlitz, the odds were against the Russians from the very start, and Napoleon exploited them to his benefit. More specifically, Napoleon's advantage allowed him to establish order within his army and his strategy. In contrast, because control was lost in the Russian center, the troops did not have the defense of order against the onslaught of war's chaos. This resulted in disorder and senseless actions like the struggle over the mop, illustrating the emergence of irrationality and futility. Nikolai's ride dramatically exposes the devastation of the Russian army, and ends with Alexander's solitary grief. It underlines the complete loss of control by presenting only the ruinous consequences of the battle. The destruction suffered by the Russians efficiently demonstrates the weakness of the one man whose position warrants strength and influence over the army; at the end of the battle, Tsar Alexander finds difficulty in even crossing a ditch. Nikolai's depression at the end of the battle stems from disillusionment with the sense of invincible national power he had felt while on parade with his troops in front of the tsar. In addition, he feels compassion for the tsar, who symbolizes all of Russia, and therefore embodies her pain.

At the end of the battle, Andrei is lying on the battlefield with a serious wound and looking up at the “lofty sky”, he experiences an epiphany on the insignificance of everything except that sky, including his earlier dreams of glory and power. His thoughts are his response to the devastating destruction of the Russian army in the battle of Austerlitz. Andrei had anticipated the battle as a significant historical event in which he might achieve some ultimately meaningful action in history as a commander of Russian troops. Instead he experienced the battle as chaos and the futility of attempting to bring order to this chaos.

Nikolai had anticipated Austerlitz differently – as a victory that would prove his own valor as well as the collective valor of all the other patriotic Russians who would fight together in the name of their country and their tsar. His narrative and observations reveal the injurious defeat suffered by an army that was overwhelmed by conditions it could not control. In effect, the Battle of Austerlitz functions as an example of the limitations of individual actions. The battle scenes that transpired effectively displayed these limitations, as did the final return to Andrei. The questions that Tolstoy answers about individual effectiveness in war are presented in the action of Schon Grabern and Austerlitz as well as in the mind of one man, who entered battle hoping to achieve glory while also questioning individual capacity for command over battle and history. At the conclusion of Austerlitz, both the events experienced in battle and Andrei’s disillusionment communicate the understanding that a range of issues dictate the outcome of battle, and that many of these issues cannot be controlled by one man.

### Chapter Three – Traditional Ritual versus Modern, Hollow Ritual

Books Four to Seven of *War and Peace* turn the attention of the novel away from warfare and onto peacetime. The domestic and public lives of the Kuragins, Rostovs, and Pierre are all covered in this section. Turning to peacetime, the conventionality and lack of chaos and disorder is instantly visible as the havoc of war is left behind. Present in the peaceful context of these books is the visible role of ritual. Iogel's ball, Pierre's involvement in Freemasonry, Natasha's first grand ball, Nikolai's hunt, and the Rostov Christmas festivities swell the narrative and introduce the significant role of ritual in peacetime. Natasha and Nikolai both discover a space that is provided by ritual in which they can exercise free will. Pierre, on the other hand, discovers how some insincere rituals, specifically Freemasonry, can have the opposite effect of stifling free will.

#### Iogel's Ball – Natasha's exhibition of her Individual Self and Free Spirit through Unique Dance

Iogel's ball in the fourth book surfaces as a recognized social occasion that fits nicely into the elite social sphere. Well-known and well-liked, Iogel's ball is a long-standing event that provides a venue for the fulfillment of social conventions and values. Matchmaking, a clear social tradition, is one of the established practices at the ball. The performance of newly-learned dances also represents cultural achievement for the dancers. Having taken dancing lessons with Iogel, the young children are now given the chance to exhibit. In this setting, dancing provides an opportunity to excel at and go beyond the limits of convention. Natasha and Denisov's dance departs from the typical dancing style at Iogel's in its native,



traditional performance. Denisov performs the mazurka in true Polish style, rather than conventionally. The constraint of social conformity is clearly released when Denisov makes unexpected movements and Natasha follows him with a sense of self-liberation.

The ball's initial description openly spells out the fixed conventionality of the event:

Iogel's were the most enjoyable balls in Moscow. So said the mothers as they watched their young people executing their newly learned steps, and so said the youths and maidens themselves as they danced till they were ready to drop, and so said the grown-up young men and women who came to these balls with an air of condescension and found them most enjoyable. That year two marriages had come of these balls. (359)

The ball clearly assumes an established role in the lives of Moscow's adolescents and young adults and in society life in general. Attendance and activity at the ball is fixed and predictable; the youths' role is to perform the dances they have learned, the young people's role is to regard the adolescents with condescension, and the mothers' role is to watch their children perform. Thus, the events at the ball proceed in a habitual, conventional manner.

The dancing at the ball in Book Four begins as an ordinary rather than original performance. Each pupil has learned the dance from Iogel and compliantly adheres to his/her training. Natasha's dance with Iogel gives little opportunity for a display of untrained talent: "Noiselessly, skillfully stepping with his little feet in low shoes, Iogel flew first across the hall with Natasha, who, though shy, went on carefully executing her steps" (361). Iogel's demonstration of his talents brings out his accomplished dancing skills: he was skillfully stepping with his little feet. He

performs well because his dancing is more practiced than it is natural and original. Natasha similarly performs as an accomplished, newly-trained pupil. Her dancing embodies the restriction of training in the “careful execution” of her steps.

When Denisov dances with Natasha, he introduces a new style and an element of originality:

First he spun her round, holding her now with his left, now with his right hand, then falling on one knee he twirled her round him, and again jumping up, dashed so impetuously forward that it seemed as if he would rush through the whole suite of rooms without drawing breath, and then he suddenly stopped and performed some new and unexpected steps. When at last, smartly whirling his partner round in front of her chair, he drew up with a click of his spurs and bowed to her, Natasha did not even make him a curtsy. She fixed her eyes on him in amazement, smiling as if she did not recognize him. (362)

Denisov’s mazurka presents the dance in its originality. Clearly, the spirit and energy of the dance are transmitted in this performance. Although his dancing undoubtedly displays his skill, it is not the sort of skill that results from constrained training that produces carefully executed steps. Finding the traditional elements of the dance, Denisov drops the limitations of convention and moves around the room in active steps. Incorporated into the dance, Natasha also finds freedom in Denisov’s free interpretation of the Polish style: “Natasha guessed what he meant to do, and abandoning herself to him followed his lead hardly knowing how” (362). Rather than adhering to a set of learned steps, Natasha *abandons* herself in an act of liberation from conventional constraints. She intuitively picks up on Denisov’s expected actions and follows her natural instinct. In every aspect of her actions, Natasha dumps her compliance with constraining convention and pursues her intuition and natural talent that can only be brought out by a true, traditional dance.

### Freemasonry – Pierre’s Entrapment in Hollow, Modern Ritual

The fifth book picks up with Pierre at a post station at a point in his life when he is suffering from a bout of moral confusion. In the previous books, Pierre had allowed a number of characters to intrude on his life choices and push through a string of events that occurred without Pierre’s initiative. As the events accumulated, Pierre lost control over his life to the point that he felt his own morals in disarray. Owing partially to his own passivity, Pierre wound up committing actions, such as his marriage to Helene and his duel with Dolokhov, whose ethics he later questioned. Feeling trapped by uncertainty over his personal set of morals, Pierre excitedly joins the Freemasons in the hopes of regenerating and purifying himself, and helping reform human life.

Pierre’s marriage had occurred through a series of orchestrated moves by Helene and her father that created a situation in which Pierre was matched up with Helene and made marriage seem inevitable. Initially, Helene presents herself to Pierre in an alluring fashion, and provokes erotic desire in him:

He half rose, meaning to go round, but the aunt handed him the snuffbox, passing it across Helene’s back. Helene stooped forward to make room, and looked round with a smile. She was, as always at evening parties, wearing a dress such as was then fashionable, cut very low at front and back. Her bust, which had always seemed like marble to Pierre, was so close to him that his shortsighted eyes could not but perceive the living charm of her neck and shoulders, so near to his lips that he need only have bent his head a little to have touched them. He was conscious of the warmth of her body, the scent of perfume, and the creaking of her corset as she moved. He did not see her marble beauty forming a complete whole with her dress, but all the charm of her body only covered by her garments. And having once seen this he could not help being aware of it, just as we cannot renew an illusion we have once seen through.

“So you have never noticed before how beautiful I am?” Helene seemed to say. “You have not noticed that I am a woman? Yes, I am a woman who may belong to anyone – to you too,” said her glance. And at that moment Pierre felt that Helene not only could, but must, be his wife, and that it could not be otherwise.

He knew this at that moment as surely as if he had been standing at the altar with her. How and when this would be he did not know, he did not even know if it would be a good thing (he even felt, he knew not why, that it would be a bad thing), but he knew it would happen. (223)

Tolstoy comes right out and explicitly states the control Helene was able to establish over Pierre with a simple, enticing gesture. Pierre offers little resistance. Even though he believed a marriage with Helene to be a bad thing, he realized that it would happen nonetheless. The final strings are pulled by Helene’s father. Coming in to congratulate and unite the couple under the pretense that Pierre had proposed, Prince Vasiliy leaves Pierre little choice but to propose:

“Aline,” he said to his wife, “go and see what they are about.”

[...] “Still the same,” she said to her husband.

Prince Vasiliy frowned, twisting his mouth, his cheeks quivered and his face assumed the coarse, unpleasant expression peculiar to him. Shaking himself, he rose, threw back his head, and with resolute steps went past the ladies into the little drawing room. With quick steps he went joyfully to Pierre. His face was so unusually triumphant that Pierre rose in alarm on seeing it.

“Thank God!” said Prince Vasiliy. “My wife has told me everything!” – (He put one arm around Pierre and the other around his daughter.) – “My dear boy... Lelya... I am very pleased.” (His voice trembled.) “I loved your father... and she will make you a good wife... God bless you!...”

