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# Violence and Edification in 19th Century Fiction: An Analysis of the Novels of Charles Dickens and Leo Tolstoy

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**VIOLENCE AND EDIFICATION IN 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY FICTION:  
AN ANALYSIS OF THE NOVELS OF CHARLES DICKENS AND LEO TOLSTOY**

by

**Caroline Fassett**

A Thesis Submitted to the Honors Council

For Honors in the English Department

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Approved by:



Adviser: Greg Clingham



Department Chairperson: Alf Siewers

## Acknowledgements

I first and foremost must thank Professor Greg Clingham for his tireless pursuit to improve the ideas, the writing, and even the use of punctuation in my Thesis. My graduating a semester early undoubtedly heightened the difficulty of the process for the both of us, but he never once allowed me to doubt that I would fail. I've known since he invited me to accompany him to India when I was a sophomore on a collaborative research project that he would have an everlasting impact on my life, both as my professor and as my friend. It is my sincerest hope to remain in touch with him after I leave the University, and for him to not want to edit or restructure anything I have written about him in expressing my gratitude above.

I must also thank the University's Honors Program for enabling me to embark on this wonderful, excruciating, terrifying journey, and particularly Professor Rob Jacob for leading the Honors Council and Professor Fernando Blanco for serving on my defense committee. I'd especially like to extend my thanks to Professor Amy McCready, who agreed to be my Second Reader and whose instruction as one of my former professors significantly influenced this Thesis.

I'd also like to thank Professor Kat Lecky, who met with me very early in the semester despite the fact that she is on sabbatical just to tolerate me rambling about my Thesis ideas to her in acutely panicked tones. Also, thank you to Professor Michael Drexler, who too is on sabbatical but met with me when I was in the final stages of completing my Thesis and was kind enough to voice his support and interest in my project. I am so lucky to have been a student in both of your classrooms, and I will treasure my experiences with you (and with every English professor I've ever had) long after I graduate.

Of course, I must thank my parents – my mother for just always reminding me that she was proud of me, especially at arbitrary, completely unnecessary moments, and my father for being the very best writer I know, and thus for setting a bar that I will perpetually try to reach but will never meet. And I need to thank my dog Penny, who was masterful in helping me to procrastinate working on this while I was home over the summer.

I also want to thank my friends, who watched me become a bit of recluse this semester and this past summer and never once expressed any resentment of me for it. Without your continued support, I know for a fact that I could not have completed this project. I love you guys!

Lastly, I'd like to thank my twin brother. You did absolutely nothing, but I forgot to mention you in my high school yearbook write-up, so it feels necessary to mention you here now – though I know you're more likely to catch the Ebola virus than you are to read my Thesis. Also, I love you, and you are the very best person I know.

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## Abstract

This Thesis argues that violence is essential to the structures and plots of Charles Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities* and of Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, and is particularly essential to the edification, or the moral and intellectual improvement, of principal characters in these four novels. Additionally, this Thesis contends that this edification is both anticipated and reinforced by the novelists' incorporation of counterparts whose demeanor and/or narrative overtly mirror that of the principal characters.

To support this argument, I bring the theory of Thomas Carlyle into conversation with the novels of Dickens to illuminate Dickens's perceptions of heroism and hero-worship, and how these perceptions influence the plot and characters of his novels. Specifically, I argue that Dickens shapes his edified characters to align with Carlyle's delineation of sincere heroes, rejects Carlyle's belief in the boundlessness and thoughtlessness of hero-worship, and engages with his interest in the heroic psyche to effectively underscore the moral and intellectual enlightenment of both Barnaby Rudge of *Barnaby Rudge* and Sydney Carton of *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Additionally, I bring the theory of Jean-Jacques Rousseau into conversation with Tolstoy to illustrate how the relationships between society and war and between virtue and the soldierly profession function within his novels. Particularly, I argue that societal forces compel Prince Andrey Bolkonsky and Count Pierre Bezukhov of *War and Peace*, as well as Alexei Vronsky of *Anna Karenina*, to become soldiers. Additionally, I contend that Tolstoy portrays the martial profession in a virtuous light in order to foreshadow the edification of Andrey and Pierre, who are morally and intellectually improved in character after entering the world of war, as well as the non-edification of Alexei Vronsky, who eschews the war effort in order to pursue a hedonistic affair with the married Anna Karenina.

In writing this Thesis, I seek to eviscerate commonly shared notions of violence as a concept that carries solely negative connotations, or as a tool injected into novels for superficial or simplistic reasons. In rejecting these notions, I not only substantiate the complexity of the function of violence in fiction, but also the life-affirming spirit of the novels that I have chosen to analyze.



## Introduction

Although Leo Tolstoy and Charles Dickens lived in different regions of the world, the two authors led lives that were oddly similar in a number of regards. Aside from the fact that both received global acclaim and fame for their novels, both men raised an inordinate number of children (Dickens had 10 children, Tolstoy 13) and had wildly unhappy marriages. However, perhaps the most striking way in which the lives of the two men paralleled one another is that each of them once witnessed a public execution, and was greatly traumatized by the experience.

When abroad in Paris in 1857, Tolstoy attended the public decapitation of a French prisoner. The experience sickened him to his core, causing him to feel physically ill the next morning and keeping him awake for several nights. When noting his emotions in his personal journal, Tolstoy described the execution as more horrifying than the “many atrocities” he witnessed in war, and accordingly labeled war as a will-less display of passion and the public beheading as an alarmingly refined, callous homicide:

I witnessed many atrocities in the war and in the Caucasus, but I should have been less sickened to see a man torn to pieces before my eyes than I was by this perfected, elegant machine by means of which a strong, clean, healthy man was killed in an instant. In the first case there is no reasoning will, but a paroxysm of human passion; in the second, coolness to the point of refinement, homicide-with-comfort, nothing big (Troyat 175).

Tolstoy continued to argue that the execution demonstrated the immorality of the French national government, labeling human law “a farce,” and the state “a plot, designed not only to exploit but also to corrupt its citizens” (Troyat 175). Indeed, the event effectively turned Tolstoy against the entire French nation, compelling him to dismiss its citizens as having no “real value” (Troyat 176).

In early 1840, Dickens also attended a public execution on a curious whim, and, like Tolstoy, was afterwards haunted for a protracted period of time by the “sight of helplessness and agony” (Kaplan 199). In his belief, similar to Tolstoy’s, that the action signified a corrupt and unforgiving state government, Dickens sketched out an unpublished argument in which he demanded the abolition of the institution of capital punishment, citing the spectacle of the death that he witnessed as “so loathsome, pitiful, and vile...that the law appeared to be as bad as [the executed], or worse” (Kaplan 200). Accordingly, in 1846, Dickens wrote widely read letters to the *Daily News* and in 1849 to the *New York Times* in which he advocated the abolition of public executions (Kaplan 200).

Because the authors each attended the executions prior to publishing the novels examined in this paper, Dickens’s *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities* and Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, one could argue that their respective renderings of human nature in their novels engage with their traumatic experiences. Kaplan suggests that the event, at the very least, influenced the narrative of *Barnaby Rudge*, which features a hangman as a villainous character who enjoys making detailed, sociopathic soliloquies about his occupation (198). Although I cannot prove it, perhaps the execution Dickens witnessed shaped not only his first historical novel, but also his second and last; perhaps the same could be said for Tolstoy and his two masterpieces. Perhaps, in order to reconcile their disillusionment with government and affirm their faith in humanity, they connected the concept of edification – a concept which will be further discussed later in this Introduction – with violence and the suffering that it entails.

In his biography *Charles Dickens*, E.D.H. Johnson briefly analyzes the function of suffering in the novels of the nineteenth century author, arguing that suffering is experienced by “characters who are both defenseless and blameless, and whose plight, therefore, elicits a

primarily emotional response” (36). In this quotation, Johnson suggests that Dickens prefers to inflict suffering upon particularly innocent, pitiable characters in an effort to more effectively elicit the sympathy of the reader. The mentally handicapped Barnaby Rudge, the eponymous protagonist of one of Dickens’s earliest novels, surely is a character “both defenseless and blameless,” and thus whose suffering in the novel is highly pitied by any reader with a beating heart. Yet, Sydney Carton, one of the principal characters of *A Tale of Two Cities*, a novel Dickens wrote roughly 18 years after *Barnaby Rudge*, does not espouse either defenselessness or blamelessness. In fact, his suffering in the novel is entirely self-inflicted; he mourns the futility of a life that he has consciously chosen to lead, and chooses to physically suffer – sacrificing his life at the guillotine in place of another.

Indeed, not all of Dickens’s suffering characters are immaculate in their vulnerability. Perhaps more significant is not the relative innocence of the Dickensian figures who suffer, but how their suffering influences and even transforms them. As Johnson argues, evil is a force that “always darkens the world of Dickens’ fiction,” yet, the novelist himself, particularly at the beginning of his career as a writer, was more concerned with the effects rather than the roots of this “evil” (36). In this regard, Dickens was like Tolstoy, who was in turn powerfully influenced by the writings of Dickens, at a young age denoting *David Copperfield* as a literary discovery of “immense influence” on him (Troyat 57-58). One could thus reasonably argue that Dickens played a part in stimulating Tolstoy’s interest in the understanding of human suffering, and his decision to explore its depths in his two most famous (and longest) works, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. Like Dickens, the manner in which Tolstoy causes his characters to suffer in these novels illustrates his curiosity in the effects (rather than the causes) of suffering –

particularly in its power to irreparably transform the characters who most profoundly experience it.

In incorporating violence, and thus suffering, into their novels, Tolstoy and Dickens were to some extent engaging with the conventions of European romanticism, which encouraged literary narratives that moved “[f]rom desire to death via *passion*” or, as Swiss cultural historian Denis de Rougemont argued, via “suffering” (243):

[P]assion means suffering. Therefore inasmuch as our notion of love enfolds our notion of woman, it is linked with a theory of the *fruitfulness of suffering* which encourages or obscurely justifies in the recesses of the Western mind a liking for war. (de Rougemont 243)

For de Rougemont, Western writers often symbolically identified war with romance because the former functioned as an appealing way to heighten the suffering of their characters; similarly, they employed language reminiscent of war in contexts of romance to emphasize or dramatize such suffering. Indeed, de Rougemont perceived a “peculiar [connection] between a certain view of woman and the European conception of war,” and argued that this connection “has had profound consequences for morality, education, and politics” (243).

Although all of the characters examined in this Thesis are subject to extreme conditions of violence, not all characters go to war, and not all of these characters suffer in such a way that can be traced back to or linked with their romantic love for a woman. Yet, scenes featuring two of the five analyzed characters, Alexei Vronsky of *Anna Karenina* and Sydney Carton of *A Tale of Two Cities*, powerfully exemplify de Rougemont’s conception of suffering as a form of passion and – more generally – his perception of Western writers’ attunement to ideals of European romanticism, and their tendency to reach backwards to medieval traditions of courtly

love. Moreover, these characters illustrate his analysis of passion as a force which achieves “its apotheosis” in death, de Rougemont classifying death as “indeed the end of all things” (de Rougemont 260).

While not all characters’ suffering is intertwined with romantic love, in the four novels examined in this paper, all of the characters mentally and physically suffer in an ethos of both organized and unorganized violence, and are morally and intellectually altered by their experiences. The novel containing the most violence is *War and Peace*; there are 587,287 words in the English translation by Constance Garnet, and one-third of them deal with war (Briggs 46). *War and Peace* is the longest novel examined in this paper, teeming with more plots and characters than Charles Dickens’s *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities* or *Anna Karenina*. While each of these novels contain a number of scenes pertinent to this paper, *War and Peace* alone contains a scene that illustrates the paradoxical relationship between combative atmospheres and what I will call edification, an experience and trope wherein violence is a salient element in the transformation of fictional characters.

Two fictional characters who experience this transformation are Prince Andrey Bolkonsky and Count Pierre Bezukhov, who both enlist to defend Russia in the Napoleonic Wars of 1803-1815. A crucial scene in the novel features a segment of dialogue between the two soldiers and close friends that takes place in the village of Knyazkovo, where the regiment of Andrey is camped out in preparation for a battle:

‘There’s one thing I would do, if I were in power,’ he began again. ‘I wouldn’t take prisoners. What sense is there in taking prisoners? That’s chivalry. The French have destroyed my home and are coming to destroy Moscow; they have outraged and are outraging me at every second. They are my enemies, they are all criminals to my way of

thinking. And so thinks Timohin, and all the army with him. They must be put to death. Since they are my enemies, they can't be my friends, whatever they may have said at Tilsit.'

'Yes, yes,' said Pierre, looking with shining eyes at Prince Andrey. 'I entirely agree with you!'

The question that had been disturbing Pierre all that day, since the Moshaisk hill, now struck him as perfectly clear and fully solved. (Tolstoy 710)

Andrey and Pierre are well known for engaging in dialectical conversations in which neither of them can manage to agree on a single position. Yet, in the one moment in the novel in which the two friends unite before a battle in a war that will change them forever, they concur on a rather arbitrary subject: the inadvisability of taking prisoners of war.

Significantly, their shared view of taking prisoners is both ironic and anticipatory: Pierre himself is taken by the French as a prisoner of war, and not only survives the experience, but ascends from it a better man. Had Pierre and Andrey's mutual condoning of the execution of all prisoners been actualized by the French, not only would they have been in violation of European law and codes of civilized behavior, but Andrey would have lost a friend, and Pierre would never have lead a life of meaning and happiness, one shaped by his moral and intellectual improvement.

The perspectives of Andrey and Pierre mirror that of any reader beginning a novel that they know to contain scenes of organized or unorganized violence, i.e. scenes of war, riots, executions, and duels. Readers often feel compelled to dismiss these paradigms of violence as inevitably harmful and ruinous to individuals and/or society; they cannot perceive another function for violence other than to wreak havoc and destruction in the lives of the novel's

characters. In this regard, they mimic the morbidity of Andrey and Pierre, who view the sole end of war as the elimination of the enemies of Russia. As made apparent in the above dialogue, the characters do not see the point of not keeping this violence consistent in all areas of war, and thereby do not see the point of capturing and not killing soldiers. Andrey and Pierre seem to agree that the conventions by which prisoners are well treated is merely a chivalrous convention, conveniently forgetting the traditional, formal, and conventional nature of the whole institution of war in the eighteenth century.

Perhaps Tolstoy concurred with Andrey and Pierre, and thus believed that the French and the Russians should certainly not act as if they are anything more than enemies in the context of organized combat. But Tolstoy understood the legalities of war, and in his treatment of Pierre he challenges their views about prisoners on experiential grounds, because in Pierre's captivity – an experience laden with both physical and mental suffering – he undergoes a complete moral and intellectual transformation.

