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Introduction

War and Peace has been translated into many languages, and innumerable volumes and articles have been written about it. The translation used in this edition is that of Aylmer and Louise Maude. It is, in this editor’s opinion, the closest yet produced in English both to the letter and spirit of Tolstoy’s Russian original. Its style is plain, direct, honest—like Tolstoy’s. Aylmer Maude lived in Russia for more than twenty-three years; his wife was born in Moscow and spent the first forty years of her life there. There can be no question of the Maudes’ knowledge of the subtleties of the Russian language. They were disciples of Tolstoy, knew him intimately, and brought tremendous devotion, precision, and the highest possible standards of research to their task of identifying the best text of the novel and then translating it with time-consuming accuracy. (The “Backgrounds and Sources” section contains an account of the textual problems in the publication history of War and Peace in Russian, as well as a note on English translations.) The Maude translation corrects for the first time various errors other translators (and in some cases even Russian editions) had perpetrated and perpetuated. It is a pleasure to be able to make the Maude translation accessible in this edition. A few of Aylmer Maude’s copious and useful footnotes (identified in the text by the initials A. M.) have been silently corrected by the present editor.

Choosing the critical essays was difficult, because of the quantity of material written about War and Peace, particularly in Russian. I have tried to include nineteenth-century (contemporary) Russian reactions (Pisarev, Strakhov, Turgenev, Leontiev); the important controversy about the form of the novel among English-speaking readers (Henry James’s and Percy Lubbock’s criticism of the novel’s composition which provoked a rash of discussions in rebuttal of their thesis—Albert Cook, E. K. Brown, Ralph E. Mathew, and others); Russian formalistic criticism (Viktor Shklovskiy, Boris Eikhenbaum); historical criticism (Georg Lukacs and Boris Eikhembaurm); political and sociological approaches to the novel (an article by Lenin and comments by the Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukacs); discussions of the ideological content and the Weltanschauung expressed in the novel (Kätte Hamburger, Isaiah Berlin); and several other of the most characteristic approaches to the novel.

Another way of categorizing the essays selected here is to divide
The Publication History of War and Peace

IN RUSSIAN

1. 1865 and 1866: The opening sections only, under the title 1805, in the magazine Russky Vestnik, Numbers 1 and 2, 1865, Numbers 2, 3, and 4, 1866.
3. 1869: Volumes 5 and 6 are published, concluding the novel and making the first edition.
4. 1869: Second edition published in six volumes, the first four textually revised.
5. 1873: Third edition appeared as volumes 5, 6, 7, and 8 of an eight-volume edition of Tolstoy’s collected works, edited by N. N. Strakhov.
6. 1873: The opening sections only, under the title 1805, in the magazine Russky Vestnik, Numbers 1 and 2, 1865, Numbers 2, 3, and 4, 1866.
8. 1869: Volumes 5 and 6 are published, concluding the novel and making the first edition.
9. 1869: Second edition published in six volumes, the first four textually revised.
10. 1873: Third edition appeared as volumes 5, 6, 7, and 8 of an eight-volume edition of Tolstoy’s collected works, edited by N. N. Strakhov.
11. 1873: The opening sections only, under the title 1805, in the magazine Russky Vestnik, Numbers 1 and 2, 1865, Numbers 2, 3, and 4, 1866.
13. 1869: Volumes 5 and 6 are published, concluding the novel and making the first edition.
14. 1869: Second edition published in six volumes, the first four textually revised.
15. 1873: Third edition appeared as volumes 5, 6, 7, and 8 of an eight-volume edition of Tolstoy’s collected works, edited by N. N. Strakhov.
16. 1873: The opening sections only, under the title 1805, in the magazine Russky Vestnik, Numbers 1 and 2, 1865, Numbers 2, 3, and 4, 1866.
18. 1869: Volumes 5 and 6 are published, concluding the novel and making the first edition.
19. 1869: Second edition published in six volumes, the first four textually revised.
20. 1873: Third edition appeared as volumes 5, 6, 7, and 8 of an eight-volume edition of Tolstoy’s collected works, edited by N. N. Strakhov.

Many editions followed. The seventh, eighth, and tenth followed the version in the sixth; the ninth, eleventh, and posthumous editions followed the fifth edition.