He embraced his daughter, and then again Pierre, and kissed him with his malodorous mouth. Tears actually moistened his cheeks. [...]

“All this had to be and could not be otherwise,” thought Pierre, “so it is useless to ask whether it is good or bad. It is good because it’s definite and one is rid of the old tormenting doubt.” Pierre held the hand of his betrothed in silence, looking at her beautiful bosom as it rose and fell. (230)

Pierre abandons his own initiative and decides to follow the decision that has been made for him. He also avoids any opportunity to regain control through the

consideration of the morality of the event. Rather than pursuing his own moral intuition that he should not marry Helene, Pierre dupes himself into believing it is good because it is approved by those who know *comme il faut*. In effect, Pierre's free will is subjugated by Helene (sex), Prince Vasilii, social convention, and by his own passivity.

Pierre's marriage to Helene initiates a new set of events that further lessen Pierre's control over himself and his life. At a club dinner prepared for Bagration, Pierre's unwise decision, or indecision, to marry Helene brings further misfortune when Pierre begins to realize that his wife had taken Dolokhov for a lover. His first concession to marry Helene, his natural but hidden fury, and Dolokhov's insolence combine to produce a duel that Pierre had not desired:

The unsolved problem that tormented him was caused by hints given by the princess, his cousin, at Moscow, concerning Dolokhov's intimacy with his wife, and by an anonymous letter he had received that morning, which in the mean jocular way common to anonymous letters said that he saw badly through his spectacles, but that his wife's connection with Dolokhov was a secret to no one but himself. Pierre absolutely disbelieved both the princess' hints and the letter, but he feared now to look at Dolokhov, who was sitting opposite him. Every time he chanced to meet Dolokhov's handsome insolent eyes, Pierre felt something terrible and monstrous rising in his soul and turned quickly away. (337)

In this scene, Pierre is provoked by a number of factors. One of these factors is his sense of his wife's guilt. As this factor is incited by Dolokhov's audacity, it generates a "terrible and monstrous" sensation that eventually takes over Pierre and leads him to challenge Dolokhov. Pierre had little opportunity to deliberate the morality of his actions. Again, his will to act was stimulated not by him, but by his wife's adultery and by Dolokhov's impudence and by his own uncontrolled impulse. Following his

moment of anger, Pierre finds little favor in the duel, and tells Nesvitski, “Oh yes, it [the duel] is horribly stupid” (339). However, he feels himself in the grips of social convention: “No! What is there to talk about?” said Pierre. “It’s all the same...Is everything ready?” (339) Pierre goes through the motions of the duel having already realized that he does not want to kill Dolokhov. By chance, he nearly kills Dolokhov (wounding him seriously) and while scapegoating Helene as the sexual devil who provoked both his marriage and the duel, he nearly kills her. He leaves Moscow having made a mess of his life there.

Pierre meets Bazdeev, an old freemason, at a post station on his way to Petersburg. At this moment, the consequences of Pierre’s earlier bad decisions have reached a climactic peak. He now knows that he was wrong to marry his wife, and he also realizes this decision produced further setbacks. After his duel with Dolokhov, Pierre asks himself, “What had happened? I have killed her lover, yes, killed my wife’s lover. Yes, that was it! And why? How did I come to do it?” – “Because you married her,” answered an inner voice” (342). To himself, Pierre admits that his troubles began when he expressed his insincere love to her after giving in to the vices that debilitated him. In his weakness, Pierre gave in to Prince Vasiliy’s and Helene’s scheme. At the post station, Pierre senses the consequences of losing his free will. As Tolstoy writes:

He had been engrossed by the same thoughts ever since the day he returned from Sokolinski after the duel and spent that first agonizing, sleepless night. But now, in the solitude of the journey, they seized him with special force. No matter what he thought about, he always returned to these same questions which he could not solve and yet could not cease to ask himself. It was as if the thread of the chief screw which held his life together were stripped, so that the screw could not get in or out, but went on turning uselessly in the same place. (377)

Pierre's narrative further elaborates on his troubles. As it comes out, Pierre is experiencing depression from a total onslaught of moral doubt, sparked by the duel:

[...] And I," continued Pierre, "shot Dolokhov because I considered myself injured, and Louis XVI was executed because they considered him a criminal and a year later they executed those who executed him – also for some reason. What is bad? What is good? What should one love and what hate? What does one live for? And what am I? What is life, and what is death? What power governs all?" (378)

Pierre has lost his footing on life as he feels a loss of binding moral integrity in his own life. Lacking a sense of his morals and values, Pierre does not have the security of the moral foundations that had earlier "held his life together".

It is not surprising, therefore, to see the hopeless Pierre infatuated with Bazdeev's inspiring offer of spiritual regeneration through membership in the Freemasons:

Pierre listened with swelling heart, gazing into the Mason's face with shining eyes, not interrupting or questioning him, but believing with his whole soul what the stranger said. Whether he accepted the wise reasoning contained in the Mason's words, or believed as a child believes, in the speaker's tone of conviction and earnestness, or the tremor of the speaker's voice – which sometimes almost broke – or those brilliant aged eyes grown old in this conviction, or the calm firmness and certainty of his vocation, which radiated from his whole being (and which struck Pierre especially by contrast with his own dejection and hopelessness) – at any rate, Pierre longed with his whole soul to believe and he did believe, and felt a joyful sense of comfort, regeneration, and return to life. (382)

In Petersburg, Pierre begins his initiation process into the fraternity of Freemasons. At this first stage in his experience with the Masons, Pierre lies about his own lack of faith out of fear that he will not be accepted:

"One more question, Count [...] do you believe in God?"  
"Yes...yes, I believe in God," he said  
"In that case..." began Willarski, but Pierre interrupted him.

“Yes, I do believe in God,” he repeated. (386)

But soon Pierre’s skeptical mind sees cracks in the mystique of Freemasonry:

Drawing nearer, he recognized in the Rhetor a man he knew,  
Smolyaninov, and it mortified him to think that the newcomer was an  
acquaintance – he wished him simply a brother and virtuous instructor.  
(388)

He soon sees the fraternity for what it really is: a cluster of society men hoping to advance their positions. It is not surprising that entrance into the fraternity of Freemasons does not give Pierre the religious and spiritual enlightenment he had felt while talking to Bazdeev. The old man is portrayed as having full belief in his convictions. The Freemasons, on the other hand, lack that sort of religious sincerity.

As his membership ties with the Freemasons progress, Pierre begins to feel more trapped within the fraternity. He respects the Masons’ ideals as expressed by his mentor Bazdeev; he wishes that these ideals could be expressed in the organization and its rituals. But it becomes increasingly clear that they are not. Therefore, the spiritual dependence that Pierre had established with the Freemasons collapses under him as he senses the insincerity of the fraternity:

Amid the turmoil of his activities and distractions, however, Pierre at the end of a year began to feel that the more firmly he tried to rest upon it, the more Masonic ground on which he stood gave way under him. At the same time, he felt that the deeper the ground sank under him the closer bound he involuntarily became to the order. When he had joined the Freemasons he had experienced the feeling of one who confidently steps onto the smooth surface of a bog. When he put his foot down it sank in. To make quite sure of the firmness of the ground, he put his other foot down and sank deeper still, became stuck in it, and involuntarily waded knee-deep in the bog. (474)

In one attempt to take initiative in the fraternity and inspire it with his own values, Pierre travels to Europe to learn more about Freemasonry as it is practiced abroad.



However, it only results in failure. Pierre introduces the concepts behind Illusionism to the Russian Freemasons, who reject it as radical, triggering depression, surrender, and inertness in Pierre.

When Pierre tries to apply the Masonic ideals of self-purification to his own life, he finds that it is overly simplistic and repressive. Pierre's submission to a Brother's opinion and Prince Vasiliy's wife's pleas to take back Helene results in his fulfillment of the Masonic rule of forgiveness. Yet he continues to be tormented by repressed feelings of loathing and jealousy (represented in the dreams he records in his diaries). Pierre's Masonic episode is Tolstoy's satiric representation of failed attempts by modern social groups (from political groups to modern religions) to demand ideological conformity by their members and to organize social life on the ritualized patterns of traditional behavior.

#### The Grand Ball – Natasha's Second Exhibition of her Individual Self in Societal Ritual

Book Six is centered on another extended account of individuals performing in ritualized social behavior – a grand Petersburg ball that is attended not only by the Tsar and by other Petersburg elite like the Kuragins, but also by the Rostov family from Moscow. Grand balls like these were instituted in Russia only a hundred years earlier by Peter the Great (who modeled them after Louis XIV's balls at Versailles). In terms of social rank, Natasha and her family are interlopers at this grand ball, but for the debutante, Natasha, the essence of the ball is the dressing up and the dancing she has already learned to do from her Moscow teacher, Iogel. The narrative begins at

the steps of the host's well-known mansion with a blend of arriving and departing carriages, and emerging elegantly-dressed ladies and gentlemen:

Carriages kept driving away and fresh ones arriving, with red-liveried footmen and footmen in plumed hats. From the carriages emerged men wearing uniforms, stars, and ribbons, while ladies in satin and ermine cautiously descended the carriage steps which were let down for them with a clatter, and then walked hurriedly and noiselessly over the baize at the entrance. (496)

The narrative then shifts to the Rostov family, where Natasha's feverish excitement dominates the description of their preparations. She instructs everyone on their attire, hurriedly fussing over their dress and hair, and is the last to finish dressing. At the ball, the narrative remains focused on Natasha and her perception of the event. The ball proceeds within the bounds of any ritualized societal performance, but Natasha's emotional reactions clearly demonstrate the unique way she perceives the event. When the ball proceeds outside of Natasha's narrative, Tolstoy paints a clearer image of the ball's conventionality. However, every return to Natasha shows her eager and excited state, and emphasizes how novel this event is for her. Her sentiments betray her position as a debutante about to perform her own special self in a public collective ritual.