This is not to say that Tolstoy advocates violence as an essential path to moral or intellectual advancement, and I am not arguing that violent circumstances are fundamental in producing a radical change in human nature. Rather, I am arguing that Dickens's two historical novels and Tolstoy's two most celebrated novels incorporate violent circumstances as an element of the edification of one or more of their principal characters.

### *What is Edification?*

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines “edification” as: 1. A building up in faith and holiness of life (Cf. I. Cor. 14) (ME); 2. mental or moral improvement; instruction (1660). I expand upon this definition of ‘edification’ to distinguish (1) one’s moral improvement as a

transformation in which the character reaches a higher level of self-fulfillment and/or self-actualization than previously known to them and (2) one's intellectual improvement as a transformation in which the character achieves a holistic comprehension of their own purpose and/or the purpose of humankind.

In Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) — on which the OED is based — the definition of “edification” is illustrated by a quotation from Jeremy Taylor, the seventeenth century Anglican clergyman: “[o]ur blessed Saviour told us, that we must account for every idle word, not meaning that every word not designed for edification, or less prudent, shall be reckoned for a sin” (333). Taylor's focus on the function of language (“idle word”) in edification is echoed by the OED that cites I Corinthians, chapter 14 as illustrating the meaning of “edification”:

Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

Both Taylor and the Corinthians draw attention to the relationship of edification to speech and to a particular use of language as a mode of action and self-revelation. Their conviction is that humans evolve both morally and intellectually through movement and speech, through action and interaction. My discussion takes this nexus of ideas and values as a critical touchstone, and I seek to demonstrate how, in crafting characters who become morally and intellectually enlightened, Dickens and Tolstoy highlight both action and speech to elucidate and to reify the edification of their characters.



### *Dickens, Tolstoy, and Edification*

Although I am principally concerned with the edification of fictional characters, it is equally notable that Tolstoy and Dickens believed in the human pursuit of moral and intellectual improvement in the reality existing outside of the pages of their novels. For example, at a young age Tolstoy fashioned a list of the ‘Rules of Life,’ or “recipes for virtue” that must be emulated in order to lead a perfect life:

Every minute he stole from the [Law] Department was spent in reading an exalting discourse: ‘Gogol, Rousseau, Pushkin, Goethe’s *Faust*, Hegel...’ Since January 1847 he had been keeping a diary of his thoughts and actions, and especially of his resolutions. His *idée fixe* was to perfect his famous ‘Rules of Life.’ It seemed to him that the more clearly he defined perfection, the more chance he had of attaining it. His recipes for virtue covered whole pages. (Troyat 52-53)

Indeed, in his early years Leo Tolstoy aspired to reach the apotheosis of human perfection, otherwise known to him as a state of unquestionable goodness; as he established in the journals he kept: “The goal of my life, it is plain, is the good” (Troyat 103). He carefully considered the various paths he could take to attain this goodness, and chose one characterized by the great works of Western literature and philosophy. In fact, two of Tolstoy’s greatest inspirations were Jean-Jacques Rousseau – whose influence in Tolstoy’s life will be discussed in this paper – and Charles Dickens (Troyat 57-58).

Still, the transformative impact of Tolstoy’s application to works of the Western canon falls in comparison to that of his experiences in war. Even while devouring great works of literature, Tolstoy found himself succumbing to the temptations of Russian society, gambling and drinking

freely and frequently. Though he was intrigued by the prospect of going to war, he didn't initially believe in the Caucasian War – though he concurrently admitted to the lack of earnestness in himself, labeling himself “a good-for-nothing wretch” (Troyat 62). Yet, eager to “triumph over his bad habits,” Tolstoy enlisted in a regiment in the Caucasus, where he continued to try to improve himself, attempting to resist the urge to gamble and keeping a diary in which he numbered the personal flaws that he sought to correct (Troyat 80, 83). Tolstoy was aware of his many shortcomings, and noted in his diary his unwavering intent to stop traveling astray from the “path of virtue”:

I am excessive, vacillating, unstable, stupidly vain and aggressive, like all weaklings. I am not courageous. I am so lazy that idleness has become an ineradicable habit with me...I am honorable, that is, I love the path of virtue...and when I depart from it I am unhappy and am glad to return to it. (Troyat 116)

Desiring to make himself useful in some way, and still determined to demonstrate his commitment to goodness, Tolstoy crafted a *Plan for the Reform of the Army*, in which he criticized the current conditions of the Russian army without proposing any remedies (Troyat 123). It wasn't long before he abandoned the treatise and turned his attention to founding a new religion, jotting down in his diary the fundamental principles that would constitute his future doctrine and shape his future writings. Two of these principles were the “search for physical well-being” and for “moral perfection” (Troyat 124). Indeed, this idea of “moral perfection” is one that remained with Tolstoy throughout his life, permeating his own manner of living as well as his novels.

Tolstoy did not alone in embracing the concept of human improvement; his belief in the capability of humans to augment their own goodness and thus their overall character was a

concept that dually captivated Dickens. Yet, unlike Tolstoy, Dickens was not as invested in perfecting himself as he was in ameliorating the lowly circumstances of others so they could lead better, morally improved lives. Indeed, in the early stages of his career, Dickens was driven by an insatiable urge to create “a powerful social statement, ‘a Sledge hammer’ that would respond to the abysmal treatment of the poor” (Kaplan 175) as well as to “the care for the mentally and physically ill” (Kaplan 211). Yet, rather than taking to the streets or publishing a politicized call to action, Dickens expressed his concern for the social conditions of the poor by creating fictional characters, through which he was able to critique society. As Johnson argues, Dickens was not “a practical reformer,” but “a moralist” who tackled contemporary problems by addressing them in his novels:

As a novelist, Dickens’ concern was with characters, not principles. This is simply to say that he did not think of himself as a practical reformer, responsible for advocating specific measures to eliminate the evils he deplored, but rather as a moralist whose mission was to lay bare the origins of those evils in prevalent attitudes of heart and mind. (Johnson 45)

Still, Dickens’s keen awareness of these “evils in prevalent attitudes of heart and mind” does not signify his pessimistic view of humanity. On the contrary, Dickens’s commitment to social reform reflected his belief in human goodness; like Tolstoy, he strongly believed in the improvement of humankind. This belief is exemplified by the novelist’s ten-year commitment to rehabilitate former prostitutes, working tirelessly “as if the redemption of a small number of fallen women symbolized the potential for wider salvation” (Kaplan 228). Dickens instituted a marks system, or “a form of reward and punishment as inducement to improved behavior” for these women to follow, and circulated an *Appeal to Fallen Women*, in which he expressed his

compassion for them as well as, admittedly, his acceptance of “deeply believed stereotypes, and some minor priggishness” (Kaplan 229). Despite the chauvinism entwined in his interest in helping prostitutes, Dickens genuinely believed that his efforts could produce moral improvement: his primary objective was to have these women “be *tempted* to virtue” (Kaplan 229). His confidence in their ability to change for the better partially demonstrates his belief and interest in the concept of edification, which is illuminated in the novels examined in this Thesis (Kaplan 229).

Dickens’s novels and progressive efforts often concentrated on social rather than individual change. However, this is not to say that Dickens didn’t also believe that humans could change even if society didn’t. Indeed, when writing his annual short Christmas novels, Dickens changed their theme after 1844; partly influenced by the philosophy and social criticism of Thomas Carlyle, Dickens’s later novels emphasized “the reformation of the individual heart” rather “than of the social system” (Kaplan 180). Though Carlyle’s influence on Dickens will be further analyzed in this paper, it is worth noting now that he played a role in shaping the perspective Dickens would take when illustrating his characters’ transformations, particularly their edification in his novels.

The novels of Dickens and Tolstoy starkly diverge in style and purpose; while Dickens crafted his works with the intention of stimulating social change, Tolstoy was opposed to matters of legislation and sociology invading “the rightful territory of Art” (Troyat 190) Yet, both writers were captivated by the possibility of human improvement, which exercised a shaping influence on their novels, in all four of which violence functions as a significant component of the principal male characters’ edification.

### *Summary of Argument*

The main purpose of this Thesis is to demonstrate that violence is a central element in the structure of Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities* and in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, and in the edification of certain central characters in these novels. At crucial points, I argue that Carlyle and Rousseau become instrumental in the vision articulated by Dickens and Tolstoy. Moreover, I conclude each chapter with a section in which I examine the counterparts of each of the analyzed characters and illustrate how they function to anticipate and reinforce the principal characters' edification – or, in terms of Alexei Vronsky, his non-edification.

Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and The Heroic in History* and Rousseau's *On the Social Contract* and essay, "The State of War," exercise significant influence on Dickens and Tolstoy's narratives. Particularly, I explore the role that Carlyle and Rousseau's theories play in influencing the plot trajectory that culminates in the edification of Dickens and Tolstoy's characters. Specifically, Carlyle's notions of heroism and hero-worship function as a backdrop in both *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, and Tolstoy engages with Rousseau's notions of violence, particularly his notions of war.

In *Barnaby Rudge*, the process of edification is played out through its eponymous, slow-minded protagonist, Barnaby Rudge, who becomes an unwitting rioter in the Gordon Riots of 1780. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, edification transforms the benevolent but defeatist Sydney Carton, who sacrifices himself to the guillotine in the French Revolution, which took place in the late 1790s.

I argue that Dickens's novels engage with three components of Carlyle's text. Dickens is interested in testing Carlyle's emphasis of sincerity as the predominant feature of heroism, and

he achieves this by injecting sincerity into the principal characters of his novels. Secondly, I illustrate how Dickens brings into conversation Carlyle's advocacy of the boundless adulation of heroes by illuminating the moral and political dangers of hero-worship. Furthermore, I maintain that Dickens responds to Carlyle's privileging heroic intellect over ordinary human action by enabling the edification of his heroes and by rejecting Carlyle's concept of hero-worship.

In *War and Peace*, two principal characters experience edification following their participation in the Napoleonic Wars. The weary and war-hungry Andrei Bolkonsky fights in the wars twice and is eventually fatally wounded. The impulsive Count Pierre Bezukhov also voluntarily fights in the Napoleonic Wars, but unlike Andrei is captured by the French and ultimately survives. Finally, in *Anna Karenina*, I examine the hedonistic soldier Alexei Vronsky, who loses his interest in and then deserts the war effort to pursue an illicit affair with the married female protagonist of the novel, the title of which bears her name. Here, in contrast to the other three novels, I grapple with Alexei Vronsky's *failure* to become edified, rather than with his edification. Vronsky is important in my overall argument because his career as a soldier, and thus his career in war, is presented as a *virtue*. Thus, when Vronsky loses interest in the war effort and effectively leaves the army because of his love affair with Anna Karenina, the narrative moralizes his situation, suggesting that the love affair is an immorality from which the military could have saved Vronsky.

A question that governs my discussion of Tolstoy is: how does violence function in his novels? In Tolstoy's novels the violence of war is presented as an inevitable product of fate, and as an event wherein men cannot exercise their own will. This perspective mirrors Walter Benjamin's own view of violence, as Benjamin argues in his "Critique of Violence" that violence alone "can guarantee law," and that this form of legal violence is fundamentally similar

to “the mythical manifestation of immediate violence,” or the manifestation of the wills of the gods, not the wills of men (296). For Benjamin, legal violence is fated and forms the foundation of the working political structure.

At the same time, I argue, Tolstoy is open to the influence of Rousseau. Three aspects of his political theory influence Tolstoy’s treatment of war and his characterization in ways that prompt him to orient his central characters in relation to war and service. Tolstoy toys with Rousseau’s idea that men only become violent after entering society and become corrupted by social values and niceties. In Tolstoy’s novels, society drives certain characters to become soldiers and go to war. Additionally, Tolstoy is intrigued by Rousseau’s faith in the non-combative spirit of humankind, and his idea that ideal virtue can be cultivated in an environment similar to that of a regiment of soldiers. These ideas of Rousseau lie behind Tolstoy’s association of war, violence, society, the military, and edification in the lives of a number of principal characters.

By virtue, Rousseau means “old-fashioned pagan virtues,” like courage and frugality, rather than “fashionable” virtues such as politeness, sociability, or the Christian virtues of piety and chastity (Wootton xii). Alasdair MacIntyre explicates these “old-fashioned pagan virtues” by identifying them as Jacobin:

Liberty, fraternity and equality were not the only Jacobin virtues. Patriotism and love of family were both important: the persistent bachelor was regarded as an enemy of virtue. So was the man who failed to do useful productive work or who failed to do good work. It was regarded as a virtue to dress simply, to live in a modest dwelling, to be – of course – regular in attending one’s club and performing other civic duties, to be courageous and assiduous in the work given one to do by the revolution.” (MacIntyre 238)

Indeed, Rousseau's concept of virtue included patriotism, a man's devotion to his family, his productivity, and especially his courage. All of the hybrid associations of Rousseau's concept of virtue inspire Tolstoy's view of the military as a virtuous organization and soldiering as a virtuous profession, and these ideas all come under scrutiny in Tolstoy's novels.



## Section I: Carlyle & Dickens

In May 1840, Thomas Carlyle delivered a series of six lectures collectively entitled *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and The Heroic in History*. These lectures analyzed famous historical male figures that Carlyle defends as heroic and deserving of limitless and fervent worship. The lectures were published in 1841, and are notable for a number of contentious positions, including Carlyle's defense of violence as a means of accumulating greatness and thus establishing heroism. The 'hero' who Carlyle uses as a paradigm to endorse violence as a potential gateway to heroism is Muhammad, the father of the religion of Islam.

In order to spread Islam to other nations, Muhammad engaged in wide-ranging combat with peoples across the world, committing millions of casualties and indoctrinating the survivors in the nascent religion. Carlyle recognizes these hideous actions, as well as Muhammad's common reputation as "a scheming Impostor, a Falsehood incarnate" who believed in a religion that equated to "a mere mass of quackery and fatuity" (53). Nevertheless, Carlyle casts Muhammad as a hero and vehemently defends him for turning to warfare as a measure of propagating his religion:

I care little about the sword: I will allow a thing to struggle for itself in this world, with any sword or tongue or implement it has, or can lay hold of. We will let it preach, and pamphleteer, and fight, and to the uttermost bestir itself and do, beak and claws, whatsoever is in it; very sure that it will, in the long-run, conquer nothing which does not deserve to be conquered. (Carlyle 73)

Indeed, Carlyle cares "little about the sword," largely because he believed that those who are defeated by it are unimpressive, vulnerable individuals and therefore "deserve to be conquered."