In the 1880's, Tolstoy ceased taking an interest in the publication of his works, turning over the rights in War and Peace and other early works to his wife. Soviet Russian editions for the most part follow the fifth edition, but in the April 1963 issue of Novy Mir, the renowned scholar N. K. Gudze argued that the third edition of 1873 had been preferred by Tolstoy and ought to be followed. The controversy aroused by Gudze's revolutionary stand is likely to continue for a long time.

IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Aylmer Maude and Louise Maude translated War and Peace twice. The version used in the present edition is their second translation, done for the Oxford University Press Centenary Edition of the works of Leo Tolstoy. War and Peace appeared in it in three volumes between 1930 and 1932. This translation is the best English version yet produced.

At the end of volume I of the Centenary Edition of the works of Tolstoy, Oxford University Press, London, 1929, The Life of Tolstoy, pp. 456-467, Aylmer Maude discusses English translations of Tolstoy. Those interested are strongly urged to read Maude's article. Pages 462-464 list various errors in Constance Garnett’s translation, which may be considered the second best after Maude’s. The worst translations seem to be Leo Wiener's and N. H. Dole’s.

Maude used a text of War and Peace combining the ordering of the material in Tolstoy's fifth edition with changes in wording made by Tolstoy in the third edition of 1873. It may well be a text superior to any published in Russian as well as in English.

Russian editions before Maude's translation, for instance, made the mistake of printing the name of the river Vistula for the correct Viliya (understandable through the closeness of the Russian name for the Vistula, Visla), although in Chapter II of Book IX, if the Uhlans are made to swim the Vistula instead of the Viliya, they are swimming a river two-hundred miles to their rear. The Maudes made valuable corrections, in this and other particulars. They examined various texts of the novel, as well as histories and maps, consulted the Moscow professor Gruzinsky, who was in charge of Tolstoy manuscripts in the Lenin Public Library in Moscow, and produced a translation as accurate in letter and spirit to Tolstoy as any done thus far.
The new, not-yet-completed novel of Count L. Tolstoy can be called the best work on the pathology of Russian society. In this novel there is a whole series of sharp and varied pictures, drawn with the majestic and imperturbable calm of an epic, that ask and answer the question: "What happens to human minds and characters under conditions that make it possible for people to get along without knowledge, without ideas, without energy, and without work?"

It is very possible and even very probable that Count Tolstoy does not have in mind the posing and the solving of such a question. It is likely that he simply wishes to draw a series of pictures out of the life of the Russian gentry in the time of Alexander I. He himself sees and tries to show to others, precisely, down to the smallest details and nuances, all the special characteristics of that time and of the people of those days, members of that circle which interests him more than any other and which is accessible to his investigation. He wishes only to be truthful and exact. His efforts are not directed to the support or rejection of any theoretical idea whatever through the pictures he creates. In all probability, his relationship to the object of his prolonged and careful research is that involuntary, natural tenderness a talented historian ordinarily feels for the remote or near past which he resurrects. He perhaps even finds, in the peculiarities of that past, in the characters he investigates, in the concepts and customs of the society he represents, many traits worthy of love and respect. All that is possible; all that is even really probable. But it is precisely because the author has spent a great deal of time, work, and love in the study and representation of the epoch and its representatives that the characters he creates live their own lives, independent of the author’s intention. They themselves enter into an immediate relationship with the readers. They speak for themselves and lead the reader irresistibly to thoughts and conclusions which the author did not have in mind and of which he perhaps would not even have approved.

† From Dmitri I. Pisarev, “Staroe barstvo” (“Old Gentry”) in Sobranye sochineniy (Moscow, 1956), IV, 370–371, 393–397 passim. Translated by George Gibian. Pisarev (1840–1868) was a brilliant, radical, sociologically oriented journalist and literary critic. The extracts are taken from his review of the first three volumes of the 1868 first edition of War and Peace, published in the magazine Otchetsy sovetski zapiski, No. 2, 1868.
This truth, springing in lively fashion out of the facts themselves, this truth breaking through the personal sympathies and convictions of the author, is especially precious because it is so irresistibly convincing.

The novel *War and Peace* is a vast assortment of varied and splendidly created characters, male and female, old and young. The range of characterizations among the young male figures is particularly wide. We shall begin with them . . . , that is, with those figures about whom a difference of opinion is almost impossible and whose inadequacy will in all probability be admitted by all readers.