The process of preparing for a ball is a set initial procedure. Tolstoy jumps from the passage describing the entrance of the mansion to the Rostov's preparations for the ball. The narrative assumes an intimate focus on the family as they get ready, and emphasizes Natasha's frenzy and excitement. Her animation and energy in this scene are the first instances in which the procedural aspects of the ball are countered by Natasha's excitement for her first grand ball:

“That’s not the way, that’s not the way, Sonya!” cried Natasha turning her head and clutching with both hands at her hair which the maid who was dressing it had not time to release. “That bow is not right. Come here!”

Sonya sat down and Natasha pinned the ribbon on differently.

“Allow me, Miss! I can’t do it like that,” said the maid who was holding Natasha’s hair.

“Oh, dear! Well then, wait. That’s right, Sonya.”

“Aren’t you ready? It is nearly ten,” came the countess’ voice.

“Directly! Directly! And you, Mamma?”

“I have only my cap to pin on.”

“Don’t do it without me!” called Natasha. “You won’t do it right.”

“But it’s already ten.” (498)

The actual standardized nature of preparing for a ball is stressed in Peronskaya’s (the Rostovs’ maid of honor) passage:

Peronskaya was quite ready. In spite of her age and plainness she had gone through the same process as the Rostovs, but with less flurry – for to her it was a matter of routine. Her ugly old body was washed, perfumed, and powdered in just the same way. She had washed behind her ears just as carefully, and when she entered her drawing room in her yellow dress, wearing her badge as maid of honor, her old lady’s maid was as full of rapturous admiration as the Rostovs’ servants had been. (499)

The above quote is the entirety of the passage devoted to Peronskaya’s preparations. For her, the routine of cleaning and dressing for a ball is predictable and unexciting, and as the word describing the process suggests, remains strictly within the sphere of a routine.

The incorporation of Natasha’s excitement and youthful freshness into the conventionality of the ball continues from the preparatory stage and into the event itself, where it stretches from the commencement to the end of the occasion. When the Rostovs enter the mansion, the hostess instantly becomes aware of Natasha’s distinctiveness:

The two girls in their white dresses, each with a rose in her black hair, both curtsied in the same way, but the hostess' eye involuntarily rested longer on the slim Natasha. She looked at her and gave her alone a special smile in addition to her usual smile as a hostess. Looking at her she may have recalled the golden, irrecoverable days of her own childhood and her own first ball. (500)

Natasha sparks in the hostess' mind a recollection of her own youth because Natasha's entire demeanor exudes youthfulness. Indeed, this very trait of youthfulness prevents her from assuming a conventional appearance and casts her as an exception among the swarm of females who do not receive a special smile from the hostess:

Only then did she remember how she must behave at a ball, and tried to assume the majestic air she considered indispensable for a girl on such an occasion. But, fortunately for her, she felt her eyes growing misty, she saw nothing clearly, her pulse beat a hundred to the minute, and the blood throbbed at her heart. She could not assume that pose, which would have made her ridiculous, and she moved on almost fainting from excitement and trying with all her might to conceal it. And this was the very attitude that became her best. (500)

Tolstoy's narration of the ball continues with this double focus on conventional, collective action and on Natasha's inspired individual participation in the larger collective ritual. Expected events like the swarming of the guests around the Emperor as he arrives and the well-performed but regular execution of the waltz by the aide-de-camp and Helene direct the event:

An aide-de-camp, the Master of Ceremonies, went up to Countess Bezukhova and asked her to dance. She smilingly raised her hand and laid it on his shoulder without looking at him. The aide-de-camp, an adept at his art, grasping his partner firmly round her waist, with confident deliberation started smoothly, gliding first round the edge of the circle, then at the corner of the room he caught Helene's left hand and turned her, the only sound audible, apart from the ever-quickening music, being the rhythmic click of the spurs on his rapid, agile feet, while at every third beat his partner's velvet dress spread out and seemed to flash as she whirled round. (504)

The countess's demeanor and the aide-de-camp's movements are essential to the ball in that they are proper and skillful. In following the standard and correct steps of the dance and of social interaction, Countess Bezukhova and the aide-de-camp proceed appropriately and accurately; even Helene's dress moves in accord with the beat of the waltz.

Natasha's dance with Prince Andrei breaks from the standard accuracy of Helene's performance. Her steps are infused with a freshness that is unlike the steady rhythm of Helene's moves and the aide's rhythmic clicks. Rather than operating under the steady direction of the music, Natasha's moves are clearly less restrained in their swiftness and lightness:

They were the second couple to enter the circle. Prince Andrew was one of the best dancers of his day and Natasha danced exquisitely. Her little feet in their white satin dancing shoes did their work swiftly, lightly, and independently of herself, while her face beamed with ecstatic happiness. (504)

Even Natasha's face betrayed an unrestrained happiness that was clearly absent in Helene's calm smile. Her beaming expression is only one example of her overall ecstatic response to the dance and the ball in general. She is integrated into the event as an excited, unique young girl, but she retains the right to perceive it in her own way, and to experience it in her own way. She holds on to her own distinctive character in her actions and in her emotional responses, and in doing so, preserves a distance from the conventionality of the ball. Instead, she brings to it a breath of fresh air, of uniqueness, and of youth. In her dancing, which breaks from the strictness of the music, and in her demeanor in general, which breaks from the strictness of

socially conventional manners, Natasha performs her own individuality and freedom, while harmonizing her unique self with the conventional flow that surrounds her.

### Rituals in the Rostov Family – Finding Self-Expression and Initiative in Traditional Ritual

The seventh book of *War and Peace* embodies the practice of ritual in the Rostov family. Nikolai returns from the regiment after experiencing disillusionment with the militaristic and diplomatic habits of the country when he sees Alexander and Napoleon act as allies. Escaping from his hurtful realization, and from the domestic financial duties he does not understand, Nikolai engages in the ritual of the hunt. The performance is a diversion from reality, but it also presents the opportunity for individual initiative. A set of Christmas rituals also create an environment favorable to initiative; the excitement and merriment of dressing up in costume and escaping from reality helps cement Nikolai's resolve to marry Sonya. Nonetheless, the conclusion of Book Seven reveals that although rituals can precipitate free will and individual action, the return to reality is necessary, and can undo the magical effects of ritual on the participant's condition.

At the end of the fifth book, Nikolai is left depressed and disillusioned with the Russian state and more specifically, the Russian tsar. For most of the novel, Nikolai has carried within him a boyish adoration for the Tsar. However, at Tilsit, Nikolai witnesses Alexander's treatment of Napoleon as an ally. Not only is he disillusioned with the Tsar, but he also questions the value and consequence of his own patriotic contributions. He realizes that hidden diplomatic events occur behind

the scenes, and that his own brave service does not affect the country as he had earlier imagined. In effect, he senses his own powerlessness:

“We are not diplomatic officials, we are soldiers and nothing more,” he went on. “If we are ordered to die, we must die. If we’re punished, it means that we have deserved it, it’s not for us to judge. If the Emperor pleases to recognize Bonaparte as Emperor and to conclude an alliance with him, it means that that is the right thing to do. If once we begin judging and arguing about everything, nothing sacred will be left! That way we shall be saying there is no God – nothing!” shouted Nicholas, banging the table – very little to the point as it seemed to his listeners, but quite relevantly to the course of his own thoughts. “Our business is to do our duty, to fight and not to think! That’s all...” said he. (453)

Returning home, Nikolai experiences the exasperating business of settling his family’s financial troubles. Here too, he realizes his powerlessness to bring their monetary situation into order.

In turning to the chase after his mismanagement of the financial dilemma, Nikolai reinvigorates himself within the context of a ritual that allows him to successfully participate within a collective whose rules promise order, but also enough room for the exercise of self initiative. Hunting as it is portrayed in the novel is a pursuit that engages a collective of men, each with his own designated spot, waiting for the appearance of the prey and then chasing it. Tolstoy points out the combination of individual and group action in the hunt:

Each dog knew its master and its call. Each man in the hunt knew his business, his place, and what he had to do. As soon as they had passed the fence they all spread out evenly and quietly, without noise or talk, along the road and field leading to the Otradnoe covert. (545)

The hunting code emphasizes the collective action that occurs in a chase. Count Rostov is explained as knowing the rules of the hunt and thus rides over to the spot where he was to stand. The placement of each participant is important so that when

the prey is spotted, the man who sees it can let out a cry and let the other men know where it is. As the prey proceeds across the field, there is a man at each vital point on the ground who, if he listens to the calls of the other huntsmen and remains attentive to his occupied area, is ready to chase the moving prey. In this way, every man is dependent on the others to alert him of the appearance of the prey and to chase after the prey when he sees it. Count Rostov's inattentiveness and resulting delayed reaction to the wolf that moves in his designated area impedes him from chasing it and thus, lets the wolf disappear into the woods. As Daniel exclaims, "You've let the wolf go! ..." (549)

Tolstoy's narrative of Nikolai's experience demonstrates the collective nature of hunting while also exhibiting the significant role of each singular individual. He remains at his post and prepares to play his part by honing in on the sounds of the men around him:

By the way the hunt approached and receded, by the cries of the dogs whose notes were familiar to his, by the way the voices of the huntsmen approached, receded, and rose, he realized what was happening at the copse. (550)

The collective aspect of the hunting ritual is necessary to orient Nikolai. However, he is alert and excited in anticipation of the moment when he will play his key role. The moment arrives when Nikolai looks around and having spotted the wolf, softly calls to his borzois, and then loudly to his horse, and begins to chase after it, seeing nothing but the wolf. When it appears that Karay has the wolf, Nikolai feels that this is "the happiest moment of his life" (552). Despite the false hope (Daniel catches the wolf after it escapes from Karay's grasp), Nikolai has correctly fulfilled his role as a member of the collective, but in remaining attentive and ready and responding at a



moment he intuitively judged as the most opportune, he has also acted successfully on his own initiative.