Furthermore, Carlyle expresses his support for Muhammad, and thus his support for the hero's use of violence, because he does not see humans as directly liable or accountable for the outcomes – however horrifying they may be – of their actions. According to Carlyle, the human will operates according to its own impersonal rules; as he asserts, “Nature herself is umpire” of war, and Nature “can do no wrong” (Carlyle 73).

Charles Dickens, close friend to and avid reader of Thomas Carlyle, was dramatically influenced by Carlyle's writings throughout his life – particularly those which dealt with issues relating to poverty and social justice, as evidenced by Dickens's choice to dedicate his political novel *Hard Times* to the writer. Still, while Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History* “shifted the locus of authority from the realm of literature to the realm of politics,” it is not particularly concerned with social issues (Vanden Bossche).

Nonetheless, this Thesis argues that Carlyle influences Dickens's notions of both heroism and hero-worship, which offers an explanation as to why he edifies two of his literary characters. Indeed, Barnaby Rudge aids in toppling London as a protester in the Gordon Riots of 1780, but survives the length of the novel and emerges from it morally and intellectually improved in character. Sydney Carton, the leading character of *A Tale of Two Cities*, is similarly transformed after he sacrifices himself to the guillotine of the French revolutionaries to substantiate his passionate love for Lucie Manette. The French Revolution serves as the ideal backdrop for Carton to meet these ends, as de Rougemont declares it to have been an event in which “collective *instincts* and catastrophic *passions* were being let loose” (256).

So, how exactly does Dickens engage with Carlyle's texts? For one, both Barnaby Rudge and Sydney Carton meet Carlyle's definition of heroism, which delineates the feature of sincerity as the most vital characteristic of heroic characters. Second, Dickens's novels implicitly criticize

the concept of hero-worship, and therefore in part challenge Carlyle's adamant support of the devoted adulation of heroic figures. Moreover, in not only forming these viewpoints, but also in structuring his characters so that they partake in the experience of edification, Dickens engages with Carlyle's emphasis of the mental dexterity of heroes.

Was Dickens influenced by Carlyle's views of violence, particularly his justification of violence as a tool to promulgate and establish heroism? Once, in the wake of a global incident, Carlyle and Dickens did evidently see eye to eye on the question of the legitimacy of a leader's use of violence to maintain his power. In the mid-1800s, the writers joined a committee of defense that supported the actions of Jamaican governor Edward Eyre, who had been charged with using excessive violence to suppress an 1865 civil rebellion (Kaplan 481). Still, their mutual participation in this committee does not shine much light on whether Dickens agreed with or opposed Carlyle's defense of violence as a potential means of establishing one's heroism, particularly because Dickens analyzes the violence in his novels – which imitate and dramatize the violent nature of true historical events – through a highly critical lens.

Violence is a significant component of the plot trajectories of the edified characters in both *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities*. For Barnaby Rudge, violence is a formidable element in a journey that ends with his moral and intellectual improvement; for Sydney Carton, violence is an element that is not just formidable but also essential to reaching those same ends. Thus, although it cannot be definitively stated that Dickens supported a hero's use of violence to, like Muhammad, extend or reinforce their convictions or ideologies, his novels suggest that he believed that violence could be a significant element of the moral and intellectual improvement of heroic figures.

### Argument 1: Sincerity as Heroic

The Great Man's sincerity is of the kind he cannot speak of, is not conscious of: nay, I suppose, he is conscious rather of insincerity; for what man can walk accurately by the law of truth for one day? No, the Great Man does not boast himself sincere, far from that; perhaps does not ask himself if he is so: I would say rather, his sincerity does not depend on himself; he cannot help being sincere! (Carlyle 54)

*On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History* promotes the worship of a number of renowned and controversial male figures, two of whom are eighteenth century men who are pertinent to my argument: Napoleon Bonaparte and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Napoleon Bonaparte is a notorious French conqueror and political leader who appears in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* in a fictionalized and highly satirized form, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau is a French writer and philosopher who heavily influenced the life and novels of Tolstoy. Carlyle chooses not to discuss either figure extensively; in fact, he freely belittles both men, arguing that the actions of Bonaparte in particular largely amounted to "smoke and waste" and that the figure himself was indeed not as great as other heroic figures in his book, like Oliver Cromwell (285). Regarding Rousseau, Carlyle flatly declares that he "cannot say so much" and, among other things, castigates his egoism, excitability, and morbidity (217). Yet, Carlyle nonetheless claims that Bonaparte and Rousseau are paradigms of heroism because they retain a quality that he classifies as the "the first characteristic of all men in any heroic": "a deep, great, genuine sincerity" (54).

Carlyle identifies sincerity as the foremost virtue of all heroes, and reinforces the significance of the quality frequently throughout the text. Indeed, Carlyle's heroes are men who

imagine and retain ideas that they “believed [in] and laid to heart” with “a wild rapt earnestness,” or an ardent, unforced level of sincerity (74).

Still, Carlyle is not arguing that all individuals who are sincere are necessarily heroes. Carlyle’s sincerity is the product of the way in which he writes; he highlights sincerity in order to illustrate the wide array of truths and values that he believes should be universally admired. In asserting that sincerity is an essential quality of heroism, Carlyle is demonstrating that heroes are composed of a number of fundamentally good qualities, and hence is legitimizing their right to be worshipped. Indeed, in further detailing his understanding of heroism, Carlyle reveals that heroes are instilled with noble qualities that extend beyond that of sincerity:

[A]ll sorts of Heroes are intrinsically of the same material; that given a great soul, open to the Divine Significance of Life, then there is given a man fit to speak of this, to sing of this, to fight and work for this, in a great, victorious, enduring manner; there is given a Hero, — the outward shape of whom will depend on the time and the environment he finds himself in. (Carlyle 137)

Carlyle’s heroes are men who are universally endowed with “a great soul,” and thus are equipped to communicate their knowledge of “the Divine Significance of Life” in a manner that is “great, victorious, [and] enduring.” Still, while Carlyle’s heroic figures share these meritorious qualities, the type of hero they become differs dependent upon the time and circumstances into which they are born. Had Bonaparte and Rousseau been born in different environments or conditions, Carlyle argues that the manner in which their intrinsic “material” manifests itself, or the methods they would have taken to demonstrate their heroism, might have differed. Nonetheless, they would have retained innately heroic qualities, like that of sincerity.

Although Carlyle was not particularly enthralled with either Bonaparte or Rousseau as human beings, he could not deny their sincerity, and thus could not deny their heroism. In asking his readers to “discern withal that [Napoleon] had a certain instinctive ineradicable feeling for reality; and did base himself upon fact, so long as he had any basis,” Carlyle acknowledges that Bonaparte’s actions were sincere because he executed them in his genuine belief that he would persevere (281). Similarly, in typifying Rousseau as a hero, Carlyle emphasizes the “spark of real heavenly fire” in his heart, and – mirroring his description of Bonaparte – acknowledges “the ineradicable feeling and knowledge that this Life of ours is true” (219). In employing language like ‘real’ and ‘true,’ Carlyle is deliberately stressing the sincerity of Rousseau, and thus offering an explanation for why he cannot eschew typifying him as a hero.

As established, not only Carlyle’s works but Carlyle himself influenced Dickens in substantial ways, as Dickens was both a reader of and a personal friend to him. While it is impossible for scholars to be wholly certain of the extent of Carlyle’s influence in Dickens’s multitude of novels, one formidable theme apparent in both *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities* appears to be the product of Carlyle’s influence: sincerity, specifically its cultivation in heroic figures. The former novel, which Dickens began work on only months after Carlyle delivered the lectures that became *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History*, is especially concerned with the notion of sincerity as an essential heroic feature; the latter novel, published nearly 20 years later, is less explicit in its interest in sincerity, yet its presence in the hero remains clear.

Unlike Carlyle, in these two novels Dickens does not use sincerity to corroborate one’s heroism. Because Carlyle has already substantiated that sincerity is a prominent feature of heroism, Dickens instills the quality in his principal male characters to merely illustrate rather

than verify their heroism. He molds these characters in such a way that, as Covert phrases it, each of them “is sincere in what he thinks, what he says, and what he does” and thus is made “great.”

In short, Dickens utilizes the trait of sincerity as a form of distinction; his heroes are shaped by a clear and inarguable sense of sincerity, and his non-heroes are not.

### *Barnaby Rudge*

Roughly midway into *Barnaby Rudge*, a villainous character, Simon Tappertit, declares that “if we are not sincere, we are nothing. Nothing upon this earth” (Dickens 216). In the context of the story, this statement is steeped in irony and Dickens’s signature sardonic wit: Simon Tappertit is a target of mockery throughout the text, a boastful and arrogant young man who leads a group of scoundrels that help to wreak unmitigated havoc and destruction on London as members of the ‘No Popery’ movement, which is led by and involves insincere characters with insincere motives. For him to utter an assertion which carries such overarching meaning is as peculiar as it is comical. Yet, the statement nonetheless establishes Dickens’s ardent interest in sincerity, which is a formidable quality of the novel’s protagonist and hero, Barnaby Rudge.

Barnaby Rudge is arguably one of the most atypical heroes to appear in a Dickens novel – or any novel, for that matter. Though he is a quite strong and driven grown man, the tasks that he can accomplish are limited because he is mentally disabled. To state it most simply, Barnaby has the build and suppleness of a well-trained athlete, but the irascible spirit and stunted intellect of a child. Indeed, Gabriel Varden, a good-hearted blacksmith and one of the novel’s more virtuous characters, labels Barnaby “a jewel” in admiring how his agility, coupled with his

simplistic view of the world, allows him to come and go “with ease where we think ourselves much wiser would make a poor hand of it” (Dickens 51). Additionally, the savage and immoral Hugh, though diverging from Varden in character and in principle, shares with him a genuine appreciation of Barnaby, stating that there isn’t “a better, nor a nimbler, nor a more active man, than Barnaby Rudge” (Dickens 381). In fact, this facet of Barnaby’s character is exactly what compels Hugh to take advantage of his dim-wittedness, manipulating him into participating in the Gordon Riots, which were Anti-Catholic protests that actually took place in London in 1780 and drive the action of Dickens’s novel.

Indeed, Hugh enlists Barnaby for the egregious movement, fully aware that he lacks the mental capacity to comprehend the licentiousness of his actions, or the ignobility of the cause for which he is fighting. Yet Dickens deliberately implicates the goodly Barnaby with these deceitful men for reasons beyond his desire to increase the reader’s sympathy for the character. I believe that the author was aware that placing Barnaby in this context would plainly highlight his sincerity, and reify the significance of sincerity in the novel as a whole. For not only does Barnaby sincerely believe in the morality of the cause he supports; he also commits to it so fully and forcefully that he quickly becomes the most earnest soldier that Dickens would ever create. Indeed, Dickens is explicit in establishing Barnaby’s faith in himself and faith in a movement that is infamous for the needless destruction that it caused:

If ever man believed with his whole heart and soul that he was engaged in a just cause, and that he was bound to stand by his leader to the last, poor Barnaby believed it of himself and Lord George Gordon. (Dickens 390)

As the above passage indicates, Barnaby’s spirit and morale were significantly stimulated by his involvement in these violent efforts. Exhibiting his full intent “to stand by his leader to the last,”



Barnaby even proves himself an ideal soldier when simply guarding a post, walking “with a measured tread,” possessed with “a brave sense of duty, and determination to defend it to the last”: in short, he was “the most devoted and the blithest champion that ever maintained a post” (Dickens 418). Though Barnaby Rudge is a fool, an unparalleled simpleton who demands sympathy from the reader, his sincerity cannot be denied.

Discernibly, Dickens’s depiction of Barnaby successfully establishes his earnestness and validates the author’s interest in the theme of sincerity. Additionally, Dickens reinforces the import of sincerity by juxtaposing Barnaby with characters who are both artificial and insincere. Indeed, the author most overtly counters Barnaby with the aforementioned Hugh, yet his deep-seated disingenuousness and his construction as a counterpart to Barnaby Rudge will be further analyzed in the ‘Counterparts’ chapter at the end of this section.

Not excluding Hugh, the most disingenuous character in the novel is the devious Gashford, who is devoid of both principles and self-integrity. Though Lord George Gordon – Barnaby Rudge’s hero – is officially the highest in command in the movement responsible for the Gordon Riots, he in truth is no more than a figurehead. That is to say, while Lord George Gordon, historically speaking, was a demagogue and an advocate in high places, Dickens fictionalizes him to function as a simple-minded figurehead of the riots; in the novel, Gashford, not Gordon, is the proper leader of the Gordon Riots.

Many scenes in the novel display the power and treachery of Gashford, particularly scenes in which he actively manipulates Lord George Gordon into trusting the uprightness of the men and movement that he leads. And many seemingly insignificant moments function to accentuate his artificiality, like those in which he bites his nails (a nasty habit symbolic of his nasty character) (Dickens 350) or smiles “as if for practice” (Dickens 279). Yet the scene that best encapsulates

Gashford's insincerity is one in which another (much more likeable) character, Haredale, scolds the villain's falsity in front of Gordon and hundreds of followers of his movement:

This man...who in his boyhood was a thief, and has been from that time to this, a servile, false, and truckling knave: this man, who has crawled and crept through life, wounding the hands he licked, and biting those he fawned upon: this sycophant, who never knew what honour, truth, or courage meant...(Dickens 343)

Though Haredale attacks a number of Gashford's qualities in the above passage, it is readily apparent that he is especially critical of his disingenuousness, not only labeling him as "false" and devoid of honor and truth, but reminding him and the reader of the fickleness and dishonesty with which he had treated others, "wounding the hands he licked, and biting those he fawned upon" (Dickens 343). These condemnations reinforce sincerity as one of the predominant themes of the novel, and obligate the reader to more carefully consider what separates the bad characters from the good. If Gashford's wickedness is principally rooted in his insincerity, it makes perfect sense that Barnaby Rudge's goodness is rooted in the opposite.

### *A Tale of Two Cities*

Men who are thoroughly false and hollow, seldom try to hide those vices from themselves; and yet in the very act of avowing them, they lay claim to the virtues they feign most to despise. 'For,' they say, 'this is honesty, this is truth. All mankind are like us, but they have not the candour to avow it.' The more they affect to deny the existence of any sincerity in the world, the more they would be thought to possess it in its boldest shape; and this is an unconscious compliment to Truth on the part of these philosophers, which will turn the laugh against them to the Day of Judgment. (Dickens 184)

The above passage encapsulates Dickens's paraphrased interpretation of a book written by Lord Chesterfield, who is the favorite author of another utterly false and artificial character in *Barnaby Rudge*, Ned Chester. Notably, the passage carries a reproachful tone; Dickens precedes it with the devilish Chester's giddy declaration that Lord Chesterfield himself is a product of the Devil (Dickens 184). Nevertheless, the reader may wonder if the author was minimally inspired by the words of Chesterfield in shaping the iconic character of Sydney Carton.