[Nicholas Rostov]

Not everybody can endure his first disillusionment in manly fashion, and Nicholas Rostov is one of those who cannot. Rather than look at those facts that oppose his youthful dreams, he shuts his eyes to them, blinded by cowardice, stubbornness, and petty fits of anger. He drives away every unfamiliar thought. He not only closes his own eyes but with fanatical eagerness tries to shut the eyes of other people.

After he fails in the Denisov business and after he looks his fill at the brilliance of Tilsit—which hurts his eyes—Rostov chooses that one course which deprives neither the poor of their spirit nor the wealthy of their cash. He drowns his doubts in a couple of bottles of wine, and, carrying his “hussar’s bravery” to its proper fashion, and Nicholas Rostov chooses that one course which deprives neither the poor of their spirit nor the wealthy of their cash. He drowns his doubts in a couple of bottles of wine, and, carrying his “hussar’s bravery” to its proper extent, begins shouting at the two officers who expressed their discontent with the Peace of Tilsit. “How can you judge what’s best?” he shouts with a reddened face. “How can you judge the Emperor’s actions? What right have we to argue? We cannot comprehend either the Emperor’s aims or his actions.”

“But I never said a word about the Emperor,” the officer justifies himself. Rostov does not listen to him. “We are not diplomatic officials, we are soldiers and nothing more,” he continues. “If we are ordered to die, we must die . . . . If the Emperor pleases to recognize Bonaparte as Emperor and to conclude an alliance with him, it means 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!”

Nikolai shouts, hitting the table with his fist. . . . “Our business is to do our duty, to fight and not to think, that’s all,” he concludes. “And to drink,” says one of the officers who didn’t want to argue. “Yes. And to drink,” Nikolai says. “Hey, you! Another bottle,” he shouts. The two bottles of wine, which he drinks in due course, are for young Count Rostov the most reliable medicine against disillusionment, doubt, and all kinds of torment. He who is lucky enough to come upon the formula “our business is not to think” at the first experience of inner turmoil and who is able to calm himself, even if only for a minute, with this formula and with the help of two bottles: such a man will probably always seek this formula’s protection as soon as uncomfortable doubts assail him and the threat of independent thinking worries him. “Our business is not to think”; that is such an irrefutable position to hold; no testimony of experience can destroy it; no argument will have any force before it. Free thought cannot disembark and gain a foothold on the shore whereon this fortress rears itself.

Rostov remains faithful to the formula he discovers in the Tilisit café under the influence of two bottles of wine. Thought will have no influence on his later life. Doubts will no longer disturb his peace of mind. He knows and wants to know only his military service and the noble diversions proper to the rich landlord and the dashing hussar. His mind refuses all work, even that which is necessary to save his family’s property from the machinations of the swindling but evidently not very literate steward, Mitenka.

Even the worldly life of Moscow seems excessively confused and difficult to Rostov, excessively full of complicated notions and subtleties. He is fully satisfied only by life with the regiment where everything is defined and set, where everything is clear and simple, where there is definitely nothing to be thought about, and where there is no room for doubt or free choice. He likes life in the regiment in the time of peace. He likes it precisely for those reasons that make it unendurable to a man in any way capable of thinking. He likes its calm laziness, its undisturbable routine, its sunny monotony, and those shackles it places on any possible manifestation of personal inventiveness and originality.

Since the world of thought is shut for Rostov, his development is finished when he is twenty years old. The content of life is already exhausted for him. All that remains for him to do is to grow more gross and stupid and then more senile and decrepit.

A superficial observer may take a liking to Rostov’s youthful fineness (for example, when he prays to God at the hunt, asking that the wolf come to him). But he who looks beyond surface images will be led to most painful reflections by the noisy and lively scene of the hunt. If such a triviality, such foolishness as the struggle of a wolf with a few dogs can make a man feel a whole complex of strong feelings, from extreme despair to mad joy, with all the halftones and nuances in between—then why should this man care about broadening and deepening his life?
Why should he seek work for himself? Why should he create for himself interests in the broad and stormy sea of life, when the stable, the kennel, and the nearby forest more than satisfy all his instinctual needs?