As Book Seven opens, Natasha is feeling frustrated by the year's delay that Andrei's father has imposed on her marriage to Andrei. She falls into a depression and a capricious state while waiting for Andrei to return and marry her. Her participation in the hunt with her brother gives her an experience of ritual performance (normally not allowed for women). Her performance of folk dancing at "Uncle's" house after the hunt is her contribution to the Russian folk rituals of playing the balalaika, singing, and dancing. For Natasha as for Nikolai, the hunt and the immersion in folk music and dance at Uncle's provides her with temporary escape from unresolved problems in her life. Natasha and Nikolai gain more than temporary escape from their adult lives when they participate in the hunt and the music and dance at Uncle's. They confirm a sense of harmony with the world that they have received in their nurturing family, with its encouragement of family members' artistic sensibilities and with its closeness to old traditions where gentry and peasants share the same culture.

The end of Book Seven (which narrates Natasha's, Sonya's, and Nikolai's participation in Christmas mumming rituals) demonstrates how submission to ritual may actually have a transformative effect on participants. On one of the Christmas holidays, Natasha wanders around the house aimlessly, in want of Andrei. Her momentary escape from depression is the children's dress-up in various costumes, the troika ride to Melyukovs', and their time at the Melyukovs':

Natasha was foremost in setting a merry holiday tone, which, passing from one to another, grew stronger and stronger and reached its climax

when they all came out into the frost and got into the sleighs, talking, calling to one another, laughing, and shouting. (577)

While Natasha is happily distracted by these familiar holiday rituals of her childhood, Sonya is transformed. Her costume turns her into a new, pretty, and daring young man:

Nicholas glanced round at Sonya, and bent down to see her face closer. Quite a new, sweet face with black eyebrows and mustaches peeped up at him from her sable furs – so close and yet so distant – in the moonlight. “That used to be Sonya,” thought he, and looked at her closer and smiled. (578)

Sonya’s transformation aids in the suspension of reality. Looking at her, Nikolai sees a new girl and finds in her the traits that he hadn’t seen earlier. As this occurs, Nikolai realizes the depth of his love for Sonya, and resolves to marry her:

Whether they were playing the ring and string game or the ruble game or talking as now, Nicholas did not leave Sonya’s side, and gazed at her with quite new eyes. It seemed to him that it was only today, thanks to that burnt-cork mustache, that he had fully learned to know her. And really, that evening Sonya was brighter, more animated, and prettier than Nicholas had ever seen her before. “So that’s what she is like; what a fool I have been!” he thought gazing at her sparkling eyes, and under the mustache a happy rapturous smile dimpled her cheeks, a smile he had never seen before. (582)

The entire ritual does in fact transform Sonya, in not just her appearance, but in her behavior as well. As she herself states, she is not afraid of anything, and growing more daring and animated, and thus more beautiful, she exudes an attractiveness that captivates Nikolai:

On the way back Nicholas drove at a steady pace instead of racing and kept peering by that fantastic all-transforming light into Sonya’s face and searching beneath the eyebrows and mustache for his former and his present Sonya from whom he had resolved never to be parted again. He looked and recognizing in her both the old and the new Sonya, and being reminded by the smell of burnt cork of the sensation

of her kiss, inhaled the frosty air with a full breast and, looking at the ground flying beneath him and at the sparkling sky, felt himself again in fairyland.

[...]

When halfway home Nicholas handed the reins to the coachman and ran for a moment to Natasha's sleigh and stood on its wing.

"Natasha!" he whispered in French, "do you know I have made up my mind about Sonya?" (584)

Indeed, the fantastical elements of the Christmas ritual showed Nikolai new traits in Sonya that had never been so vivid earlier. These elements also strengthened Nikolai's resolve. He makes up his mind to marry Sonya while sensing himself in "fairyland". The performance of the ritual, therefore, presents the chance for initiative and individual action.

After the conclusion of the ritual, the suspension of reality is finally released, and the return to daily life brings with it the difficulties that had been erased within the performance of the ritual. Nikolai's magically inspired decision to marry Sonya comes into direct conflict with his mother's opposition to it:

Soon after the Christmas holidays Nicholas told his mother of his love for Sonya and of his firm resolve to marry her. The countess, who had long noticed what was going on between them and was expecting this declaration, listened to him in silence and then told her son that he might marry whom he pleased, but that neither she nor his father would give their blessing to such a marriage. Nicholas, for the first time, felt that his mother was displeased with him and that, despite her love for him, she would not give way. (586)

In meeting resistance from his mother, Nikolai's initiative that seemed so clear while under the influence of ritual now emerges more complicated. Unfortunately, the reality of life presents obstacles to the employment of free will, which are erased in the isolated and confined world of ritual.

A sincere practice of ritual can generate a harmonization between the participant and the world at large. Art and music are two key elements within ritual that can be the catalysts for this reaction. Iogel's ball and the grand ball gave Natasha the opportunity to step outside the bounds of social convention and intuitively follow the natural movements of her feet. In doing so, she follows a more natural harmony, rather than the constraining rules of conventional dance. Her dancing is characterized as being liberating, and in fact, her harmonious integrations are liberating. Similarly, the hunt offers Nikolai harmonious integration with the traditions of the chase. By following the code of the hunt, Nikolai finds liberation through the space left open for individual initiative. On the other hand, hollow ritual such as Freemasonry can be stifling in its imposition of values and its own failure to follow these constructed codes.

## Chapter Four: The Escalation of History's Crushing Force and Pierre's

### Revelation as a Prisoner

#### Bald Hills – Succumbing to the Forces of History and Finding Renewal and Liberation in the Breakdown of Order

Book Ten of *War and Peace* begins its narrative of the 1812 invasion of Russia at the Bolkonski estate at Bald Hills. The sweeping destruction of Moscow is preceded by the fall of Bald Hills. In the commencement of the tenth book, the Bolkonskis receive a letter from Andrei advising them to move to Moscow as the French approach Smolensk, a short day's journey from Bald Hills. The old prince confuses the 1812 war with the campaign of 1807 and shows other clear signs of aging. He forgets that he has left Andrei's letter on the table, has trouble falling asleep, and is generally absentminded. He sends his servant Alpatych to Smolensk, and prior to Alpatych's journey, Dessalles writes a letter to the Governor requesting information on the state of affairs and the danger posed to Bald Hills as the old prince does not comprehend the situation. The old prince is shaken out of his apathy when Alpatych returns from Smolensk and begins ordering militiamen to be assembled to defend Bald Hills while instructing Marie, the little prince and Dessalles to leave for Bogucharovo and from there, Moscow. At the peak of his feverish activity, however, the old prince suffers a stroke. Thereafter, the old prince appears timid and frail. His condition detains the family at Bogucharovo for three weeks, and it brings about a change in his character, loosening his strict self control and enabling him to express his love for his daughter straightforwardly.

Many events in the tenth book point to the once-powerful prince's incapacity to manage the security of Bald Hills as the danger of the approaching French draws nearer. Alpatych discounts the evident signs of approaching danger when he rides into Smolensk; he disregards the sounds of musketry as he is approaching the town and restricts his focus to the prince's orders. Only after French artillery shells begin exploding on the street where Alpatych is staying, only after looting begins, fires are set and officers are declaring the town abandoned, does Alpatych awaken to the reality of the French invasion. Andrei spots him and writes him a note for the old prince instructing them to leave immediately for Moscow as Bald Hills was to be occupied by the French within a week. Like Alpatych, the old prince disregarded and in fact, was unaware of the approaching threat. Alpatych's oblivion underlines the danger of the old prince's apathy to the existing peril. The old prince does experience a wave of energy at Alpatych's return:

After the return of Alpatych from Smolensk the old prince suddenly seemed to awake as from a dream. He ordered the militiamen to be called up from the villages and armed, and wrote a letter to the commander in chief informing him that he had resolved to remain at Bald Hills to the last extremity and to defend it [...]. (795)

His burst of activity, however, is presented as pathetically futile, and Princess Marie is so alarmed by it that she disobeys him for the first time by refusing to leave for Bogucharovo. Indeed, the "feverish and sleepless activity" (795) expresses senility and failing strength and is cut short when he suffers a stroke. Afterwards, his failing health prevents him from carrying out his demented plan of defending Bald Hills, and further detains his family at Bogucharovo. Consequently, as the French approach Bald Hills, the family remains inert, exposed, and helpless.

Meanwhile, the French invasion moves closer to Bald Hills as an unstoppable movement. The old prince's delusion and Alpatych's disregard are weak elements in the path of the greater force of the war. Alpatych's journey to Smolensk shows the incapacity of civilians to understand the invasion or to stop its advancement. He had ridden into the town dismissive and unconcerned with the developing danger. By the end of his visit, the proximity of the war was undeniable and unavoidable. Essentially, the power of the war holds the inhabitants of Smolensk and Bald Hills in its grasp. It brings commotion to the streets of Smolensk, it wounds the cook who comes out to look at the first cannon balls landing on her neighborhood, and leads Ferapontov, who rebuffed the approaching danger alongside Alpatych, to set fire to his own shop so as not to leave anything for the French. As the men who denied the progression towards Smolensk were forced to recognize the inevitability of the abandonment of the town, their sudden recognition of the power of history's movement is reinforced by a sense of their own powerlessness to impede its advancement. War's destructive force appears absurdly overwhelming in comparison to the demented old prince in his final days. The proximity of the French underlines the approaching encounter between the historical force of the war and the failing strength of the old prince's personality. The prince vainly attempts to preserve the order that he has imposed on his estate, his family, his life. His incapacity to accomplish this, however, is underlined by his paralysis that literally and symbolically renders him utterly powerless in the face of an advancing stronger force.