Carton is not a man who attempts to "deny any sincerity in the world," or feigns to despise the virtues apparent in the lives around him; rather, he envies the morality of others, and wishes that he could better himself so that he could match them in character. Yet, a bit like Chester's convictions, Carton very clearly does not attempt to hide his own vices from himself, often reciting them to others and thus lowering himself into a self-pitying vat of despair. But it is this very act of avowing his own defects that ultimately enables him to lay claim to his own virtues, and become morally and intellectually transformed. Indeed, the emphasis Dickens places on Carton's recognition of his own shortcomings mirrors a facet of Carlyle's argument from *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History*: that "[t]he greatest of faults...is to be conscious of none." Carton is hyperaware of his deep-seated flaws and inefficiencies – for example, he asserts to his partner and friend Stryver that he is hopelessly "incorrigible" (Dickens 145) – and Dickens ties this awareness to his sincerity, ultimately crafting a character whose chief strength is the earnestness with which he acknowledges his own weaknesses.

The term 'sincere' is printed only once in the entirety of the novel, and it is far from fortuitous that it is uttered by the tale's sole heroic figure, Sydney Carton:

For you, and for any dear to you, I would do anything. If my career were of that better kind that there was any opportunity or capacity of sacrifice in it, I would embrace any

sacrifice for you and for those dear to you. Try to hold me in your mind, at some quiet times, as ardent and sincere in this one thing. (Dickens 158)

In this passage, Carton is nearing the end of a lengthy soliloquy in which he reveals his long suppressed romantic feelings for and to Lucie Manette. Yet the passage's significance surpasses its explicit role as a romantic confession: it also provides the reader with insight into Carton's virtuous character, and anticipates his heroic action of sacrificing himself for the happiness of the woman he loves. In addition, it suggests the relationship between heroism and sincerity, as Carton is begging the object of his affections to recognize the sincerity of his words and thus the sincerity of himself. Indeed, this passage marks not only the first (and sole) time that the word 'sincere' appears in the novel; it is the first instance in which the reader is made aware of the nobility and goodness that Carton represses, and which he is capable of expressing. In brief, the above dialogue captures the first moment in the novel when Sydney Carton reveals the true content of his character, and reveals it to be sincere – and thus heroic.

Following this confession, the reader begins to see Carton differently; rather than representative of a hollowed misery and a defeatist attitude, his self-loathing is indicative of his sincerity. Because of this, his forthcoming heroic deed is not necessarily anticipated by the reader, but is presented as a more logical event in the novel, one that can be justified by Carton's manifest heroism. The next time Carton visits the Manette residence, he is "not improved in habits, or in looks, or in manner" (Dickens 212). Indeed, he remains every bit as cognizant of his depraved character as he previously was, as made apparent in his exchange with Charles Darnay, a man similar to Carton in looks but different from him in every other regard:

Sydney Carton: Now, you know me; you know I am incapable of all the higher and better flights of men. If you doubt it, ask Stryver, and he'll tell you so.

Charles Darnay: I prefer to form my own opinion, without the aid of his.

Sydney Carton: Well! At any rate you know me as a dissolute dog, who has never done any good, and never will.

Charles Darnay: I don't know that you 'never will.'

Sydney Carton: But I do, and you must take my word for it. (Dickens 213)

Carton's romantic revelation is designed to dramatically alter the reader's perception of his character, but not alter the character himself. The only regard in which Carton immediately changes is that he begins to act more discreetly, Darnay observing an apparent newfound "rugged air of fidelity" about the man in seeing him at his home (Dickens 212). Only Lucie Manette, greatly saddened by the emotionally exhausting conversation between herself and Carton, is able to perceive the nobility and goodness widening within him. In ruminating upon how Carton had thrown much of himself away but still had much great character left to exhibit, Lucie mourned "how much he every day kept down and perverted" (Dickens 158). Yet, even Lucie does not suppose that the sincerity apparent in Carton is indicative of his heroic status, though this reality will be revealed and reified in truly remarkable fashion at the novel's end.

### Argument 2: Danger of Hero-Worship

In December 1861, Charles Dickens learnt of the death of Prince Albert, and in response he postponed scheduled reading performances of his novel as a show of respect to the Queen of England, Queen Victoria. Yet, within a short period of time, Dickens declared the protracted mourning of the queen to be unhealthy, especially because Prince Albert was "neither a phenomenon nor the saviour of England" but simply "the best sort of perfectly commonplace man!" (Kaplan 447-448).

From these comments, one can conclude that Dickens certainly did not fawn over the royal family, or believe that relatives to the Queen of England were any better or worthier in character because of their royal heritage. This conviction parallels the cautious attitude that Dickens adopts when considering the notion of hero-worship in both *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities*. Indeed, while these novels mirror Carlyle's rendering of the hero as a sincere figure, they dually approach Carlyle's advocacy of the ardent worship of heroic figures with a formidable amount of skepticism.

In *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History*, Carlyle defines hero-worship as "transcendent wonder; wonder for which there is no limit or measure," or, in short, to "admire without limit" (12). In clarifying this concept, Carlyle links hero-worship with an optimistic view of human nature:

And what is notable, in no time whatever can they entirely eradicate out of living men's hearts a certain altogether peculiar reverence for Great Men; genuine admiration, loyalty, adoration, however dim and perverted it may be...And to me it is very cheering to consider that no sceptical logic, or general triviality, insincerity and aridity of any Time and its influences can destroy this noble inborn loyalty and worship that is in man.

(Carlyle 17)

The above passage exhibits Carlyle's personal admiration for a person's "noble inborn loyalty" to "Great Men," an admiration that he pronounces so fully that he even embraces a "dim and perverted" type of hero-worship. Perceptibly, Carlyle does not recognize any danger inherent in venerating another man so earnestly, even pronouncing that he is cheered by the impermeability of this reverence to any sort of potential influence.

Although Dickens placed enormous trust in the judgment of Carlyle throughout his life, his novels challenge this conception of hero-worship (Kaplan 177). Unlike Carlyle, Dickens recognizes the insufficiencies of hero-worship, including the possibility that the adulated “hero” may not be heroic at all, but rather a flawed or even immoral human being. Indeed, both *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Barnaby Rudge* illustrate how the enthrallment with a figure who does not deserve to be worshipped can cause the worshipper to lose his capacity as a moral agent.

### *Barnaby Rudge*

...he felt a compelling desire to see his audience’s reaction to what he had written...Like an actor, he wanted the pleasure of spontaneous applause, the immediate confirmation of his command of other people’s feelings. (Kaplan 177)

Dickens gained international fame as one of the most renowned writers of the Victorian era, but the author’s genuine passion lay in the theater. Although Dickens only acted on the stage intermittently, he enjoyed the profession tremendously and from it learned the magnetic power of an audience’s applause and acclaim. Indeed, instilled in Dickens from his earliest days as an author was a relentless fixation on the warm and exultant reception of his readership.

Yet, while the author may have craved the worship of his readers, his novels reveal the suspicion with which he considered the concept of hero-worship. The passage below, for example, places Barnaby Rudge between men he naively views as “the most virtuous and disinterested heroes in the world,” and who are paradoxically two of the most devious characters in the novel:

Hugh poised his steady arm aloft, and clapping Barnaby on the back, bade him fear nothing. They shook hands together – poor Barnaby evidently possessed with the idea

that he was among the most virtuous and disinterested heroes in the world – and  
Gashford laughed again. (Dickens 396)

In his idiocy, poor Barnaby Rudge falsely reveres Hugh and Gashford, two of the novel's greatest villains, in his belief that they are two of the world's most benevolent and selfless heroes. This unfounded worship of two men who far from deserve it conveys Dickens's skepticism of hero-worship, an attitude that is predominantly personified in the novel not by Hugh or Gashford, but by the character of Lord George Gordon.

Dickens's Gordon is a bumbling, incompetent politician who becomes the leader of a movement that bears his name under the sway of the devious Gashford, officially his assistant but more genuinely his puppet-master. Both the dominance Gashford exercises over his own "superior" and the sheer ignorance of this superior to comprehend his comparable weakness to his "inferior" is best illustrated in a dialogue featuring the two characters:

Gashford: '...and waved your own and touched your sword; and when they cried, 'No Popery!' and you cried, 'No; not even if we wade in blood,' and they threw up their hats and cried, 'Hurrah! not even if we wade in blood; No Popery! Lord George! Down with the Papists – Vengeance on their heads' – when this was said and done, and a word from you, my lord, could raise or still tumult – ah! then I felt what greatness was indeed, and thought, When was there ever power like this of Lord George Gordon's!

Lord George Gordon: 'It's a great power. You're right. It's a great power!...But – dear Gashford – did I really say all that?'

Gashford: 'And how much more!...Ah! how much more!' (Dickens 280-282)

Not only does the above passage demonstrate Lord George Gordon's lack of heroism and susceptibility to Gashford's manipulation, but it also functions as a social commentary on the



precariousness of adulation. As Dickens demonstrates in the above passage, opting to worship and idealize others can be utterly foolish and dangerous, not only because the target of worship can be enormously flawed and thus unworthy of such praise, but also because the act of worshipping runs the risk of becoming excessively romanticized and, as a result, reinforcing the false merits of the venerated person.

Indeed, Dickens enforces these truths by informing the reader that Lord George Gordon is capable of being a good man, but his virtue becomes foiled by the unmerited adulation he receives as the leader of an immoral cause. Gordon is, like Barnaby Rudge, a fundamentally earnest character, “sincere in his violence and in his wavering”; he shares with Barnaby a sincere conviction in the uprightness of the ‘No Popery’ movement, and in his own abilities to lead it (Dickens 288). Yet, Gordon is led astray by the hazardous seduction of hero-worship, which is largely exemplified in a scene that occurs shortly before the commencement of violence in the novel, wherein Gordon first witnesses the unprecedented magnitude and morale of his followers and watches them as they all “burst into a tremendous shout...[while] the air seemed rent and shaken, as if by the discharge of cannon” upon his appearance. In response to this, he emotionally proclaims to Gashford:

I am called indeed, now. I feel and know it. I am the leader of a host. If they summoned me at this moment with one voice to lead them on to death, I'd do it. Yes, and fall first myself. (Dickens 380)

Gordon's assertion that he is “the leader of host” echoes Milton's portrayal of Satan in *Paradise Lost*, who was “cast...out from Heaven” with “his host of rebel angels” (Book 1, Stanza 1, Lines 37-38) In paralleling Gordon with Milton's Satan, Dickens is illustrating how boundless veneration can lead a man into falsely believing in the legitimacy of the applauded cause or

action – in this context the legitimacy of the ‘No Popery’ movement. Still, Gordon’s candid and sacrificial nature is appealing, his willingness to “fall first” himself signifying his potential to become a Carlyle or Dickensian brand of hero. But, what corrupts Gordon’s morality is the undue adulation he receives from his own followers and then receives again with an exaggerated flair from Gashford, for it produces in him “[a] nature prone to false enthusiasm, and the vanity of being a leader,” which Dickens labels as “the worst qualities apparent in his composition” (Dickens 288). The author thus invites the reader to recognize Gordon’s venality, and to mock the adorned heroic image of the character throughout the novel.

### *A Tale of Two Cities*

Unlike Lord George Gordon in *Barnaby Rudge*, the object of undue worship in *A Tale of Two Cities* is not a character directly involved in the violence shaping the story’s action. In fact, the character in the novel who epitomizes not only the absurdity but also the danger of venerating others is one of the book’s more seemingly insignificant characters: Jerry Cruncher, a self-identified “honest tradesman” who works for Tellson’s Bank and weaves in and out of the main action of the novel.

Jerry Cruncher reigns as his eponymous son’s “honoured parent” (Dickens 166), which is illustrated at many points in the novel, like when Young Jerry gazes at his father with “twinkling eyes...restlessly watchful of him,” as he vulgarly “bit and spat out straw” (Dickens 63). But what makes Young Jerry’s adulation of his father especially disconcerting is not merely that Cruncher is a relatively unintelligent and inconsequential man who far from merits the adoration he receives. Cruncher frequently physically and verbally abuses his wife largely because her ardent religious devotion confuses and upsets him, thus setting a toxic precedent for his son (Dickens

61). Dickens poignantly captures how powerfully Cruncher's cruel treatment of his wife impresses upon Young Jerry, who was actually "touched" when Cruncher brutally castigates his wife for failing to properly care for him (Dickens 165):

This touched Young Jerry on a tender place; who adjured his mother to perform her first duty, and, whatever else she did or neglected, above all things to lay especial stress on the discharge of that maternal function so affectingly and delicately indicated by his other parent. (Dickens 165)

Accordingly, Young Jerry's steady admiration of his father compels him to disobey the orders he had been given to go to bed on that same night. He chooses to follow his father out into the night, "[i]mpelled by a laudable ambition," to, as Dickens satirically phrases it, "study the art and mystery of his father's honest calling" (165). But, while he expected to simply spot his father fishing with some of his other adult comrades, Young Jerry instead discovers him illegally entering a cemetery and digging up a buried casket. Severely frightened after seeing his father, the grave robber, holding up the remnants of a corpse, Young Jerry immediately bolts. As he runs home, he remains traumatized to the extent that he feels the presence of the skeleton following him into the night:

He had a strong idea that the coffin he had seen was running after him; and, pictured as hopping on behind him, bolt upright, upon its narrow end, always on the point of overtaking him and hopping on at his side – perhaps taking his arm – it was a pursuer to shun. It was an inconsistent and ubiquitous fiend too, for, while it was making the whole night behind him dreadful, he darted out into the roadway to avoid dark alleys, fearful of its coming hopping out of them like a dropsical boy's-kite without tail and wings. (Dickens 167)

This episode conveys Dickens's understanding of how the moral conscience works, wherein the repressed event always eventually rises to the surface of one's mind. This "pursuer to shun" and "inconsistent and ubiquitous fiend" appears to be symbolic of more than the deceased villain of Young Jerry's imagination; these epithets dually characterize the villain present in Young Jerry's reality, a father ubiquitous in his life who both merits shunning and is himself a prolific shunner, and tends to speak to others with an "unconscious inconsistency" (Dickens 60). That Dickens has re-envisioned Cruncher as an indomitable motif connotative of death better speaks to the mistrust with which Dickens considers the notion of hero-worship than perhaps any other example or passage written in the novel.