NIKOLAI STRAKHOV

[The Significance of the Last Part of War and Peace]  

Volume VI of War and Peace is the denouement, the conclusion to terrible events and the beginning of a new life. The nature of the French Army's retreat and the activities of our armies are related with a clarity and truth equal to those of the account of the Battle of Borodino and the destruction of Moscow. The action moves quickly, but nothing that the fulness of the picture demands is left out. The partisan warfare, the situation of the fleeing Frenchman, the cruelty of some of the Russians, the kindness of others, "the feeling of majestic triumph in conjunction with compassion for the enemy and awareness of being in the right" are all depicted. And as in Volume V, Kutuzov appears in the beginning when it became clear that the enemy was fleeing and in the end when in Vilna he listens to the reprimand of the Emperor.

We see how young men died (death of Petya Rostov), how brides grieved for their bridegrooms and sisters for their brothers (Natasha and Princess Mary for Prince Andrew), how mothers suffered for their children (Countess Rostova for Petya). When the war ends, people separated by the war are united once again in Moscow. An interchange of stories and questions begins. New relationships and a new life commence.

The deeper meaning of this chronicle culminates in the final lessons Pierre learns from his own sufferings, from Karataev's speech before his death, and from Karataev's death itself. The author depicts the regeneration of Pierre powerfully and deeply.

† From N. N. Strakhov's review of the fifth and sixth volumes of War and Peace upon their publication in Moscow in 1869. The review appeared in Garka for January 1870. Translated by George Gibian from N. N. Strakhov, Kriticheskie stati ob I. S. Turgeneve i L. N. Tolstom (St. Petersburg, 1895), pp. 346–348.

Nikolai Strakhov (1828–1896) was an important editor, book reviewer, scholar, and literary critic. A nationalist and a Slavophile in his convictions, supporting indigenous and traditional elements of Russian culture, he was a friend of Dostoevsky, and corresponded voluminously with him as well as with Tolstoy. He contributed to Dostoevsky's magazines and edited the works of Apollon Grigoriev, to whom he refers in the passages translated here. He played an important part in the publication of War and Peace.

The Last Part of War and Peace

In this regeneration is embodied the regeneration of all Russia, the unfolding of spiritual forces that had to follow the sufferings and the struggle. For Pierre, as for Russia, a new, better era began. Purified, strengthened and enlightened by suffering, Pierre now deserves the love of Natasha and experiences all the happiness of which he is capable. Here again the author enters the realm of life's unchanging, continually interesting aspects and ascends to an amazing, incomparable height. He depicts for us two new families, formed by the experiences he has narrated. These families are, so to speak, the crown of the novel, like a fruit on one of the innumerable branches of the tree—Russia—which survived the beneficent storm. Never before in the history of the world had there been such a description of marital life, because never before had there been such a description of a Russian family, the best of all families in the world. The love of husband and wife in full flowering, pure, tender, hard, unshakably deep, is revealed for the first time in all its strength and without varnish.

The picture of the two new families culminates in amazing harmony. When the story began, two families that had existed for a long time were presented to us—the Bolkonskis, who had a grown up son and daughter, and the Rostovs, when Nicholas was still only in school and Natasha was twelve years old. Fifteen years later (the period which the story spans), there appear before us two young families with little children. With the strategy of a genius, the author began the story of the families with people of such maturity that we could become interested in them, and concluded with scenes in which even the babies are extremely endearing to us, since they belong to families with whom, in the course of the story, we have come to identify ourselves.

The picture of human life is complete.

The picture of the Russian of those days is complete.

The picture of what we call history and the struggle of nations is complete.

The picture of everything that people consider to be their happiness and greatness, their sorrow and their humiliation, is complete. That is what War and Peace is.
The meaning of War and Peace?

The meaning is expressed in these words of the author more clearly than anywhere else: "There is no greatness where there is no simplicity, goodness, and truth."