While his stroke and paralysis weakens the old prince, his death liberates and empowers Princess Marya. The threat of the approaching French strengthens her

resolve and reinvigorates her. She knows that their movements cannot be restrained as the old prince had momentarily believed before his stroke. She recognizes that the forces of war are stronger than her. However, in spite of the fact that she is initially paralyzed with thoughts on death and her own immorality in wishing for her father's death, her energy is sparked by Mademoiselle Bourienne's suggestions that they remain at Bogucharovo and appeal to the French when they arrive. Tolstoy narrates the transformation that occurs in Marya at this moment:

“Dunyasha, send Alpatych, or Dronushka, or somebody to me!” she said, “and tell Mademoiselle Bourienne not to come to me,” she added, hearing Mademoiselle Bourienne's voice. “We must go at once, at once!” she said, appalled at the thought of being left in the hands of the French.

“If Prince Andrew heard that I was in the power of the French! That I, the daughter of Prince Nicholas Bolkonski, asked General Rameau for protection and accepted his favor!” This idea horrified her, made her shudder, blush, and feel such a rush of anger and pride as she had never experienced before. (809)

As Tolstoy explains, Princess Marya felt herself the representative of her dead father and of Andrei, and thus thought their thoughts and felt their feelings involuntarily (809). Acting in their name, and now in her own, she resolves to organize the evacuation of her household and her peasants eastward away from the invading French. The havoc of war can render characters inert, as with the old prince, but it can also spark human power and action, as with Marya.

In a microcosmic portrayal of the effects of war, Bogucharovo witnesses renewal in Princess Marya, powerlessness in the old prince, and the breakdown of established authority in the peasants' disobedience. Alpatych's efforts in instructing Dron to order the peasants to provide horses and carts for Princess Marya are met with little success. Alpatych senses that a general mood of noncompliance has settled



on the commune, and indeed, no carts were provided when they were ordered to. Princess Marya's appeal to the village elder Dron, and then to the peasants of the estate, are also unsuccessful. She promises them grain, and they reply with defiance: "Oh yes, an artful tale! Follow her into slavery! Pull down your houses and go into bondage! I dare say! 'I'll give you grain, indeed!' she says," voices in the crowd were heard saying" (813). The hierarchy of authority has been demolished as the peasants sense the approach of the French and conspire to consent to French rule, which, in a traveling rumor, promised liberation.

Destruction is clearly an outcome of war. Rebirth and rejuvenation, however, are also consequences of war. Prince Andrei's visit to the Bald Hills estate reveals these twin products of war as they have affected the place of his birth and childhood. His first observations emphasize the dead atmosphere of the abandoned estate:

[...] Prince Andrew noticed that there was not a soul about and that the little washing wharf, torn from its place and half submerged, was floating on its side in the middle of the pond. He rode to the keeper's lodge. No one was at the stone entrance gates of the drive and the door stood open. Grass had already begun to grow on the garden paths, and horses and calves were straying in the English park. (783)

However, his lagging spirit is momentarily renewed by the young girls in his garden attempting to steal some plums. Coming into contact with another being whose youth and energy has not been hurt by the war, but in fact, who has found a treat in the devastation of the estate in the form of unguarded plums, Andrei experiences a sensation of comfort and rejuvenation:

[...] A new sensation of comfort and relief came over him when, seeing these girls, he realized the existence of other human interests entirely aloof from his own and just as legitimate as those that occupied him. Evidently these girls passionately desire one thing – to carry away and eat those green plums without being caught – and

Prince Andrew shared their wish for the success of their enterprise.  
[...] Prince Andrew was somewhat refreshed by having ridden off the  
dusty highroad along which the troops were moving. (785)

The forces of history and war bring down upon the inhabitants of Bald Hills and Smolensk a destructive situation of such overwhelming character and power that clearly no person can reverse or deny its approach. The old prince, an embodiment of individual activity and capacity, proves to be as powerless in the face of this oncoming force as Ferapontov who sets fire to his house and Alpatych whose stubborn denials at Smolensk are shattered by the reality of the town's conditions. Nonetheless, the desperate situation also gives rise to liberating self-expression that had been stifled by the conditions in place before the approaching devastation demolished the established order. The old prince is weakened as the French approach, but his death lifts Marya to a position where she can move and act freely from her father. The young girls who steal the plums and the revolting peasants are also given an opportunity to express their self-will as the old hierarchy of authority had broken.

#### The Battle of Borodino – A “Moral Victory”

The battle of Borodino introduces new elements to Tolstoy's representation of war. In his description of Borodino he begins to treat the morale of the troops not as an ephemeral, shifting phenomenon but as an enduring “spirit of the troops”. Before the battle, Pierre asks Andrei what success in battle depends on. He receives the following answer:

On the feeling that is in me and in him and in each soldier. [...] A battle is won by those who firmly resolve to win it! Why did we lose the battle at Austerlitz? The French losses were almost equal to ours, but very early we said to ourselves that we were losing the battle, and we did lose it. And we said so because we had nothing to fight for

there, we wanted to get away from the battlefield as soon as we could. 'We've lost, so let us run' and we ran. (862)

The battle of Borodino continues to display the prevailing chaos of war, but the scenes that inspire Pierre and that occurred throughout the battle generated a sentiment of resilience that eventually led to the "moral" victory of Borodino.

Pierre was initially compelled to participate in the war effort from an emotional sense of patriotic duty. The Emperor's visit in Moscow and tear-jerking speech pushed many nobles to provide the army with men and reinforcements, and it unbiasedly aroused Pierre into action:

Pierre's one feeling at the moment was a desire to show that he was ready to go all lengths and was prepared to sacrifice everything. He now felt ashamed of his speech with its constitutional tendency and sought an opportunity of effacing it. Having heard that Count Mamonov was furnishing a regiment, Bezukhov at once informed Rostopchin that he would give a thousand men and their maintenance. (757)

Having enlisted, Pierre meets with Andrei and their conversation broadens his understanding of the significance of the approaching battle:

He now understood the whole meaning and importance of this war and of the impending battle. All he had seen that day, all the significant and stern expressions on the faces he had seen in passing, were lit up for him by a new light. He understood that latent heat (as they say in physics) of patriotism which was present in all these men he had seen, and this explained to him why they all prepared for death calmly, and as it were lightheartedly. (864)

Before he experiences the exercise of this "latent heat" in battle, Pierre is first caught in the confusion of the massive movements and disorientation that occur in war:

Having descended the hill the general after whom Pierre was galloping turned sharply to the left, and Pierre, losing sight of him, galloped in among some ranks of infantry marching ahead of him. He tried to pass either in front of them or to the right or left, but there were soldiers everywhere, all with the same preoccupied expression and busy with

some unseen but evidently important task. They all gazed with the same dissatisfied and inquiring expression at this stout man in a white hat [...]. (882)

Riding to the knoll where the battery is stationed, Pierre leaves the open battlefield for a more confined space. Here, he delves into a microscopic position that brings him into direct contact with the individuals, rather than the massive groups, that affect battle.

Pierre is initially encapsulated within the intimate battery group, providing him with a chance to experience the fiery spirit of each individual soldier and of a small collective. His attention is completely absorbed by the small battery; he appears unconscious of the danger surrounding him. The men of the battery, urging each other on in an energetic and good-natured manner, enclose Pierre in a seemingly protective sphere:

The booming cannonade and the fusillade of musketry were growing more intense over the whole field, especially to the left where Bagration's fleches were, but where Pierre was the smoke of the firing made it almost impossible to distinguish anything. Moreover, his whole attention was engrossed by watching the family circle – separated from all else – formed by the men in the battery. [...] Pierre did not look out at the battlefield and was not concerned to know what was happening there; he was entirely absorbed in watching this fire which burned even more brightly and which he felt was flaming up in the same way in his own soul. (887)

Pierre's narrative illustrates the mentality of the men in combat. The "fire which burned even more brightly" is the same sentiment that Andrei identifies as the "feeling that is in me and in him and in each soldier". It is, beyond heightened morale brought on by feeling of order or confidence, an all-encompassing passionate drive that overwhelms the men at Borodino. It is this determination that prevails in the battery and keeps Pierre in a state of eager interest and excitement. It thoroughly

influences the men as it psychologically separates them from the violence of the war, and keeps them animated and even cheerful:

By ten o'clock some twenty men had already been carried away from the battery; two guns were smashed and cannon balls fell more and more frequently on the battery and spent bullets buzzed and whistled around. But the men in the battery seemed not to notice this, and merry voices and jokes were heard on all sides. (886)

This fervent spirit increases paradoxically as the soldiers' situation becomes more desperate and the danger increases:

Pierre noticed that after every ball that hit the redoubt, and after every loss, the liveliness increased more and more. As the flames of the fire hidden within come more and more vividly and rapidly from an approaching thundercloud, so, as if in opposition to what was taking place, the lightning of hidden fire growing more and more intense glowed in the faces of these men. (887)

The men are ordered in an intimate grouping which removes chances of disorientation, as Pierre first experiences while riding to the knoll. The significance of their action lies in the fire and resolve that grew with the heightening of danger. It was the increasing hazards and the force of the enemy which drove the men to continue firing. It gave them the opportunity to function within a group that sustained heightened morale, but more specifically, that allowed them to release their energy and determination to triumph over the French in the form of active duty. Watching the exercise of fruitful action, Pierre is similarly infected by the excitement and energy produced by the oncoming enemy.

In the moment that Pierre witnesses the young officer getting shot, however, the havoc of war enters the isolated sphere of the battery. He is suddenly awakened to the danger surrounding him, and this disrupts his comprehension of the events happening around him.