Yet, quite strikingly, Dickens does not allow for this experience to tarnish Young Jerry's steady worshipping of his father. The following morning, in fact, Young Jerry not only regains his courage, but transforms in both disposition and outlook: he becomes "a very different Young Jerry from him of the previous night...[h]is cunning was fresh with the day, and his qualms were gone with the night" (Dickens 169). Despite the misgivings which he may have had about his father's skeleton-stealing profession only hours before, he eagerly inquires about it the next day and ultimately exclaims that he would "so like to be a resurrection-man when I'm quite growed up" (Dickens 169)!

Jerry Cruncher and his son may not be the central characters in *A Tale of Two Cities*, but their presence in the novel is not perfunctory. It works structurally and metaphorically to establish a set of values that is essential to a novel that centers on the tragic events of the French Revolution, the rendering of which is largely shaped by Carlyle's *French Revolution* (Kaplan 415), a text that elicits a "darkly tragic view of the human condition" (Rosenberg xx). Indeed, Carlyle's book, which is a fictionalized but fact-based interpretation of the French Revolution,

describes the Revolution as “the politics of aggression by ingestion” wherein “society rests on the primitive political fact ‘that *I* can devour *Thee*’” (Rosenberg xx).

It is thus all the more disturbing that Young Jerry’s resolute adulation of his father mirrors the very nature of the revolutionaries, who like Young Jerry are made to bear witness to the corruption and morbidity surrounding them. And like Young Jerry, they accept these circumstances as they are because of their irreparable faith in the leader(s) that have produced such horror. Yet for them it is a vindictive cause, rather than a vindictive man, that they choose to venerate.

### Analysis of Edification

How is Dickens’s alignment of these characters with Carlyle’s taxonomy of heroism, as well as his rejection of hero-worship, connected with the characters’ eventual edification in the novels? One explanation lies in Carlyle’s emphasis of the mental acumen of heroes, or heroes’ capacity to form great thoughts. As Covert argues, Carlyle’s conception of greatness “does not come from deeds”; heroes are born “from their thoughts, their philosophizing,” and the “new theories that they introduce into the world.” According to Carlyle, the advancement of our world today equates with the realization of the thoughts of great men:

...the modellers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain; all things we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realisation and embodiment, of Thoughts that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world. (Carlyle 3)

Indeed, Carlyle is more concerned with man’s cerebrum than with man’s strength. As Covert argues, what differentiates “Carlyle’s theory of what makes a man a great man” from the

conventional definition of greatness is that his idea of man is one who “only need express his thoughts in a good way.”

Thus, the weight Carlyle places on the mental faculty of heroes elucidates the edification of Dickens’s Carlyle-type heroes, considering that edification is an intellectual and moral transformation, or a transformation that is concentrated in the psyche and conscience. Moreover, Dickens rejects Carlyle’s support of hero-worship in his belief that human improvement should be an internalized process rather than an adoption of a mere social posture. In other words, as illustrated by the characters of Lord George Gordon and Young Jerry, Dickens believes that hero-worship can impede the edification of individuals. In the case of the former, Gordon falsely interprets the admiration he receives as evidence of his own high self-worth; in the latter, Young Jerry’s admiration for his father falsely convinces him of Cruncher’s high self-worth. In both instances, Dickens explicitly exemplifies each character’s underlying goodness to underscore hero-worship as a force that deters them from improving themselves either morally or intellectually.

In what follows, I will analyze the edification of both Barnaby Rudge and Sydney Carton in their respective novels.

### *Barnaby Rudge: The Edification of Barnaby Rudge*

The most heroic character in *Barnaby Rudge* is its eponymous protagonist. While the novel’s title admittedly hints at this heroism being made apparent at some point in the narrative, the fact that Barnaby Rudge is the champion of his own novel seems quite unprecedented from its start. The reader first encounters Barnaby as he echoes rather than attempts to alleviate the cries of a wounded man lying in the streets. Within moments it is made clear that the character is

not only somewhat incompetent in terms of his ability to help others, but is mentally handicapped, Dickens describing him as an individual whose face was “strangely lighted up by something that was *not* intellect” (35-36).

Moreover – quite opposite to Sydney Carton – Barnaby Rudge does not commit some astoundingly courageous or self-sacrificial deed that substantiates his heroism. In stark contrast, he unwittingly joins an egregious social movement and actually aids in spreading far-reaching and needless destruction to the city of London. Yet, as previously established, because the character boasts an unequivocally sincere heart and demeanor, Dickens creates him with the intention to have him serve as his novel’s Carlyle-approved hero.

Moreover, Barnaby Rudge is not just a hero, but an edified hero following his participation in the violent Gordon Riots. Yet, the question still lingers: if edification is a transformation oriented in the mind, how can a character as base and simple-minded as Barnaby Rudge experience it? Recall that in the framework of this Thesis, edification encompasses both moral and intellectual enlightenment, which can be attained both through action and through speech. Barnaby largely becomes enlightened as a result of his actions, particularly his involvement in the Gordon Riots.

The structure of the novel enables Barnaby Rudge to become intellectually transformed in that he acquires a proper understanding of his distinct purpose in the reality in which he dwells. Dickens deliberately informs the reader at the novel’s end that the character not only becomes “more rational” following the riots, but also retains “a better memory,” and, most significantly, “a greater steadiness of purpose” (Dickens 647). Yet, what precisely is this purpose?

Throughout the novel, Barnaby is plagued by a persistent anxiety to make himself useful to others, especially to his mother. As a participant in the Gordon Riots, for example, Barnaby mistakenly believes that his mother would be overflowing with pride at the sight of her son marching in the protests:

‘Wouldn’t it make her glad to see me at the head of this large show? She’d cry for joy, I know she would. Where *can* she be? She never sees me at my best, and what do I care to be gay and fine if *she’s* not by?’ (Dickens 384)

Yet, what Barnaby isn’t fully aware of during the riots is that he already serves a substantial purpose in his mother’s life. He is a character defined by the indefatigable happiness and joy he receives from the most mundane facets of life: “in every tree, and plant, and flower, in every bird, and beast, and tiny insect whom a breath of summer wind laid low upon the ground, he had delight” (Dickens 367). And, as articulated best by Dickens, Barnaby’s “delight was hers”: his mother felt unparalleled levels of gratitude for her “poor light-hearted idiot” of a son, who “filled her breast with thankfulness and love” (367).

Following the riots, Barnaby ascertains his purpose more clearly. He learns that he can please his mother by simply continuing to be a source of tireless happiness in her life, and by eternally remaining by her side. And in this he is successful, for by the novel’s end there has yet to be known an individual “with a blither or more happy soul than Barnaby,” and, moreover, “though he was free to ramble where he would” he chose to never leave his mother, and “was for evermore her stay and comfort” (Dickens 648). While Barnaby is a highly naïve and innocent character, both the protagonist’s essential happiness and his conscious decision to remain by his mother’s side represent the “greater steadiness of purpose” that he attains following the violence of the riots.



Barnaby's happiness also demonstrates his moral transformation, wherein his self-contentment is heightened following the paradoxically calamitous violence he experiences and to which he contributes. Despite being traumatized by the event, which comes to ineluctably symbolize a "dark cloud," that "overhung his previous existence," Barnaby manages to remain perfectly cheerful in nature (Dickens 647):

He was not in the less happy for this [dark cloud], for his love of freedom and interest in all that moved or grew, or had its being in the elements, remained to him unimpaired.

(Dickens 647-648)

Barnaby's uninhibited contentment extends beyond accomplishing Dickens's desire for a sentimental end to his novel; it suggests that the author desires to reassure the reader that, despite the unmitigated violence and savagery that Barnaby had endured through his own actions, he emerges at the other end of it self-actualized and self-fulfilled. He emerges from it a man transformed entirely and incorrigibly for the better. Indeed, he emerges from it with an edified soul.

#### *A Tale of Two Cities: The Edification of Sydney Carton*

On the surface, Sydney Carton and Barnaby Rudge have close to nothing in common. Sydney Carton is a man whose strength is largely derived from his brutal awareness of his personal defects; Barnaby Rudge is oppositely empowered by his inability to acknowledge any of his individual flaws, which thereby enables him to view himself and the world through an irreparably optimistic lens. Yet, both characters share similar trajectories in their respective narratives, wherein each of them craves to be guided by some exceptional purpose and ultimately discover it as well as a keener sense of self-fulfillment.

It's important to note that, while the edification of Sydney Carton is most overtly demonstrated by his actions – particularly the actions he takes to accomplish one overarching, sacrificial action – his speech equally produces and illustrates his improved state.

Indeed, Sydney Carton undergoes both a moral and an intellectual transformation, discovering a purpose that is ultimately fulfilled and attaining an unprecedented level of self-satisfaction in pursuing it. Still, this ambition is unavoidably fatal, as de Rougemont foresaw it to be in asserting that the passion of characters inspired by the European romantic period requires “death to be the end of all things”: Carton arranges for his own execution by the French revolutionaries in place of Charles Darnay, the husband of his beloved Lucie Manette (Dickens 260). Regardless of the heart-rending ends of his pursuit, Carton pursues it nonetheless, and dies an edified man.

Carton's edification becomes apparent to the reader rather quickly, for after he settles upon sacrificing himself to the guillotine the characteristics previously labeled as Carton's faults and follies are suddenly rewritten as his strengths and assets. For example, earlier in the novel Charles Darnay had identified Carton as “a problem of carelessness and recklessness” (Dickens 214). Yet, while executing his self-sacrificing scheme, Carton addresses Mr. Barsad, an English turncoat of the French revolutionaries, and actually exploits his “negligent recklessness of manner” to augment “his quickness and skill,” and thus to deftly blackmail Barsad into granting him entrance into the prison cell where Darnay is being detained until his execution (Dickens 307). In this transaction, one of Carton's greatest faults has been transmuted into an asset that ironically enables Carton to save Darnay's life.

Furthermore, shortly after the scene mentioned above, Carton exchanges a few words with Jarvis Lorry, a dear friend of the Manettes, which exemplify his changed but constant manner:

‘You are a good man and a true friend,’ said Carton, in an altered voice. ‘Forgive me if I notice that you are affected. I could not see my father weep, and sit by, careless. And I could not respect your sorrow more, if you were my father. You are free from that misfortune however.’

Though he said the last words, with a slip into his usual manner, there was a true feeling and respect both in his tone and in his touch, that Mr. Lorry, who had never seen the better side of him, was wholly unprepared for. He gave him his hand, and Carton gently pressed it. (Dickens 318)

Demonstrably, though Carton has revealed a softer and more compassionate side of himself when addressing Lorry in the above passage, Dickens implores the reader to understand that these are characteristics that had always been present, but which Carton had chosen to suppress. Indeed, as Lorry deciphers in Carton’s self-pitying language, Carton still preserves “his usual manner,” signifying that his transformation has not wholly eradicated his former demeanor, but merely uplifted it.

Importantly, what is responsible for Carton’s improvement is the acquisition of a greater degree of self-contentment. For example, when lounging in the Manette residence for the last time before he would sacrifice himself, there was “an air about him that was not all of pity – that had a flush of pride in it” (Dickens 345). Furthermore, when Carton finally enters the jail cell of Charles Darnay, preparing to drug the man in order to save his life and lose his own, Dickens

writes that “[t]here was something so bright and remarkable in his look that, for the first moment, [Darnay] misdoubted him to be an apparition of his own imagining” (Dickens 360).

Carton is morally transformed in that he acquires a profound sense of self-fulfillment as a direct result of his decision to sacrifice himself. That Sydney Carton sacrifices himself in his love for Lucie Manette illustrates de Rougemont’s characterization of a “hero who serves for love” as “the primary and invariable motif from which erotic fantasy will always start” (249):

It is a sensuality transformed into the craving for self-sacrifice, into the desire of the male...to suffer and to bleed for his lady-love. The expression and the satisfaction of desire, from having both seemed unattainable, were transmuted into something loftier -- a heroic action undertaken for the sake of love. Death thereupon became the only alternative to the fulfillment of desire, and in any event release seemed absurd. (de Rougemont 249)

In his knowledge of the unattainability of Lucie’s love, Carton turns to the best alternative that he could perceive: death. And, in choosing death, Carton’s passionate desire is indeed “transmuted into something loftier,” which is corroborated by the level of self-fulfillment that he attains and that had never before seemed feasible to him.

Yet, Carton is also intellectually transformed in the sense that he attains a purpose that he is fixedly resolved to meet, the purpose being to forego his own life in order to save that of Charles Darnay. Indeed, Dickens is quite explicit in equating Carton’s self-sacrificial desire with the pursuit of his true purpose. In his transformed state, Carton begins walking with “a braced purpose in the arm and kind of inspiration in the eyes,” symbolizing the purpose towards which he was moving and to which he was eagerly looking (Dickens 308). Likewise, Carton openly lingers upon the painful notion of a pointless or misused life in various discussions after he has internally decided to secure his own execution. When urging Doctor Manette to continue pressing those who

had sentenced his son-in-law to death to allow him to evade execution, Carton mutters: “[o]f little worth as life is when we misuse it, it is worth that effort” (Dickens 346). Moreover, in the passage below, Carton asks Lorry a poignant and hypothetical question touching upon what he interprets as the basic foundations of a life well lived:

If you could say, with truth, to your own solitary heart, to-night, ‘I have secured myself the love and attachment, the gratitude or respect, of no human creature; I have won myself a tender place in no regard; I have done nothing good or serviceable to be remembered by’; your seventy-eight years would be seventy-eight heavy curses; would they not? (Dickens 320)

Indeed, Carton’s question validates his perception of a life devoid of both the natural empathy of others and a steady willingness to benevolently serve others as not only meaningless but blasphemous. Yet, while Lorry answers in the affirmative, what he is unaware of is that Carton has discovered a means through which he can secure these ends that are essential to leading a life worth living. And, in completing these ends, Carton posthumously reassures the reader of the lack of remorse he feels for choosing to pursue a fatalistic purpose rather than to continue to live a futile life, for Carton dies with “the peacefullest face...ever beheld” at the guillotine (Dickens 385), and utters the iconic final words of the novel:

It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known. (Dickens 386)

## Counterparts

The novels are full of twins and opposites, but in the crisis of conversion the mirror is offered to the character, in effective mime and therapy, as well as to the reader in irony and generalization. The mime is simple, but its implications are many. (Hardy 32)

There are several reasons why authors may choose to create a character who largely functions to parallel or complement another character. As discussed by Hardy, who analyzes the utility of the many counterparts interwoven into Dickens's novels, these counterparts or "twins and opposites" often create a sentient mirror for a character, compelling them to come to terms with their own ontology "in effective mime and therapy." Additionally, Hardy also argues that Dickens creates counterparts in an effort to stimulate a particular, often ironic, reaction from the reader.