The aim of the writer consisted in representing true greatness as he understands it and placing it in antithesis to false greatness, which he rejects. This aim is manifested not only in the antithesis of Kutuzov and Napoleon but in all the smallest details of the struggle carried on by all of Russia, in the feelings and thoughts of every soldier, in the whole moral world of the Russian people, in their whole way of life, in all aspects of their lives, in their manner of loving, suffering, dying. The writer presented with utmost clarity what Russian people consider to be human nobility—the ideal of a greatness which is present even in weak soldiers and which does not forsake the strong ones even in moments of error and moral disintegration. This idea consists, according to the formula given by the author himself, in simplicity, goodness, and truth. Simplicity, goodness, and truth in 1812 defeated a power that did not respect simplicity and that acted out of evil and falseness. This is the meaning of War and Peace.

In other words, the writer has given us a new Russian formula for the heroic life, a formula Kutuzov fills, but which Napoleon can in no manner fit. The author says directly about Kutuzov: "The simple, modest, and therefore truly magnificent figure could not fit for the heroic life, a formula Kutuzov fills, but which Napoleon can not obey."

In this conclusion reached by the unhappy idealist.

The task of all literature after Gogol consisted only in seeking Russian heroism, removing from it Gogol's negative attitude, and grasping Russian reality in a correct, broad manner so that the ideal without which the nation could not exist, just as a body could not exist without its soul, would not long be hidden from us. Long, strenuous work was needed, and all our writers carried on and, consciously or unconsciously, revealed the Russian ideal.

Leo Tolstoy was the first to complete the task. He was the first to surmount all the difficulties and to endure and defeat the process of negation in his heart. When he liberated himself from it, he grasped Russian reality in a correct, broad manner so that the brilliance and power of those forms of life based on strength, not on harmony resulting from equilibrium. Europe and the ancient world created many of these striking forms, of every kind of mental intensity, which grew to dazzling size. We, the youngest of the great nations, are attracted by these forms of alien life. But deep in our hearts we observe another, original ideal of our own, in comparison with which the embodiments, in reality and in art, of ideals not in keeping with our spiritual order fade and appear ugly.

Purely Russian heroism, purely Russian heroic behavior in all possible spheres of life—that is what Leo Tolstoy gave us, that is the chief object of War and Peace. If we look at our past literature, it becomes more clear to us what a tremendous service Tolstoy has rendered us and wherein this service lies. The founder of our independent literature, Pushkin,1 alone in his great soul, bore sympathy for all kinds of greatness, all forms of heroism: that sympathy enabled him to perceive the Russian ideal and to become the founder of Russian literature. But in his marvelous poetry this ideal shines through only in some ways, only in glimpses that are unmistakably clear though insufficient and undeveloped.

Then appeared Gogol,2 but he did not succeed in the immense task. He wept for his idea, he shed, "through the laughter visible to the world, invisible tears," testifying that while he did not wish to give up his idea he was not able to master a way to embody it. Gogol began to reject the life that so recalcitrantly refused to yield its positive sides to him. We have nothing heroic in our life: we are all either Khlestakovs or Poprishchins—4—that is the conclusion reached by the unhappy idealist.

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2. N. V. Gogol (1809–52), Russian writer whose works include short stories, the play The Inspector General, and the novel Dead Souls.
3. Khlestakov, the comic hero of Gogol's Inspector General, is an ordinary clerk who is mistaken for a government inspector when he visits a small town, and Poprishchin is the chief character in Gogol's Notes of a Madman.
peace as a second is suffering, calm, patient. Grigoriev appeared beautiful qualities of Russian spiritual strength. very original and to the fullest extent. is to prove the well as no­ envy, people powerful master.

The aim of the whole story of War and Peace is to prove the superiority of meek heroism over active heroism, which is not only always defeated but is also ridiculous, not only weak but also harmful. Tolstoy’s clearest and most vital example of the person who believes himself an active hero is Rastopchin. We are told that this character is very well realized and that detailed, lengthy historical research has confirmed Tolstoy’s poetic acumen. Confronted with great events, people like Rastopchin appear worthless and pitiful, not because they are persons very weak in themselves, but because they endeavor to meddle in affairs immeasurably beyond their strengths. The author presents not only individual characters but an entire nation (the French who lead Europe against us) and whole circles within Russia herself—the court circle, the military headquarters—as guilty of exaggerating their own significance, of this absurd and insolent self-aggrandizement. The author shows how assurance of one’s own strength, the acceptance of the conviction that behind one’s personality is the ability to change and direct events, leads only to mistakes and inevitably linked with the worst passions—vanity, self-love, envy, hatred, and others.