Suddenly something happened: the young officer gave a gasp and bending double sat down on the ground like a bird shot in the wing. Everything became strange, confused, and misty in Pierre's eyes. One cannon ball after another whistled by and struck the earthwork, a soldier, or a gun. Pierre, who had not noticed these sounds before, now heard nothing else. (888)

The narrative becomes confused at this point and remains confused throughout the invasion of the battery because the battery's ability to deny and thus remain unaffected by the chaotic conditions around it is interrupted when the enemy disrupts the small sphere. Pierre runs down the slope to bring up the ammunition boxes and is suddenly struck with indecision: "Where am I going?" he suddenly asked himself when he was already near the green ammunition wagons. He halted irresolutely, not knowing whether to return or go on" (889). Pierre's lack of fear or indecision prior to the young officer being hit, as evidenced, was maintained because the burning resolution of each member of the battery transferred onto him. For Pierre, however, witnessing the focal officer of the battery getting shot disrupted the mental possession brought on by seeing the transfer of energy into action. The moment when the focal officer is shot, Pierre's disposition shifts from fiery internal energy to immobility. His stunted movements reinforce the disappearance of sensibility and rationality in the reality of hand-to-hand combat. While operating in havoc, men become disoriented and confused, impeding logical comprehension and overwhelming any sense of purposeful action:

He saw the senior officer lying on the earth wall with his back turned as if he was examining something down below and that one of the soldiers he had noticed before was struggling forward shouting "Brothers!" and trying to free himself from some men who were holding him by the arm. He also saw something else that was strange. But he had not time to realize that the colonel had been killed, that the soldier shouting "Brothers!" was a prisoner, and that another man had

been bayoneted in the back before his eyes, for hardly had he run into the redoubt before a thin, sallow-faced, perspiring man in a blue uniform rushed on him sword in hand, shouting something. Instinctively guarding against the shock – for they had been running together at full speed before they saw one another – Pierre put out his hands and seized the man (a French officer) by the shoulder with one hand and by the throat with the other. The officer, dropping his sword, seized Pierre by his collar. For some seconds they gazed with frightened eyes at one another's unfamiliar faces and both were perplexed at what they had done and what they were about to do next. (890)

The tone of Pierre's narrative is cloudy and bizarre. Rather than describing the colonel as killed, Pierre perceives him as examining something down below. The "something else that was strange" that Pierre could not even distinguish was the killing of a man right before his eyes. He is clearly unable to grasp the events happening before him. When the French officer runs at him, Pierre acts instinctively and grabs him by the throat while the officer grabs his collar. Both are puzzled with their actions and their situation. Similar to the illogical struggle Andrei saw while running with the standard at Austerlitz, both Pierre and the officer are caught in the whirl of disorder which prevents either from rationally comprehending their reactions.

The recapture of the knoll occurs with a gust of energy that juxtaposes Pierre's immobility at the ammunition boxes and the perplexity of Pierre and the Frenchman who were holding on to one another and then ran in separate directions. The "dense crowd of Russian soldiers" is described as "stumbling, tripping up, and shouting, ran merrily and wildly toward the battery" (890). As the crowd of counter-attacking Russian soldiers "ran merrily", they hark back to the battery's cheerful spirit. They saw that the French had attacked the battery, and were running merrily

specifically because they knew they were about to enter into combat and wanted to enter combat. The source of their liveliness came from the opportunity to express their self energy and determination through direct combat with the very enemy that triggered their energetic feelings of resolve.

While Pierre is able to participate in meaningful action at Borodino, Andrei's regiment is made to sit like lame ducks while the fighting moved along around them. Their frustrating position places them in a situation opposed to that faced by the battery. The battery's fiery sentiment was intensified as conditions worsened and the fighting grew fiercer. Andrei's regiment, on the other hand, sees the action happening around them but as reserve units, are made to stand in place, rendering them powerless and worse for them, making them feel powerless. As Tolstoy notes,

Prince Andrew's regiment was among the reserves which till after one o'clock were stationed inactive behind Semenovsk, under heavy artillery fire. [...] Without moving from that spot or firing a single shot the regiment here lost another third of their men. (902)

Their actual situation is acutely frustrating, as the men stand in the line of fire, open to death but unable to move to protect themselves or attack the enemy. The progression of battle continued around them as "everything went on of itself", burdening them with a sense of their passivity, their nonessential. Their inertness removed the possibility of exhibiting their self energy through combat. As a result, they were incapable of fighting off the psychological effects of oppressive havoc as Pierre's battery had done.

At the battle of Borodino, the Russian army was able to secure a victory because the situation gave them an opportunity to release their resolve and excited energy in the form of action. The danger of combat invigorated them, while their



active duty allowed for the release of that escalating energy. It was that release which guaranteed the continuation of the Russian defensive. Because the Russians remained in place, they were able to secure what Tolstoy titles a “moral” victory:

[...] but all the general and soldiers of his army [...] experienced a similar feeling of terror before an enemy who, after losing HALF his men, stood as threateningly at the end as at the beginning of the battle. The moral force of the attacking French army was exhausted. Not that sort of victory which is defined by the capture of pieces of material fastened to sticks, called standards, and of the ground on which the troops had stood and were standing, but a moral victory that convinces the enemy of the moral superiority of his opponent and of his own impotence was gained by the Russians at Borodino. [...] The direct consequence of the battle of Borodino was Napoleon’s senseless flight from Moscow [...] and the downfall of Napoleonic France, on which at Borodino for the first time the hand of an opponent of stronger spirit had been laid. (914)

Pierre also recognizes and is inspired by the spirit of the men he observed at the battery. His reflections on them center specifically on their capacity for action. He is in awe of their ability to act in the face of danger and likely death. However, he also realizes that it is precisely because they were able to exhibit action that they proved successful in their repulse of the French: “And *they* are simple. *They* do not talk, but act. The spoken word is silver but the unspoken is golden. Man can be master of nothing while he fears death, but he who does not fear it possesses all” (941). Soon after his return to Moscow, Pierre escapes his duties and seeks out Bazdeev’s old house, where he toys with a plan to assassinate Napoleon. Pierre is eventually incited into action as he recollects the success that results from extracting self energy by practicing activity.

The Abandonment of Moscow – Chaos Ensues in the City; Pierre Finds Momentary Liberation

After the battle of Borodino, the theater of war continued to move towards Moscow as the French troops marched deeper into Russia while the Russian army retreated. The proximity of the enemy triggered movement away from Moscow as its inhabitants felt the inevitability of the city's abandonment. With the departure of its elite class, Moscow became a "queenless hive". Meanwhile, the city is depicted as turning towards chaos as previous figures of order and societal norms become obsolete. Crowds become unruly and citizens unmanageable, while former symbols of authority are ruled ineffective. Where order previously sustained daily life, now chaos and lawlessness rule. The turn to disorder becomes complete when Napoleon arrives at the outskirts of Moscow, displaying the powerful radiation of war's chaos onto its surroundings, and human incapacity to stem it.

Speaking in the magisterial philosophical voice that intrudes more and more on his narrative as he follows Napoleon's eastward movement from Smolensk to Borodino to Moscow, Tolstoy calls the abandonment of Moscow an "inevitable" event. He sees three primary causes of this inevitable event. One is the collective resolve of the citizenry to not submit to the French rule. Another is the army's collective sense that it must retreat through Moscow to preserve its remaining strength. And the third is abandonment as a result of disintegrating civil authority. As people began to leave Moscow, an unruly energy took over the city that supplanted its former order for lawlessness. This energy was a result of increasing anxiety as the enemy came closer and the inability of anyone, ordinary people and statesmen, to

stop it. The movement of history was too strong to be impeded. As a result, the anxious and wild energy was absorbed by the remainder of the population. It is most evident in the formation of rowdy crowds, unmanaged or controlled by government officials whose powers became obsolete in the disorder of the city. Tolstoy splits and fragments his narrative to zero in on individuals as they realize that former authorities like Rostopchin have lost their authority. This realization turns individuals into members of mobs. In one case, he traces the evolution of a mob from a drunken brawl at a Moscow bar. In a confusing melee, workers begin to fight with blacksmiths; they form a confused mob that heads toward city hall to seek resolution from the “authorities”. The crowd led by the tall youth that joined the publican’s fight with the blacksmiths brews further violence and gathers a greater mass around him as he spoke loudly to attract attention. That mass then crosses paths with the superintendent of police whose evasive reply to their request for information can not pacify them, and so they move on to Rostopchin. Rostopchin, incapable of providing them with a satisfactory explanation and plan, hands a political prisoner Vereshchagin over to them, calling him a traitor. The crowd falls on him violently as they’re propelled by their own restless energy:

But after the exclamation of surprise that had escaped from Vereshchagin he uttered a plaintive cry of pain, and that cry was fatal. The barrier of human feeling, strained to the utmost, that had held the crowd in check suddenly broke. The crime had begun and must now be completed. The plaintive moan of reproach was drowned by the threatening and angry roar of the crowd. Like the seventh and last wave that shatters a ship, that last irresistible wave burst from the rear and reached the front ranks, carrying them off their feet and engulfing them all. (991)

The crowd's murder of Vereshchagin occurs because every previously established barrier, set by law or social norms, or in this case, human feeling, had been demolished in the chaos that spread throughout the city. This scene with Vereshchagin encapsulates the loss of control experienced by Muscovites as the city fell to chaos. Their inability to control themselves led to Vereshchagin's death; it is a small occurrence within the larger model of human limitations in situations of social disorder.