While Dickens incorporates counterparts into both *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, it is impossible to definitively state each and every motive he had to shape these mimetic characters. Yet, I argue that, in the context of these two novels, Dickens creates characters who counter Barnaby Rudge and Sydney Carton to at least partially anticipate and reinforce these characters' ultimate edification. In other words, these counterparts, in both direct and indirect ways, function to emphasize and/or advance a trajectory that results in the principal characters' edification.

### *Barnaby Rudge*

After completing an initial reading of *Barnaby Rudge*, it may seem altogether unfathomable that any other character in the novel serves as a counterpart to its eponymous protagonist, who is unmatched in spirit and sheer energy. Yet, from close examination, one can

decipher small yet significant similarities between Barnaby Rudge and Hugh, a lowly and deceitful worker at the Maypole Inn who manipulates Barnaby into participating in the Gordon Riots.

Though in attitude the two characters starkly oppose one another, they share peculiar similarities in terms of their mental capacities. Although Barnaby is the sole of the two characters who is mentally handicapped, both are intriguingly described as deficient in “imagination” by the same man, John Willet:

[Barnaby] wants imagination...that’s what he wants. (Dickens 92)

...there an’t a better man in England that is that Maypole Hugh yonder...but if that chap had only a little imagination, sir—. (Dickens 229)

Furthermore, both Hugh and Barnaby Rudge act as pawns in the novel; characters superior to or more knowledgeable than they use them in order to advance their own nefarious actions and goals. Although at first glance it may not appear that Hugh is a pawn at all, given that he – unlike Barnaby – is much more cognizant of the consequences and gravity of his actions, he in fact consciously welcomes the prospect of being used, telling Ned Chester that he can use him as he likes, for he has little concern for “what the end is” or what the ramifications of his actions are (Dickens 319).

But, counterparts do not necessarily exclusively share similar qualities; they can also act as each other’s complements or equivalents by differing from one another in critical ways. Indeed, in complete contrast to Barnaby, Hugh is immune to the persuasive appeal of hero-worship, and actually reconstructs the whole concept of heroism in viewing it from his own farcical perspective. This is best exemplified in his decision to become one of Simon Tappertit’s followers, another man he tells can “[m]ake anything [he] like[s]” of him (Dickens 309):

The bare fact of being patronized by a great man whom he could have crushed with one hand, appeared in his eyes so eccentric and humorous, that a kind of ferocious merriment gained the mastery over him, and quite subdued his brutal nature. (Dickens 309)

What exactly is achieved in creating such a parallel for the protagonist? As the above passage demonstrates, counterparts can augment a specific truth or meaning in the novel that is dually expressed through the character that they parallel. The absurd and facetious way in which Hugh views the adulation of a hero or “great man” perfectly matches the uneasiness with hero-worship that Dickens implicitly expresses throughout the novel. Although Barnaby’s accidental affiliation with the riots and his steadfast faith in Lord George Gordon surely makes such an uneasiness known to the reader, Hugh’s evisceration of the notion of heroism undoubtedly reinforces it.

Moreover, in intriguing ways, Hugh’s existence in the novel actually reifies and enhances the morality and eventual edification of Barnaby Rudge. This is most powerfully seen in a dialogue exchanged between the two characters when they are imprisoned together following the riots, awaiting their impending execution:

‘What cheer, Barnaby? Don’t be downcast, lad...’

‘Bless you,’ cried Barnaby, stepping lightly towards him, ‘I’m not frightened, Hugh. I’m quite happy. I wouldn’t desire to live now, if they’d let me. Look at me! Am I afraid to die? Will they see *me* tremble?’

Hugh gazed for a moment at his face, on which there was a strange, unearthly smile; and at his eye, which sparkled brightly...(Dickens 606)

The above passage does not capture the edification of Barnaby Rudge, but it certainly mirrors and foresees it in that it illustrates a profound degree of self-fulfillment and contentment in



Barnaby, as well as his astoundingly astute understanding of the perilous fate awaiting him, which he embraces as a purpose he is destined to fulfill.

Barnaby's lofty soul is heightened by the presence of Hugh in the jail cell. For, like Barnaby, Hugh is not intimidated by death in the slightest; in fact, earlier in the novel he proclaims that he's "never been sorry for a man's death" in all of his life (Dickens 172). Yet, what overtly separates the two characters is the indefatigable devotion of Barnaby to a movement he still believes to be righteous in character; as he stood there in the prison cell he still wore the 'No Popery' movement's insignia: a hat adorned with broken peacock feathers (Dickens 606). According to Vanden Bossche, Carlyle emphasizes sincerity as that which makes a hero great, for sincerity "has a touch of godliness in it." If ever such a godliness was revealed in the heart of a sincere character, it was in that of Barnaby, who stood in a prison cell sporting luminescent eyes and "a strange, unearthly smile" as he awaited an untimely death – from which he is ultimately pardoned. Instead of meeting his death, Barnaby is brought "home in triumph," and instead met with the jubilant faces of scores of London citizens who "cheered with all their might" for the preserved life of the heroic figure (Dickens 624).

### *A Tale of Two Cities*

Unlike the characters of Barnaby Rudge and Hugh, Sydney Carton and Charles Darnay do not demand meticulous analysis in order to substantiate that they function as counterparts in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Dickens constructs the two characters to be nearly identical in appearance, as their interchangeability enables the final event of the novel – wherein Carton surreptitiously substitutes himself to be executed in Darnay's place – to occur realistically. Yet, there are

numerous other objectives Dickens sought to accomplish in paralleling these two characters, including Darnay's function to both embolden and anticipate Carton's edification.

The reader first meets Sydney Carton and Charles Darnay in the same scene of the novel, where they appropriately sit opposite one another in an English courtroom. All attention in the room is fixed on Darnay, a prisoner standing trial for treason, while Carton is all but physically absent as his counsel, subsisting in a determined sort of silence as the trial proceeds, his eyes concentrated on "the ceiling of the court" (Dickens 79). Yet, while Carton's "careless and slovenly if not debauched" appearance outwardly suggests his uselessness in the trial, it is he who ultimately wins the case in favor of his defendant and thus prevents Darnay's execution. To accomplish this, he simply hands his co-counsel, Stryver, a small, handwritten note suggesting that he confuse the witness he is cross-examining by establishing the physical likeness between Carton and Darnay:

Stryver: 'Did you ever see anybody very like the prisoner?'

Not so like (the witness said) as that he could be mistaken.

Stryver: 'Look well upon that gentleman, my learned friend there,' pointing to him who had tossed the paper over, 'and then look well upon the prisoner. How say you? Are they very like each other?'

Allowing for my learned friend's appearance being careless and slovenly if not debauched, they were sufficiently like each other to surprise, not only the witness, but everybody present, when they were thus brought into comparison. (Dickens 79)

Indeed, in making not only the witness but also the entire courtroom aware of the uncanny resemblance that Carton bears to Darnay, the confidence of the witness is smashed "like a crockery vessel," his part of the case reduced "to useless lumber" (Dickens 79). In effect, Carton

upsets the prosecution's case for unquestionably identifying Darnay as the spy spotted by the authorities, winning the freedom of his counterpart.

Yet the significance of this event in the novel extends far beyond its advancement of the plot, wherein Darnay is set free and Carton is established as the aesthetic double who sets him free. For one, the scene concurrently signifies the repressed utility of Carton and foreshadows the novel's conclusive event, in which Carton yet again saves the life of Darnay by sacrificing himself in his place – an action he accomplishes as a result of their interchangeable appearances. Simultaneously, it shapes the dynamic between Carton and Darnay that persists throughout the novel – Carton as an introverted, impudent figure so certain of his own inconsequentiality that he enables his co-counsel to articulate the pivotal discovery that he himself had made, and Darnay as the singular object of attention and concern, who exclusively wins widespread congratulations for “his escape from death” (Dickens 84). Indeed, this stilted dichotomy between the role each character plays in the same reality – Carton that of the loser, and Darnay that of the victor – is one that ultimately drives Carton to once again save the life of Darnay, but this time by ending his own.

Still, the presence of Charles Darnay in the novel does not simply foreshadow the eventual edification of Carton; it also incites it. Throughout the novel, Dickens clearly distinguishes Darnay as a man who actualizes all that Carton is not, and all that he aspires to be. A man of French genealogy, Darnay becomes “a higher teacher of the French language,” and is prized throughout the English community due to both the scarcity of individuals in his profession and the earnest diligence with which he educated his students:

As a tutor, whose attainments made the student's way unusually pleasant and profitable, and as an elegant translator who brought something to his work besides mere dictionary

knowledge, Darnay became known and encouraged...with great perseverance and untiring industry, he prospered. (Dickens 135)

By contrast, Carton receives no fulfillment or personal satisfaction from his occupation as a lawyer. After attending to Stryver's papers for a number of consecutive, long nights, Carton evidently feels "none the livelier and none the soberer for so much application," and adversely deteriorates to "a very damaged condition" as a result of drinking copious amounts of wine as he works (Dickens 143).

Moreover, at the previously discussed trial, Darnay wins the unreserved sympathy and tears of Lucie Manette, a witness brought to the stand who gazed at the accused man with a "pity" that broke through her face of "earnest youth and beauty" (Dickens 75). Following the trial, Carton is not hesitant to express to Darnay how powerfully he envied him for being the recipient of such affections, asking him in a tone laced with sardonicism and bitterness if it was worth being tried for one's life "to be the object of such sympathy and compassion" (Dickens 88).

Yet, Carton's total lack of self-gratification extends beyond the indifferent attitude with which he approaches his job and his solitary life; as previously established, Carton does not feel a hint of contentment in any aspect of his life. Thus, in helping to acquit Darnay of his treasonous charges and perilous fate, he cannot relate to the relief the character must feel to re-acquire his life:

As to me, the greatest desire I have is to forget that I belong to [the world]. It has no good in it for me - except wine like this - nor I for it. So we are not much alike in that particular. Indeed, I begin to think we are not much alike in any particular, you and I. (Dickens 88)

Carton's (however inebriated) deliberateness in differentiating himself from Darnay demonstrates each character's function in the novel more effectively than any other passage in the novel. For embedded in Carton's words is not only the ardent longing to be similar to Darnay in respects separate from their corporeal identities, but a deeply ironic conviction that the most formidable difference between himself and Darnay is in their respective kinds of attachment to the world. For, as the reader will see, it is the depreciation with which Carton views the world that allows him to exit it so courageously, and hence become a man of even greater import than his counterpart.

So, indeed, Carton is correct in that he is not alike at all to Darnay, and that he never will be – a truth reinforced by his last encounter with Darnay, in which Carton has changed so dramatically that he is not initially recognized by the man who bears his resemblance, Darnay misdoubting him as “an apparition of his own imagining” (Dickens 360). But, without the presence of Darnay in the novel, Carton is not only deprived of an ample means through which he can reify his own self-worth; he is deprived of a sentient being who, in epitomizing all of his potential, vigorously encourages him to not only actualize it, but to surpass it. That he does indeed surpass it is substantiated by a scene that perfectly encapsulates the resentment with which Carton views himself as a result of meeting Darnay:

A good reason for taking to a man, that he shows you what you have fallen away from, and what you might have been! Change places with him, and would you have been looked at by those blue eyes as he was, and commiserated by that agitated face as he was? (Dickens 90)

As the reader learns, when Carton does physically change places with Darnay, he in fact does not receive the same magnitude of sympathy from Lucie as her future husband had when put on trial

for treason. He earns a great deal more, coming to “hold a sanctuary” in the heart of Lucie and draw tears from her on each anniversary of his death. He becomes an edified being of greater worth than that which he ever sought, a man held more sacred in the souls of Darnay and Lucie Manette than they held each other (Dickens 386).

## Section II: Rousseau & Tolstoy

When historians analyze the origins of the French Revolution, they often begin with Rousseau's *On the Social Contract*. Although the work is not necessarily a call to action, it presents the "fundamental claim that human beings are naturally good" and thus "that consequently there is no excuse for injustice" (Wootton xxix). This philosophy inspired the French revolutionaries to assemble, overthrow the French monarchy, and issue a decade of social and political upheaval and turmoil throughout the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Although the French Revolution drives the plot of Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, Rousseau played a more substantial role in the life of Tolstoy than he did Dickens. Rousseau's influence permeated Tolstoy's life early on, Tolstoy in his youth listing both *Confessions* and *Emile* on a list denoting his most important literary discoveries (Troyat 57-58). French thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau was the writer who "would influence him more than any other throughout his life," and the writer he even admitted to loving and being "greatly indebted to" in 1905 (Briggs 17). Indeed, in 1901, Tolstoy donned a medallion around his neck with a picture of Rousseau tucked within it in place of a cross necklace (Briggs 17). Tolstoy's attachment to Rousseau was "more than admiration or sympathy"; it was an "instant, enduring, ineradicable affinity" (Briggs 17).

Briggs asserts that the ideas of Rousseau "have many parallels in Tolstoy's work," most of which were "instinctive" to him or natural for him to incorporate (17). In this paper I seek to engage with Briggs's argument by claiming that Tolstoy brings into conversation ideas articulated in Rousseau's *On the Social Contract*, as well as those in his essay entitled "The State of War," in the narrative of his two great novels. In part, I will elucidate how the experience of war edifies Prince Andrey Bolkonsky and Count Pierre Bezukhov of *War and Peace* and why,

by contrast, soldier Alexei Vronsky of *Anna Karenina* abandons the war effort and descends into a state of dissipation.

Three of Rousseau's concepts are pertinent to my argument. First, I propose that Tolstoy engages with Rousseau's argument that humans become warlike only after entering society and becoming susceptible to its corrosion by underscoring society as a primary factor in his characters' decision to resort to violence and/or become soldiers. Additionally, I propose that Tolstoy establishes violence as an element of his characters' moral and intellectual enlightenment, or edification, as a result of the manner in which Rousseau appeals to his admiration of the military profession. Particularly, Tolstoy engages with both Rousseau's reasoning that men are incapable of causing war, and his portrayal of an ideal virtuous environment as analogous in nature to a military environment.

In summary, in this portion of the paper I intend to analyze these aspects of Rousseau's theory in order to show how they are exemplified in the narratives of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.