In this way, the total effect of the story is that the predatory character is left without an area of effective activity. Speaking in general, however, it is impossible to deny that decisive, bold people were important in the course of events, that the Russian nation did produce people who developed their personal opinions and strengths to the fullest extent. It is absolutely true that such development of the personality distinguishes itself by unattractive traits: but it is also not to be doubted that in these people there also appeared beautiful qualities of Russian spiritual strength.

There is a side to the Russian character that the author does not completely grasp and represent. We yet have to wait for a writer who could depict this side as Pushkin did in Peter the Great in The Bronze Horsemman: * * * “Oh powerful master.
of fate!" * * * But as long as we do not have pure, clear images of active heroism, as long as this heroism does not find a poet to represent it, we must humbly bow before the poet who glorified and embodied for us the heroism of meekness. We can only guess and darkly foresee the traits of a different kind of greatness that also belongs to the Russian nature. That greatness Tolstoy has presented we already see before our eyes, clearly incarnated.

We cannot but agree with the writer on one essential point—we completely accept the superiority of meek heroism over active heroism. Count Tolstoy presented for us, if not the strongest, then in any event the best sides of the Russian character, those that have and must have the greatest value. Just as we cannot deny that Russia defeated Napoleon not by active but by meek heroism, so in general we cannot deny that simplicity, goodness, and truth compose the highest ideal of the Russian people before which the ideal of strong passions and dominant personalities must bow. We are strong as a whole people, we are strong with that strength that lives in the simplest and meekest personalities—that is what Tolstoy wanted to say, and he is absolutely right. Let us add that we should admire the best traits of our national ideal even in the event that it were not proven to us that simplicity, goodness, and truth can defeat every false, evil, and untrue force. If the question were one of power it would be decided according to which side wins; but simplicity, goodness, and truth are dear to us in themselves, and it is all the same whether they win or not.

All scenes of private life and personal relationships that Tolstoy presents have one and the same goal: to show how the Russian people—whose highest ideal is simplicity, goodness, and truth—suffer, rejoice, love, carry on their family and personal lives, and die. The difference so clearly shown between Kutuzov and Napoleon also exists between Pierre and Captain Rambelle when they talk about their loves and adventures, and between Bourienne and Princess Mary, and so on. The national spirit that expressed itself in the battle of Borodino manifests itself in Prince Andrew's thoughts before his death and in the spiritual and emotional development of Pierre, in the conversations of Natasha with her mother, and in the reunions of the families—in a word, in all spiritual directions of their private lives. Everywhere, at all times, there rules the spirit of simplicity, goodness, and truth, or there appears a struggle between that spirit and people deviating in other directions (or there appears to be a spiritual struggle in the people who deviate from simplicity, goodness, and truth) and sooner or later the victory of that spirit. For the first time we see the incomparable charm of the purely Russian ideal—meek, simple, infinitely tender, and at the same time unshakably hard and resolute. The tremendous canvas of Tolstoy is a worthy representation of the Russian people. It is a truly unheard of phenomenon, an epic in a contemporary form of art.

IVAN TURGENEV

Comments on War and Peace †

Since I received your letter I have had time to read Ostrovsky's play [Voevoda] and the beginning of Tolstoy's novel [War and Peace]. To my utter disappointment I must admit that this novel strikes me as being positively bad, boring, and unsuccessful. Tolstoy left his bailiwick and all his defects thus came to light. All these little tricks, cleverly noticed and pretentiously presented, the petty psychological observations that, under the pretext of truth, he plucks out from under the armpits and other dark places of his heroes—how meager is all this on the broad canvas of a historical novel! And he places this unfortunate product higher than The Cossacks! So much the worse for him, if he says sincerely. And how cold and dry all this is—how one feels the author's lack of imagination and naivety—how wearisomely a memory of the fleeting, the incidental, the unnecessary works on the reader. And what are these young ladies! Every one some sort of scrofulous, affected dame. No, this can not be; this is the way to fall, even with his talent. This is extremely painful for me, and I should like to be mistaken.

[Letter to P. Annenkov—April 13, 1868]

I received the fourth volume of Tolstoy. [Books 9 and 10] ... Much of it is excellent but you can not overlook the deformities!