Rostopchin's loss of power stands as the clearest representation of disintegration of order at the governmental level. The advancing force of the war disrupted the established order as the majority of the inhabitants fled and the remainder was left in a lawless city. In the face of these conditions and the ever-approaching wave of the French advance, Rostopchin is left powerless, yet continues to commit petty, meaningless actions like the scapegoating of Vereshchagin because he cannot admit his present weakness:

This man did not understand the meaning of what was happening but merely wanted to do something himself that would astonish people, to perform some patriotically heroic feat; and like a child he made sport of the momentous and unavoidable event – the abandonment and burning of Moscow – and tried with his puny hand now to speed and now to stay the enormous, popular tide that bore him along with it.  
(931)

The forces that had been galvanized by the momentous expectations overwhelmed the ordinary inhabitants of Moscow, and they also revealed the powerlessness of socially-established images of power. The eye of the storm had reached Moscow and the massive movement away from it could not have been stopped by Rostopchin. Finally

Rostopchin himself admits the moral weakness of not acknowledging historical “inevitability”:

Though he knew it was coming, he did not till the last moment wholeheartedly believe that Moscow would be abandoned, and did not prepare for it. The inhabitants left against his wishes. [...] But when events assumed their true historical character, when expressing hatred for the French in words proved insufficient, when it was not even possible to express that hatred by fighting a battle, when self-confidence was of no avail in relation to the one question before Moscow, when the whole population streamed out of Moscow as one man, abandoning their belongings and proving by that negative action all the depth of their national feeling, then the role chosen by Rostopchin suddenly appeared senseless. He unexpectedly felt himself ridiculous, weak, and alone, with no ground to stand on. (986)

The Rostopchin episodes show that civil authorities are only legitimate and thus observed in a time of order. Established political authority means nothing when social order collapses. Having narrated the inevitable flow of military actions that lead to Borodino and then from Borodino through Moscow, Tolstoy then narrates the inevitable collapse of social order in Moscow and the ensuing social chaos for the stragglers left in Moscow when Napoleon arrives.

Unlike Kutuzov, who was able to admit that a retreat and a desertion of the city was necessary because it could not be avoided, Rostopchin decided to fight against the greater forces that would prove to be overpowering. Three times he commits the sin of not recognizing historical inevitability. First he fails to admit the inevitability of the French army’s advance into Moscow. Second he fails to admit the spontaneous urge of Muscovites to abandon their city, rather than submit to French rule. And third he fails to admit his own inevitable loss of authority in the ensuing breakdown of social order. His manic declarations were taken seriously only by a select few, and even those he let down. His promise to form a resistance to the French

never materialized because he did not make an appearance at the designated time. His attempt to pacify the mob that formed under his window only resulted in the death of an innocent man. Having completely lost control of the city, Rostopchin finally sees his own futility.

In the midst of chaos, the illusion of individual initiative and control is exposed as a false deception. The reader is assured of this idea in Tolstoy's focus on Rostopchin's ill-fated, delusional self-confidence. Pierre's experiences under these same conditions questions whether free will and moral responsibility can operate in a state of disorder. Tolstoy writes that Pierre's encounter with the departing Rostovs and Natasha's enthusiasm reinforces Pierre's decision to remain in Moscow as the threat of invasion nears. The desperate conditions of the city and its inevitable fate incite Pierre's extraordinary plans to assassinate Napoleon. Inspired by *them*, the artillery men at Borodino who persevered against the assaulting French through energy and passion, Pierre thinks that he too, must fight against the onslaught of French force:

When, having bought the coat merely with the object of taking part among the people in the defense of Moscow, Pierre had met the Rostovs and Natasha had said to him: "Are you remaining in Moscow? ... How splendid!" the thought flashed into his mind that it really would be a good thing, even if Moscow were taken, for him to remain there and do what he was predestined to do.

Next day, with the sole idea of not sparing himself and not lagging in any way behind *them*, Pierre went to the Three Hills gate. But when he returned to the house convinced that Moscow would not be defended, he suddenly felt that what before had seemed to him merely a possibility had now become absolutely necessary and inevitable. He must remain in Moscow, concealing his name, and must meet Napoleon and kill him, and either perish or put an end to the misery of all Europe – which it seemed to him was solely due to Napoleon.  
(1001)

Pierre's exaggerated mission is provoked by the desperate situation in Moscow. However, as with any plan for influential, individualistic action in *War and Peace*, Pierre's task is foiled by circumstances beyond his control; Napoleon was already in the Kremlin when Pierre arrives at Arbat to kill him. In addition, the ludicrousness of his extraordinary plans is underlined by their volatility; one heartfelt talk with the French captain Ramballe undid Pierre's gloomy state necessary for the implementation of his task.

Pierre finds more success in smaller-scale efforts and positive actions. Several factors work to his benefit. For one thing, the extreme conditions empower him with a sense of strength that pushes him forward to complete his tasks: "It had a peculiarly strong effect on him because at the sight of the fire he felt himself suddenly freed from the ideas that had weighed him down. He felt young, bright, adroit, and resolute" (1029). In addition, his virtuous mission to save a small child is assisted by a French soldier who points to the spot where the girl is: "There is your child! Oh, a girl, so much the better! [...] Good-by, Fatty. We must be human, we are all mortal you know!" (1030) Pierre is successful in saving the little girl because the forces that could have worked against him, including the danger of the fire and the animosity of the French troops, are manipulated to work in accordance with his task. Heroic deeds, however, have little place in a setting of disorder, and the extent to which Pierre's free will can freely operate in Moscow is curtailed when he is arrested for attacking an officer who would have raped a young, Armenian woman.

Pierre's Experience as a Prisoner – The Loss of Self-Will; Inspiration from Karataev;  
a Philosophy of Self-Preservation in the Midst of Fatal Forces

Pierre's first experiences as a prisoner break down any belief in his own free will. Initially, he feels his own powerlessness in the hands of the French. Tolstoy comments on the French order that had dominated Moscow and Pierre's captivity within that system:

It was plain that the Russian nest was ruined and destroyed, but in place of the Russian order of life that had been destroyed, Pierre unconsciously felt that a quite different, firm, French order had been established over this ruined nest. He felt this in the looks of the soldiers who, marching in regular ranks briskly and gaily, were escorting him and the other criminals. [...] Pierre felt himself to be an insignificant chip fallen among the wheels of a machine whose action he did not understand but which was working well. (1066)

He soon begins to feel that in fact, some unnamed, abstract system, even beyond the French order, was overwhelming him:

The adjutant, also, had evidently had no evil intent though he might have refrained from coming in. Then who was executing him, killing him, depriving him of life – him, Pierre, with all his memories, aspirations, hopes, and thoughts? Who was doing this? And Pierre felt that it was no one. It was a system – a concurrence of circumstances. A system of some sort was killing him – Pierre – depriving him of life, of everything, annihilating him. (1068)

The execution of several Russian prisoners brings the crushing oppression of this “system” into full view. The fact that this overpowering force stems beyond the French occupiers and subsumes them as well is evidenced in the horror seen in both the French and Russian witnesses of the executions and the reluctance of the French to commit these atrocities. In addition, the fact that this “system” is controlling life and death decisions displays its overwhelming level of domination. No one appears to be in control of the events, nonetheless, the French troops continue to shoot the



Russian prisoners. As everyone begins to sense that the executions are happening against the wills of both the French and Russian, the question arises of who in fact *is* controlling and dictating the events:

On the faces of all the Russians and of the French soldiers and officers without exception, he read the same dismay, horror, and conflict that were in his own heart. "But who, after all, is doing this? They are all suffering as I am. Who then is it? Who?" flashed for an instant through [Pierre's] mind. (1070)

As Pierre grows more aware of the "system's" oppressive hold over both the French and Russians, so strong that it would lead the French to kill against their will, his faith in the right ordering of the universe wanes and collapses:

From the moment Pierre had witnessed those terrible murders committed by men who did not wish to commit them, it was as if the mainspring of his life, on which everything depended and which made everything appear alive, had suddenly been wrenched out and everything had collapsed into a heap of meaningless rubbish. Though he did not acknowledge it to himself, his faith in the right ordering of the universe, in humanity, in his own soul, and in God, had been destroyed. He had experienced this before, but never so strongly as now. When similar doubts had assailed him before, they had been the result of his own wrongdoing, and at the bottom of his heart he had felt that relief from his despair and from those doubts was to be found within himself. But now he felt that the universe had crumbled before his eyes and only meaningless ruins remained, and this not by any fault of his own. He felt that it was not in his power to regain faith in the meaning of life. (1072)

Pierre sensed a lack of order in the universe because he witnessed the complete loss of free will. He saw the power of each man to make moral decisions effaced by a greater force that possesses him. He saw this in the French soldiers who executed the prisoners against their will and their sense of decency. In the ultimate possession of action, this force causes one man to kill another. It eliminates his power to make his own moral decisions and his power over his deeds. Pierre's witness of the devastating

results of this loss of power collapses his own belief in the order of the universe and in his free will.