### Argument 1: Influence of Society

In his essay entitled "The State of War," Rousseau argues that individuals are not of a naturally adversarial character, but are conditioned to act combatively only after falling prey to the influence of society (258):

Man is naturally peaceable and timid; at the slightest danger his first movement is to flee; he becomes warlike only by dint of habit and experience...It is only after having entered into society with another man that he decides to attack someone else, and it is only after having been a citizen that he becomes a soldier. (Rousseau 258)



In Rousseau's view, men are taught rather than inherently inclined to enter into combat with others, for the natural state of humans is one of both peace and timidity. Yet, in what regard does society trigger individuals to become combative? According to Rousseau, societies function as "a refuge" from the lawfulness of the state, where men form into "great bodies" and are "left to their own impulses" to "produce shocks...more terrible in proportion as their mass exceeds that of individuals" (259-260). Tolstoy appears to toy with this interpretation of society as that which instigates individuals to "attack someone else" in framing his characters' perception of war in both *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*. In both of his novels, Tolstoy portrays society as a force that catalyzes his characters to become both violent in nature and commit themselves to the war effort.

### *War and Peace*

Two male characters who are dissimilar in almost all respects, including their looks and dispositions, frame the backbone of *War and Peace*: Prince Andrey Nikolayevich Bolkonsky and Count Pyotr Kirillovitch Bezukhov, or Pierre for short.

In being introduced to Andrey, the reader is immediately struck by how apathetically he views both Russian society and his pregnant wife:

Obviously all the people in the drawing-room were familiar figures to him, and more than that, he was unmistakably so sick of them that even to look at them and listen to them was a weariness to him. Of all the wearisome faces that face of his pretty wife seemed to bore him most. With a grimace that distorted his handsome face he turned away from most. (Tolstoy 12)

The predominant reason why Andrey departs for war is because of the torpor he feels for an environment dominated by his elitist peers, an environment of which his wife is both a paradigm and a product. As he articulates to Pierre, a man who he singularly addresses with pleasantries and sweetness because of his similar nonconformity to this artificial environment (Tolstoy 12), he's going to war both because he feels he has to and because, as he states, "the life I lead here, this life is – not to my taste!" (Tolstoy 22). Discernibly, Andrey's social position and his wish to abandon society altogether have compelled him to go to war; on both accounts, society is the leading factor which has driven him to combat.

Unlike Andrey, Pierre does not imagine himself entering war at the novel's start, yet societal forces propel him into violence nonetheless. Although Pierre, similar to Andrey, longs for a change of environment, particularly one which discourages and corrects his "dissipated mode of life" (Tolstoy 26), his principles conflict with what he perceives as the purpose of the war:

The war is now against Napoleon. If it were for freedom, I could have understood it, I would have been the first to go into the army; but to help England and Austria against the greatest man in the world – that's not right. (Tolstoy 21)

Yet, Pierre's disinclination to go to war does not cleanse his life of violence, for Pierre challenges another man, Dolohov, to a duel whilst Andrey is at war. It would be erroneous to equate this duel with Rousseau's notion of war, as Rousseau accounts for the prevalence of violence in a social atmosphere, and differentiates such violence from what occurs within a genuine state of war. Indeed, a duel falls within Rousseau's realm of social violence, and is an action that he typifies as "an accidental and particular war that can arise between two or more individuals" (258):

...and as for duels, provocations, cartels, calls to one-on-one combat, aside from the fact that they were an illegitimate and barbarous abuse of an entirely military constitutions, they did not result in a genuine state of war but in a private affair that was resolved within a limited time and place, such that, for a second fight to take place, a fresh call to arms was needed. (Rousseau 258)

Although Rousseau argues that a man retains an inherent conviction or “natural law” that prohibits him from sacrificing “the life of his fellowman except to preserve his own,” he does recognize and strongly condemn the existence of quarrels in the civil state (258). Thus, in inciting a duel with Dolohov, Pierre is in fact still conforming to Rousseau’s interpretation of the civil state rather than entering into the true state of war to which Andrey committed himself. Still, it is the interference of members of society that entices Pierre to become violent within the civil state, and the morally dubious nature of society that incites him to enlist as a soldier in the Napoleonic Wars.

Early in the novel, Pierre inherits the estate of his deceased father and suddenly becomes an object of interest to the upper hierarchy of Moscow, each day receiving “a great number of persons, who previously had not cared to be aware of his existence, but now would have been hurt and offended if he had not chosen to see them” (Tolstoy 181). Within a short period of time he weds Ellen, a woman widely considered the most beautiful of Russian society, but also a woman who is dissolute and wicked. That their marriage would be one saturated in dishonor, nastiness, and unnaturalness (Tolstoy 187) was apparent to Pierre before they even became engaged, yet – much like Tolstoy’s perception of the events of war – he felt it was inevitable, that it “had to be so and could not have been otherwise” (Tolstoy 192). Tolstoy is meticulous in foreshadowing the immorality of their marriage; once Pierre and Ellen have become officially

betrothed, the first comment Ellen makes to her fiancé is a request for him to remove his spectacles (192). The absence of Pierre's spectacles symbolizes his loss of moral vision, and thus his descent into a blinded life of depravity and vice, which reaches its climax in the form of a duel instigated by societal gossip.

Only months into his marriage, Pierre begins hearing murmurings of an affair between Ellen and a man named Dolohov. He even receives an anonymously written letter about the matter that references how blind he has become despite the spectacles that he dons:

This unsettled question that worried him was due to the hints dropped by the princess, his cousin, at Moscow in regard to Dolohov's close intimacy with his wife, and to an anonymous letter he had received that morning, which, with the vile jocoseness peculiar to all anonymous letters, had said that he didn't seem to see clearly through his spectacles, and that his wife's connection with Dolohov was a secret from no one but himself. (Tolstoy 281)

Losing his temper at dinner one night, Pierre unthinkingly challenges Dolohov to a duel, and Dolohov willingly accepts. This duel is depicted as both senseless and foolish, particularly because Pierre is internally aware of the guilt of his wife and the "guiltlessness of Dolohov," and even admits to Nesvitsky, his official second at the duel, that "it was awfully stupid" of him to lose his temper the way that he had (Tolstoy 283). Yet the duel is carried out nonetheless, Dolohov departing from it seriously but not fatally wounded, and Pierre free of any injury (Tolstoy 283).

Although Pierre bitterly regrets this action, he emerges from it chastened and prepared to alter his life for the better. He cares little for how the duel has disgraced his name and honor, labeling such a disgrace "relative" and "apart from [him]self" (Tolstoy 287). What

predominantly concerns him is the dissolute qualities of Ellen, and “his most insincere love to her”; this concern provides him with the strength to separate from his wife, leaving her the revenue from his Russian estate and traveling alone to Petersburg (Tolstoy 288-289). Although Pierre’s confrontation with Ellen is verbally abusive and almost escalates into another violent scene, it does not escalate into another senseless catastrophe: Pierre is wearing his spectacles as the scene unfolds, signifying the replenishment of his moral sight (Tolstoy 288). And, indeed, free of his wife’s poisonous influence, Pierre does begin to lead an uplifted life, and to remember “how good it was to be virtuous” (Tolstoy 321):

He reviewed his vicious past, and with an ecstatic sense of beginning anew, pictured to himself a blissful, irreproachfully virtuous future, which seemed to him easy of attainment. It seemed to him that he been vicious, simply because he had accidentally forgotten how good it was to be virtuous. (Tolstoy 321)

This passage marks Pierre’s rediscovery of happiness, and eagerness to reinstitute morality into his life. In searching for virtue and pursuing this “path of regeneration” (Tolstoy 323), Pierre becomes a devotee of the Free Masonry religion, which in his view creates “quite a different Pierre, better than the one...in Petersburg” (Tolstoy 344).

Although one may interpret Pierre’s transformation as the beginning stages of his edification, Pierre in fact has not yet become either intellectually enlightened, in which he would attain a more profound understanding of his own purpose and that of humankind, or morally enlightened, in which he would experience self-fulfillment or self-actualization. In truth, Pierre is “living just the same old life in different surroundings” (Tolstoy 347), and he still frequently feels himself “dissatisfied” and impatient “to do something for humanity” (Tolstoy 492). Still, the duel and progression of Pierre’s character in the novel is significant in that it parallels and

anticipates his eventual edification. For, similar to how he becomes a more content and goodly man following a notably violent incident, Pierre achieves edification only after enduring an epoch of pain and suffering brought upon by the violent circumstances of war.

It must be re-emphasized that this duel is triggered by the influence of Moscow society, a realm brimming with individuals who insatiably crave both gossip and drama. Although one can argue that the violence is more directly triggered by Ellen's adultery, her infidelity to Pierre is purposefully left ambiguous in the novel, Ellen informing her husband that "it's not many a wife who with a husband like you wouldn't have taken a lover, but I haven't done it" (Tolstoy 289). Indeed, without the interference of society, composed of people hungry to inform Pierre of matters of no concern to anyone but himself and his wife, the duel would never have occurred.

Eventually, Pierre imitates Andrey by choosing to go to war in order to escape from what Rousseau characterizes as "the great bodies" of society "left to their own impulses" (259-260). Driving home through Bolotny Square, Pierre stumbles upon a crowd "intently riveted" by the flogging of two Frenchmen accused of being spies (Tolstoy 690). Sickened by both the vulgarity and the spectacle of the deed, Pierre is suddenly overcome by "a sense of the urgent necessity of taking some step and making some sacrifice," and becomes happily determined to depart for war as soon as possible and forego the privileges of his life as a Russian aristocrat (Tolstoy 691):

He was conscious now of a glad sense that all that constitutes the happiness of life, comfort, wealth, even life itself, were all dust and ashes, which it was a joy to fling away in comparison with something else. (Tolstoy 691)

Both the duel and Pierre's delayed decision to enlist in the military illustrate the causal relationship Tolstoy constructs between society and violence. It is the coaxing and intrusive nature of society that encourages Pierre to prompt a duel with Dolohov, and the superficiality of

society displayed at Bolotny Square – a superficiality that encompasses “everything conventional, artificial, [and] human” that Pierre comes to loathe – that drives him to war (Tolstoy 821). Thus, it is far from coincidental that society is the predominant instigator of violence in Tolstoy’s epic novel and that Rousseau, one of his greatest influences, pinpoints society as a force which encourages man “to attack someone else” or become combative in character (258).

### *Anna Karenina*

According to de Rougemont, for “some time before and after” 1490, Italian culture had “no small share of military glory” (251). With the growth of this glory, the art of war transformed to express an “admirably humane” culture, or “a profound ‘civilization,’”; indeed, wars effectually became civilized “to the full extent that such a paradoxical statement can be true” (de Rougemont 252). This notion that the military and warfare not only became normalized but widely venerated in 15<sup>th</sup> century Western culture mirrors the nature of the Russian culture captured in the pages of *War and Peace* and especially *Anna Karenina*, the narratives of which are by an aristocratic society that similarly lauded the military as an honorable career and war as emulative of a humane and advanced culture.

In detailing the upbringing of Vronsky, Tolstoy emphasizes how strongly society influences his decision to pursue a career as a soldier. In fact, in first describing Vronsky in the novel, Tolstoy details him as someone who “had never known family life” (Tolstoy 56). From his birth, Alexei Vronsky is instead raised within social establishments that condition him to imagine himself as a soldier of great promise. Indeed, Vronsky “barely remembered his father” because he, as a child, was educated in the Corps of Pages, a military academy in imperial Russia

(Tolstoy 56). Moreover, following his graduation, Vronsky is quickly seduced by the society of Petersburg, which offered him a “luxurious and coarse life” (Tolstoy 56):

Leaving school as a very young and brilliant officer, he immediately fell in with the ways of rich Petersburg military men. Although he occasionally went into Petersburg society, all his amorous interests lay outside it. (Tolstoy 56)

This passage exemplifies Vronsky’s fervent acceptance as “a young and brilliant officer” by Petersburg society. Additionally, it demonstrates that Vronsky is initially effective in separating his romantic interests from his own professional ambitions, “all his amorous interests” lying outside of the Petersburg society in which he prospers. Thus, the passage anticipates a time in which Vronsky will fail to isolate his romantic life from his life as a soldier, and how this failure will result in the collapse of his burgeoning military career – and thus his identity.

Stephan Arkadyich, an acquaintance of Vronsky’s, describes him in a manner that closely mirrors the characterization above in that it intertwines his identity with the society of Petersburg and emphasizes the prestige of his position in the military:

Vronsky...is one of the finest examples of the gilded youth of Petersburg. I got to know him in Tver, when I was in government service there and he came for the conscription. Terribly rich, handsome, big connections, an imperial aide-de-camp, and with all – a very sweet, nice fellow. And more than just a nice fellow. As I’ve come to know him here, he’s both cultivated and very intelligent. He’s a man who will go far. (Tolstoy 39)

Vronsky’s community of peers certainly has high expectations of him that stem from their recognition of his status as a soldier. Furthermore, Vronsky’s peers likely admire him because he lives the fullness of his life with the same submissive and courteous disposition that a typical soldier reserves exclusively for combat. For example, although he admits to not respecting or



even loving his mother, “by his upbringing, he could not imagine to himself any other relation” to her “than one obedient and deferential in the highest degree” (Tolstoy 61).

Vronsky’s martial character is further exemplified by a code of conduct he unwaveringly obeys. This code mirrors the medieval construction of a “system of forms and rules for the vehement emotions” that enables individuals to mitigate their passions, remain chivalrous and escape barbarity (de Rougemont 246). Vronsky shapes each facet of his life to conform to an unwritten code of aristocratic personal and societal conduct that “unquestionably defined everything that ought and ought not to be done” (Tolstoy 304):

The code embraced a very small circle of conditions, but the rules were unquestionable and, never going outside that circle, Vronsky never hesitated a moment in doing what ought to be done. These rules determined unquestionably that a card-sharper must be paid but a tailor need not be, that one should not lie to men but may lie to women, that it is wrong to deceive anyone but one may deceive a husband, that it is wrong to pardon insults but one may give insults, and so on. (Tolstoy 304-305)

Although these rules appear to be both contradictory and hypocritical, Vronsky’s consistent obedience to them keeps his life stable and predictable, and allows him to feel “at ease” and “hold his head high” (Tolstoy 305). Yet, once he begins to pursue an affair with the married Anna Karenina, Vronsky concludes that his code of conduct “did not fully define all circumstances,” and, moreover, that his relations with Anna lacked any semblance of “a guiding thread” (Tolstoy 305).

Vronsky’s willingness to compromise his code of conduct exemplifies his willingness to compromise his relationship with society. For, while Vronsky is convinced that all of his peers “might know or suspect” his affair with Anna, he is determined to silence their gossip or

judgments and “make them respect the non-existent honour of the woman he loved” (Tolstoy 305). The implications of this statement are clear: Vronsky is willing to resort to violence in a context separate from the battlefield in order to preserve his illicit relationship with Anna. In fact, he is openly impatient to be challenged to a duel by Anna’s husband, the cuckolded Alexei Alexandrovitch; it is a potential event that that Vronsky has prepared himself for “from the first moment” (Tolstoy 305):

‘What a position!’ [Vronsky] thought. ‘If he’d fight, if he’s stand up for his honour, I’d be able to act, to express my feelings; but this weakness or meanness...He puts me in the position of a deceiver, which is something I never wanted and do not want to be.’