† From Russkie Pisateli o Literature, ed. S. Balukhaty (Leningrad, 1939), volume I, pp. 353–355. Translated by Virginia Van Wyten. The letter to About is from the text in I. S. Turgenev, Stat'i o Pisatelyakh (Moscow, 1957), pp. 69–70. Translated by Virginia Van Wyten. Another comment by Turgenev about Tolstoy will be found quoted in the chapter from Victor Shklovsky, p. 1429.

Turgenev, as a rival novelist and firm pro-Westerner, naturally was negative about many aspects of Tolstoy's art and opinion. However, as the letter to About shows, he could also be enthusiastic.
"Oh, how terrible," said Sonya, returning from the yard chilled and frightened. I believe the whole of Moscow will burn, there's an awful glow! Natasha, do look! You can see it from the window, she said to her cousin, evidently wishing to distract her mind.

But Natasha looked at her as if not understanding what was said to her and again fixed her eyes on the corner of the stove. . . .

"Look, Natasha, how dreadfully it is burning!" said she.

"What's burning?" asked Natasha. "Oh, yes, Moscow."

And as if in order not to offend Sonya and to get rid of her, she turned her face to the window, looked out in such a way that it was evident that she could not see anything, and again settled down in her former attitude.

"But you didn't see it!"

"Yes, really I did," Natasha replied in a voice that pleased to be left in peace."

These two excerpts give a perception of the Moscow fire which is opposite to the one expected: here the stylistic insistence is evident, although extremely well motivated.

BORIS EIKHENBAUM

[The Genre of War and Peace in the Context of Russian Literary History]†

There is no obviously definitive text of War and Peace, and it is impossible to establish one. The text of War and Peace reflects changes that took place in Russian life and in Tolstoy himself during the years from 1863 to 1873. Tolstoy's original antihistoricism dictated to him a rather modest idea of a war-and-family chronicle. Then, moved by preoccupations of the time, he began to change the chronicle into a historical poem, into an epic, and to introduce a whole series of historico-philosophical views. His antihistoricism became historical nihilism, and his novel-chronicle became a new genre that grew out of combining novel-like action and historical material with philosophical reasoning. The result was a negative genre, in as much as the elements composing it were in conflict. The epoch, which pushed Tolstoy into historical questions that were the burning issues of the day, caused what had so recently attracted and inspired him, to lose value in his own eyes. Those critics who said that Tolstoy found the going hard in the last volumes and was hurrying to take leave of his characters were not wrong. During Tolstoy's struggle in the 1860's he conceived and began his novel; but as a man of this period, albeit an archaist (the one does not exclude the other, but on the contrary is indissolubly connected with it), he changed in the course of his work and became so infected by the very epoch of the 1860's that he began to feel he was a historian and a publicist teaching his contemporaries and dictating the truth to them. Not in vain did Tolstoy himself (in a letter to Pogodin, 1868) call the novel-like side of his work "rubbish." Strakhov speaking about Tolstoy's enthusiasm for historical questions, noted perceptively that "Beethoven thought his main calling was jurisprudence and was almost sorry that he had devoted so much time to music."

Tolstoy's novel was not a new genre, but the product and the destruction of earlier genres. In it, two fundamental directions of the Russian novel, originating in the 1820's and 1830's, crossed and united: the family, everyday life (landlord's life) novel and the military-historical novel. These two directions were first sketched in by Pushkin (Eugene Onegin and The Captain's Daughter). The development of the love novella and the tales of worldly life, which were passed down from Lermontov and ended with Turgenev, moved the novel in another direction; meanwhile, progressive literature of the 1840's, the Natural School, also departed from the novel. It became the specialty of second-rate authors—Bulgarin, Zagoskin, Zotov, and others—and was transformed into a boulevard genre, for a low stratum of readers. But in the 60's the novel was renewed and came to occupy the chief place in literature. That the genre was being "elevated" is clearly visible in Tolstoy's work. Dostoevsky was faced with elevating, but he elevated material that had nothing in common with the Russian novel of the 1830's. He knew it himself and very exactly and correctly characterized the literary position of Tolstoy in a letter to Strakhov in 1871: "Do you know, all that is landlord's literature which said everything that it had to say (in Lev Tolstoy, magnificently); but this height of 'landlord' literature was also the last."