Pierre's acquaintance with Platon Karataev is significant in the physical and mental changes Karataev inspires in Pierre. Platon Karataev recounts his life as a peasant and the compulsory time he had to serve in the military in place of his brother. His hardships were brought on by the political system in Russia at the time: serfdom. He recognizes the domination of state forces in the shaping of his life, but he has also achieved a sense of harmony with it, and with the greater world. As Karataev states, "Where there's law there's injustice" (1074). Karataev's simple reconciliation with the authoritative conditions surrounding him gives way to his establishment of an order separate from those conditions, where his perception of reality is redefined. Within his order, Karataev perceives and creates a peaceful and harmonious coexistence with people and circumstances. Pierre senses Karataev's peace of mind and this sets Pierre back onto a path of mental and moral strengthening, and revives in him a new life-force:

For a long time Pierre did not sleep, but lay with eyes open in the darkness, listening to the regular snoring of Platon who lay beside him, and he felt that the world that had been shattered was once more stirring in his soul with a new beauty and on new and unshakable foundations. (1076)

Karataev's character helps Pierre in guiding him towards an understanding of the harmonious way in which man can live with the universe. Pierre's first experiences as a prisoner shattered his perception of an orderly world in which man can make moral decisions for himself. He saw the disorder of a world where free will is stunted, and forces greater than man propel him to commit actions involuntarily. Karataev, in

contrast, shows Pierre that man can in fact live in harmony with the world while also retaining his own free will by remaining detached from the same objects that he loves:

Karataev had no attachments, friendships, or love, as Pierre understood them, but loved and lived affectionately with everything life brought him in contact with, particularly with man – not any particular man, but those with whom he happened to be. He loved his dog, his comrades, the French, and Pierre who was his neighbor, but Pierre felt that in spite of Karataev's affectionate tenderness for him (by which he unconsciously gave Pierre's spiritual life its due) he would not have grieved for a moment at parting from him. And Pierre began to feel in the same way toward Karataev. (1078)

Pierre's narrative breaks off for a one-month period. In that month, he experiences significant physical changes as a result of the hardships he had to endure. When his narrative returns, Pierre is re-introduced as an alert, calm man with a solid physical appearance:

Physically he had changed much during this time. He no longer seemed stout, though he still had the appearance of solidity and strength hereditary in his family. A beard and mustache covered the lower part of his face, and a tangle of hair, infested with lice, curled round his head like a cap. The look of his eyes was resolute, calm, and animatedly alert, as never before. The former slackness which had shown itself even in his eyes was now replaced by an energetic readiness for action and resistance. His feet were bare. (1119)

Tolstoy also states explicitly the mental effects that Pierre's experience as a prisoner had on him. Besides developing physically, Pierre also developed in his mental outlook and in his relationship with the world around him. Rather than feeling oppressed by the crushing force that had pushed the French soldiers to kill Russian prisoners, Pierre has been energized spiritually by the experience of physical hardship and his mind and body's spontaneous response to it. He feels good about his vital

response and this leads to a peace of mind that strengthens his sense of harmony with himself and the world:

He had long sought in different ways that tranquility of mind, that inner harmony which had so impressed him in the soldiers at the battle of Borodino. He had sought it in philanthropy, in Freemasonry, in the dissipations of town life, in wine, in heroic feats of self-sacrifice, and in romantic love for Natasha; he had sought it by reasoning – and all these quests and experiments had failed him. And now without thinking about it he had found that peace and inner harmony only through the horror of death, through privation, and through what he recognized in Karataev. (1122)

The test of Pierre's ability to remain unaffected by the great, oppressing force that had pushed the Frenchmen to unwillingly execute the Russian prisoners occurs in later executions of sick prisoners who cannot continue their march with the French. In one of these scenes, Pierre again notices the power of the mysterious force that overwhelms these soldiers and leads them to shoot the weak prisoners. However, he now acknowledges the futility of trying to escape it. He instead realizes that the best confrontational approach is waiting and enduring its power:

[...] he recognized that mysterious, callous force which compelled people against their will to kill their fellow men – that force the effect of which he had witnessed during the executions. To fear or to try to escape that force, to address entreaties or exhortations to those who served as its tools, was useless. Pierre knew this now. One had to wait and endure. He did not again go to the sick man, not turn to look at him, but stood frowning by the door of the hut. (1125)

The greatest test of Pierre's newly acquired knowledge and enlightenment occurs in the scene where he realizes that Karataev will be shot by the French for not being able to continue the march. Tolstoy again reminds us of the powerlessness that Pierre had felt while witnessing the executions, when he was first arrested:

Pierre felt that fatal force which had crushed him during the executions, but which he had not felt during his imprisonment, now

again controlled his existence. It was terrible, but he felt that in proportion to the efforts of that fatal force to crush him, there grew and strengthened in his soul a power of life independent of it. (1129)

Pierre recognizes the existence of the “fatal force”, but develops enough strength alongside its overwhelming presence to hinder it from destroying his “power of life independent of it”. By maintaining an independence from the force, Pierre thus sustains his independent power of free will. Pierre realizes that if he sees Karataev before and after his execution, he would be subjected to this “fatal force”. Seeing and talking to Karataev would be a denial of the impending effects of the force. Ignoring Karataev and walking past him as he sat down during the march was Pierre’s acceptance of the force that was going to bring about his friend’s execution. Walking away was also Pierre’s way of retaining the level of separation Karataev maintained with everyone he met which thus granted him a level of independence. Thus, the emotional and mental grievances that Pierre had suffered at the sight of the first executions did not befall him because he remained independent of his friend and consequently, of the force. He maintained a “power of life independent of it”, which was the only approach that could be taken to overcome it:

He did not see and did not hear how they shot the prisoners who lagged behind, though more than a hundred perished in that way. He did not think of Karataev who grew weaker every day and evidently would have to share that fate. Still less did Pierre think about himself. The harder his position became and the more terrible the future, the more independent of that position in which he found himself were the joyful and comforting thoughts, memories, and imaginings that came to him. (1177)

Finally, the greatest execution, Karataev’s death, is explained briefly and simply. Pierre’s narrative does not go into the intense emotional outburst and confusion that it had earlier during the first executions. It proceeds as simply as it does in Pierre’s

mind. The reason for that is Pierre's disengagement from the force and the consequences it brings about. Pierre maintains his independence from it, as displayed by his return to reckoning the stages that still remained to Smolensk. He maintains his own thoughts and avoids emotional and mental entanglement in the execution, and thus retains a level of power over the "fatal force":

From behind, where Karataev had been sitting, came the sound of a shot. Pierre heard it plainly, but at that moment he remembered that he had not yet finished reckoning up how many stages still remained to Smolensk – a calculation he had begun before the marshal went by. And he again started reckoning. (1181)

## CONCLUSION

The First Epilogue of *War and Peace* skips to the year 1820, eight years after Napoleon's retreat from Moscow and five years before the Decembrist Revolt. The narrative is concentrated entirely on the domestic situation of the novel's main protagonists. Nikolai and Marya have married, as have Natasha and Pierre. The couples are raising their children. This is Tolstoy's final statement on domestic life, centered on a nurturing upbringing of children, as being the optimum ideal. Indeed, the handful of individuals who had displayed an abundance of free spirit and personality throughout the novel, such as Natasha and Nikolai, transfer their energy to their families in the Epilogue. As the narrative notes, this shift is most pronounced in Natasha:

Natasha... had at once abandoned all her witchery, of which her singing had been an unusually powerful part. She gave it up just because it was too powerfully seductive. She took no pains with her manners or with delicacy of speech, or with her toilet, or to show herself to her husband in her most becoming attitudes, or to avoid inconveniencing him by being too exacting. She acted in contradiction to all those rules. She felt that the allurements instinct had formerly taught her to use would now be merely ridiculous in the eyes of her husband, to whom she had from the first moment given herself up entirely – that is, with her whole soul, leaving no corner of it hidden from him. (1282)

In remaining distant from society and devoting herself entirely to her husband and children, Natasha encloses herself within the family and isolates herself from other spheres. Her domestic circle seems complete and self-sustaining. The domestic order that she and Pierre have established for themselves appears to capture the message of Platon Karataev's philosophy on establishing an order that nurtures life; and this

happy family seems safe from the destructive forces of history that had prevailed in Russia only a few years earlier.

Meanwhile, Pierre joins a secret society that Russian readers implicitly recognize to be the Decembrists. Pierre explains to Nikolai and Denisov that the evils of Russia's autocracy now justify a revolution that would unseat it. Speaking of a vision that he and his Petersburg friends have just made to organize a rebellion against the state, Pierre says:

That is not enough, I told them. Something else is needed. When you stand expecting the overstrained string to snap at any moment, when everyone is expecting the inevitable catastrophe, as many as possible must join hands as closely as they can to withstand the general calamity. (1298)

Thus, Pierre has just made a fateful decision that will expose him and his family to new, tumultuous historical forces. Readers can infer that Pierre will become one of those Decembrist leaders who will be executed or exiled to Siberia and that Natasha may become one of those Decembrist wives who will go and join their husbands in exile. As if the implications of Pierre's visits to St. Petersburg are not threatening enough to the first epilogue's vision of family happiness, Nikolai states explicitly that he will join the government in a violent putdown of Pierre's movement. :

“You are my best friend, as you know, but if you formed a secret society and began working against the government – be it what it may – I know it is my duty to obey the government. And if Arakcheev ordered me to lead a squadron against you and cut you down, I should not hesitate an instant, but should do it. And you may argue about that as you like!” (1300)

Nikolai's forceful reaction communicates his resolve to stop Pierre if Pierre were to revolt against the government, and to take up arms against him if the government



demanded it. His statement establishes the adversarial position to Pierre's revolutionary initiatives and the forces Pierre would have to confront.

How is the reader to understand this dual vision of two happy families and the imminent historical developments that will destroy their tranquility and divide the gentry against itself? Tolstoy provides an ambiguous answer in Natasha's reference to Platon Karataev. When Natasha and Pierre are alone, Natasha asks Pierre if he thinks Karataev would approve of Pierre's plans. Pierre responds with two replies:

“Platon Karataev?” he repeated, and pondered, evidently sincerely trying to imagine Karataev's opinion on the subject. “He would not have understood... yet perhaps he would.”

[...]

“No, he would not have approved,” said Pierre, after reflection. “What he would have approved of is our family life. He was always so anxious to find seamliness, happiness, and peace in everything, and I should have been proud to let him see us. There now – you talk of my absence, but you wouldn't believe what a special feeling I have for you after a separation...” (1307)

The mention of Karataev reminds the reader that Karataev embodies ultimate wisdom for Pierre: a sustainment of spirit in the face of adversarial, life-denying forces.

Karataev idealized family life but he also is happy that his service in the army spared his brother's family from losing his brother. Pierre's example embodies both the values of a nurturing family and the value of committing one's life to the greater good. The ultimate wisdom of *War and Peace* ends in the ambiguous conflict of admitting ever-changing forces of history and exposing oneself to history while also attempting to create life-sustaining order.

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