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Boris Eikhenbaum (1886-1959) was one of the foremost Russian literary scholars of this century. His published works number in the hundreds. Particularly his structuralist and historico-biographical studies of Tolstoy are valuable.

1. Mikhail Pogodin (1800-75) was a conservative professor of history at the University of Moscow. He was close to the Slavophiles and published numerous political and journalistic works as well as historical studies [Editor].
The philosophical and military-theoretical materials suited Tolstoy not only ideologically but also structurally, stylistically. As he made the transition from the novel-chronicle to the epic genre, he had to introduce a new stylistic element of a higher nature than that used in family and battle scenes. This element was particularly necessary at the novel’s points of division, where a new volume or a new part began. The genre of the military-historical epic, which was clearly emerging as early as 1868 (when Books IX and X were being written), demanded Homeric digressions to serve as compositional and stylistic boundary marks, separating authorial narrative tone from the characters’ dialogue and from a simple description of events. In fact, the chief philosophical digressions in War and Peace are placed as beginnings at the points of division. Books I through VIII of the novel according to the 1868 edition, which were still linked with the original “English” genre and therefore were not in need of special stylistic divisions, do not contain any Homeric digressions. The montage of these volumes consists of simple alternation of plot lines based on an alternation of battle and family scenes. Only the pages devoted to free masonry introduce into the novel a somewhat new element, but one which is not yet connected with the author’s tone and which is only an approach to it. The first indication of digressions that prefigure the elevation of the genre are the short reflections that open the first chapter of Book VII: “The Bible legend tells us that the absence of labor—idleness—was a condition of the first man’s blessedness before his fall,” and so on. With the transition to 1812, the necessity for digression as an element of epic genre became clear, and the first part of volume two opens with a long discussion of the causes of the War of 1812 and fatalism in history. Thereby the problem of the new genre was solved. This genre is already making clear its objective demands—the need for repetition. Book X, Chapter 1, opens again with a discussion of the War of 1812 (“Napoleon began the war with Russia because he could not resist going to Dresden, . . .”). Repeating not only stylistically, but also thematically much of the first discussion, the sharp transition to further narration about the fates of the heroes (“The day after his son had left, Prince Nicholas sent for Princess Mary to come to his study”) gives the sensation of a jolt, of contact between two stylistic elements, particularly necessary in order to make the philosophical digression felt as an element of compositional, an element of genre, like the digressions of Homer in the Iliad or Goethe in Faust. Thereby a new mainspring was introduced into the novel, assuring forward movement into a large expanse. The digressions become more and more frequent and assume a more and more solemn tone, that of prophecy. Pogodin’s “historical aphorisms” are now replaced as an influence by Urusov’s mathematical concept of the continuity of motion and of the differential of history, and so on. Such a digression opens Book XI, Chapter 1: “Absolute continuity of motion is not comprehensible to the human mind.” The law of repetition that underlies the whole system of the novel forces Tolstoy to begin Book XIII with the same tone, with the well-known reflection, “Man’s mind cannot grasp the causes of events in their completeness, . . .” The stylistic identity of these two beginnings underlines their compositional role as a periodically returning repetition. This law operates until the end, intensifying its function. The first part of Book XIV begins with a reflection about the Battle of Borodino and partisan warfare and ends with a reflection about the flight of the French. The First Epilogue begins with a long digression of philosophical-historical nature (“Seven years had passed, . . .”) which is interrupted by the outcome of the action (Natasha’s marriage). Then it is taken up again and occupies the Second Epilogue, twelve entire chapters where much of what was said earlier is repeated.

An examination of the novel from this stylistic point of view convinces us that philosophical, historical digressions were introduced by Tolstoy really as elements of genre, as a sign of the epic, analogous to the digressions of the Iliad. A novel written on a rather scanty basis of historical material, filled with family episodes lacking any relation to history and the era of 1812, becomes, thanks to these digressions, a quasi-historical, even altogether historical work, not simply a novel such as those of Zotov or Zagoskin, but an epic. Genre and stylistic devices compensate for the lack of history as such. The digressions serve as a substitute for history. Against their background, even the family scenes appear to be historical.

† From Lev Tolstoy: Kniga wtoraya, 60ye gody, pp. 375-78. Translated by George Gibian.