(Tolstoy 356)

In retaining the chivalric view that duels produced “the triumph of one personality over another,” Vronsky desires to compromise his code of conduct, and hence compromise his own mode of existence (de Rougemont 252). The code of conduct that he has adhered to since birth epitomizes the martial demeanor that has been crafted and cultivated by the influence of society rather than by the influence of his family. Accordingly, his decision to renege on this code in order to retain his unlawful relationship with Anna begins to obscure the fragile line dividing war from society, as Vronsky becomes eager to dispose of a man whom he solely considers as “superfluous and interfering” rather than as a fully fleshed human being (Tolstoy 305). Indeed, Vronsky’s increasing inability to be obsequious to his own established rules demonstrates the division growing within himself between the promising soldier and the hedonistic lover. Because his militaristic ambitions “struggled with his love,” Vronsky soon resolves to sacrifice them for the happiness in his immoral love, a decision that irreparably alters himself and his relationship with society (Tolstoy 306). Evidently, Vronsky’s passion for Anna is too strong to be attenuated

by the code of conduct that he follows, a code he ironically followed to moderate his lustful passions (de Rougemont 246).

Similar to Andrey and Pierre, societal influence compels Vronsky to become a soldier and go to war. Yet, unlike Andrey and Pierre, Vronsky replaces his commitment to the military with a corrupt and depraved sexual passion for a married woman. This is why Vronsky does not achieve edification by the novel's end; on the contrary, he withers into a shadow of his former self, a man intent on going to war with the sole purpose of meeting his own death (Tolstoy 780).

### Argument 2: Natural Peacefulness of Humankind

In *War and Peace*, Tolstoy argues on behalf of the absence of volition in persons who either fight in or attempt to control the course of war, mirroring Benjamin's view of legal violence as a force born alone from "the uncertain, ambiguous sphere of fate" (295). Tolstoy establishes this argument through both his characters and through a narrative interwoven into the novel in which Tolstoy speaks directly to the reader. An example of the former is encompassed by a scene in which Andrey admires the leadership of his martial superior, General Kutuzov:

He knows that there is something stronger and more important than his will – that is the inevitable march of events, and he can see them, can grasp their significance, and, seeing their significance, can abstain from meddling, from following his own will, and aiming at something else. (Tolstoy 684)

Andrey feels protected under the direction of General Kutuzov not because he perceives him as a military genius, but because he understands that there are no military geniuses and can ascertain that Kutuzov understands this as well. Moreover, Andrey's view of Kutuzov as an effective

general is not derived from how adept the general is at strategizing victories or in delegating martial duties; rather, Andrey believes Kutuzov is effective because he comprehends the inevitability of the “march of events” of war, and thus chooses to “abstain from meddling [and] following his own will” (Tolstoy 684). Instead of viewing war from an intellectual perspective, General Kutuzov maintains “the capacity for the calm contemplation of the course of events,” and in this he retains confidence that all to unfold before him “would be as it should be” (Tolstoy 684).

In an important narrative in *War and Peace*, Tolstoy presents his personal theories and misgivings about the origins and events of war in arguing that the events of war are predestined. Perhaps the passage which best encapsulates this viewpoint is one in which he uses the metaphor of an apple falling from a tree to represent the unfolding of war:

When an apple has ripened and falls, why does it fall? Because of its attraction to the earth, because its stalk withers, because it is dried by the sun, because it grows heavier, because the wind shakes it, or because the boy standing below wants to eat it?

Nothing is the cause. All this is only the coincidence of conditions in which all vital organic and elemental events occur. And the botanist who finds that the apple falls because the cellular tissue decays and so forth is equally right with the child who stands under the tree and says the apple fell because he wanted to eat it and prayed for it. Equally right or wrong is he who says that Napoleon went to Moscow because he wanted to, and perished because Alexander desired his destruction, and he who says that an undermined hill weighing a million tons fell because the last navy struck it for the last time with his mattock. In historic events the so-called great men are labels giving names to events, and like labels they have but the smallest connection with the event itself.

Every act of theirs, which appears to them an act of their own will, is in an historical sense involuntary and is related to the whole course of history and predestined from eternity.

(Tolstoy 556)

In equating the absence of a cause that can explain an action in nature to the absence of any logic that can explain the events of war, Tolstoy is adopting overtly histrionic and exaggeratory language to reinforce his view of war. Indeed, the absurdity of Tolstoy's language demonstrates how dramatically and emphatically he rejects both the volition of humankind and the existence of heroism or greatness as potential rationalizations for the trajectory of history.

While this position is a significant point of focus throughout *War and Peace*, it is also briefly established in *Anna Karenina*, despite the fact that the novel did not contain one scene of war:

Sergei Ivanovich: On the one hand, war is such a beastly, cruel and terrible thing that no man, to say nothing of a Christian, can personally take upon himself the responsibility for starting a war. That can only be done by a government, which is called to it and is inevitably drawn into war. On the other hand, according to both science and common sense, in state matters, especially the matter of war, citizens renounce their personal will.

(Tolstoy 805)

In the above passage, Sergei Ivanovich, an academic philosopher in the novel and half-brother to Levin, dismisses the notion that men can start war by arguing that it is “a beastly, cruel and terrible thing” that is singularly initiated by government. He continues to argue that individuals “renounce their personal will” in war, and government officials do the same when handling matters related to war.

Although each of the analyzed passages has similarly illustrated Tolstoy's rejection of men's will in atmospheres of war, Ivanovich's sentiments in particular are highly reminiscent of those of Rousseau. Like Tolstoy, Rousseau negates the idea that humans can exercise their will in actions that initiate or occur within war, stating in his *Social Contract* that "[i]t is the relationship between things and not that between men that brings about war" (161). This contention is recited and more intimately explained by Rousseau in "The State of War," wherein he delineates these "things" as "states," in asserting that "there is no war between men; there is war only between states" (260).

Rousseau's refusal to fault men for the incidence or atrocities of war suggests his ardent belief in the intrinsic goodness of humankind. Indeed, Rousseau emphasizes that individuals' possession of the "natural law" repudiates the argument that the human species was "formed merely for mutual self-destruction" (258):

If the natural law were inscribed only in human reason, it would hardly be capable of directing most of our actions, but it is also engraved in the heart of man in indelible characters, and it is there that it speaks to him more forcefully than do all the precepts of the philosophers; it is there that it cries out to him that he is not allowed to sacrifice the life of his fellowman except to preserve his own, and there that it makes him feel horror at spilling human blood not in anger, even when he finds himself obliged to do so.

(Rousseau 258)

As this passage demonstrates, Rousseau holds an optimistic view of humankind. He asserts that any man's inclination to kill another man is strictly derived from his own sense of self-preservation, and that, even in killing someone else in order to save their own life, individuals cannot escape from their conscience. Indeed, Rousseau does not attribute the cause, happenings,

or consequences of war to individuals, but to states, which are driven by “a manifest inclination to destroy the enemy state” or at least to diminish its relative power (264). Moreover, these states are not composed of individuals; they are inhabited by “public persons,” who Rousseau argues deviate entirely from “real men” (265):

If there never were and never could be a genuine war between individuals, who then are those between whom it takes place and who can really call themselves enemies? I answer that they are public persons. And what is a public person? I answer that it is that moral being that is called “sovereign,” which has been given its existence by the social pact, and all of whose wills bear the name ‘laws.’ (Rousseau 264)

Not only does Rousseau equate a public person to a moral being, but he also describes this moral being as one who can be reduced to “a construction of reason” (265). In underscoring both the morality and rationality of the initiators of war, Rousseau is effectively legitimizing war and defending those involved in its occurrence.

In contrast to Rousseau, Tolstoy’s texts do not legitimize but re-evaluate the concept of war by questioning what historians presume to know about it; still, a component of Tolstoy’s re-evaluation of war is the role played by individuals in initiating or controlling it, which is a perspective that engages with Rousseau’s refusal to fault men as those who cause war. This refusal is grounded in Rousseau’s steadfast belief in the natural non-combativeness of humankind. It is thus reasonable to argue that Tolstoy not only engages with Rousseau’s argument in support of the innocence of man despite his affiliation with war when shaping his belief in the absence of their will in war, but also engages with him in drawing a direct connection between inherent goodness and participants in war. This heightens the credibility of

my argument that Tolstoy draws a connection between virtue and the soldierly profession, which will be discussed in the following section.

### **Argument 3: Portrayal of Virtuous Environments**

In the later stages of his life, Tolstoy's writings become more deeply rooted in his fervent pacifism and anarchistic principles (Briggs 95). Yet, as a young and inexperienced man, Tolstoy followed his brother to the Caucasus to join the army, marking the period in his life in which he began to write, and particularly to write about war (Troyat 106). Tolstoy is notable for incorporating his own intellectual qualities into the characters he crafts, and Pierre and Andrey are no exception; as established in the Introduction of this paper, Tolstoy, like Pierre, first refused to go to war in his shared belief that its cause was not earnest enough (Troyat 62). Yet, like both Pierre and Andrey, Tolstoy opts to go to war partially because he sought an escape from the "debased world" in which he dwelt and for which he "felt nothing but contempt" (Troyat 72).

Nonetheless, as a young soldier of 24, Tolstoy, in a diary that he kept with him in the regiment, censured war as "so unjust and ugly that all who wage it must try to stifle the voice of conscience within themselves" (Troyat 101). Tolstoy often yearned for solitude while at war, and was prone to blaming the other soldiers for "turning him aside from the path of goodness" on the occasions that he broke his personal code of conduct.

All the while, however, Tolstoy couldn't repress the evident admiration he felt for the soldiers whom he fought beside. For example, Tolstoy was impressed with his comrades' apparent apathy to war to the extent that he cast soldiers in an otherworldly mold in his autobiographical story entitled *The Raid* (Troyat 103):



Joking, laughter, gay banter, gambling and drink expressed a universal indifference to the approaching danger. It was as though it were impossible to imagine that some of these men would not be coming back by this same road – it was as though all of them had already left the world long ago. (Troyat 81)

Tolstoy's veneration for his fellow soldiers is reinforced by his personal desire to emulate their fearlessness; he indicates in a diary entry dated on February 5, 1852 that he was not afraid of pain, but of not "being able to bear pain and death with dignity" (Troyat 91). As his time throughout the Caucasian War progresses, Tolstoy continued to emphasize how much he appreciated the fortitude of the men surrounding him, even pronouncing that he was thankful to God for granting him the opportunity to be a soldier:

...there were one hundred and sixty wounded who refused to leave the ranks. These are noble days!...I have not had the good fortune to see action yet myself, but I thank God for allowing me to be with these people and live through this glorious time! (Troyat 120)

Indeed, Tolstoy developed a great respect for the men in his regiment, admitting in a journal entry written in January 1854 that he had "unconsciously come to love the people he was about to leave, as well as the country" (Troyat 107). Still, Tolstoy was a man of two minds, retaining an attitude wrought with capriciousness and volatility. Less than two months before expressing the gratitude he felt for enlisting in the Caucasian War and befriending other soldiers, he wrote in a letter to his brother Sergei that his regiment consisted of "stupid officers, stupid conversations" (Troyat 106).

Still, although Tolstoy was at times critical of the other men in his regiment, following the war he felt nothing but pride in his epoch as a soldier. This pride was demonstrated by the

attachment he felt to his uniform, and the struggles he underwent when readjusting to the banalities of civilian life:

And, proud of his uniform, it annoyed him to see ‘drunken, nasty’ civilians trying to carry on like ‘true officers.’ For, although he claimed to loathe the military profession, he felt nothing but contempt for the townsmen in their dress suits who had never spent a night on sentry duty or seen a comrade shot down at their side. An inferior race, with stuffed paunches and sensitive behinds, pen-pushers, intriguers, clods. (Troyat 134-135)

Indeed, regardless of the at times fickle attitude he expressed in his letters and diary entries, Tolstoy did not question the honor of the soldierly profession in the same way that he questioned the honor of war. In returning home, he felt a constant sense of self-satisfaction when reflecting on his time in the Caucasus; in fact, during a short period in which he stayed with his friend and fellow novelist Ivan Turgenev, he brought with him his sword “decorated with the ribbon of the Order of St. Anne” to adorn the front hall of the home, despite the fact that it was a home where he did not live (Troyat 135). He recited war stories when courting Sonya, his future wife (Troyat 253), and when married to her he felt nostalgic for his life in war, envisioning himself “taking up arms to put down the rebels” who were leading an insurrection in Poland (Troyat 282). He even wrote to Russian poet and former soldier Afansay Fet to suggest that they might “have to take down [their] swords from their rusty nails” in response to “the Polish business” (Troyat 282).

Tolstoy’s respect for the soldierly profession would reveal itself in powerful ways in several of his writings, particularly in *War and Peace*. We see this, for example, in his treatment of greatness as a concept indicative of worldly success and military conquest in the novel. To most readers, it is obvious that Tolstoy criticizes greatness or heroism as a myth used to romanticize Bonaparte and to justify the outcomes of war:

When it is impossible to stretch the elastic thread of historical argument further, when an action is plainly opposed to what all humanity is agreed in calling right and justice, the historians take refuge in the conception of greatness. Greatness would appear to exclude all possibility of applying standards of right and wrong. For the great man – nothing is wrong. There is no atrocity which could be made a ground for blaming a great man...And it never enters any one's head that to admit a greatness, immeasurable by the rule of right and wrong, is but to accept one's own nothingness and immeasurable littleness. (Tolstoy 974)

Demonstrably, Tolstoy believes that it is greatly mistaken for historians to use the concept of greatness to rationalize the events of war, arguing that one's substantiation of greatness is compounded by the fact that, in order to establish this view, they must overlook any sense of right and wrong. However, Tolstoy does not altogether deny that greatness can exist within contexts of war. At one point in *War and Peace*, Tolstoy calls the character General Kutuzov “a truly great figure,” with an “extraordinary intuition into the significance of contemporary events,” rooted in “the purity and fervour of patriotic feeling in his heart” (Tolstoy 990).

Moreover, as established, an overarching argument in *War and Peace* is concerned with the powerlessness of the human will within great historical events, such as war; Tolstoy argues that the subject of history is not, as many believe it to be, “the will of man” but rather the “representation of its action” (Tolstoy 1100); in other words, every act performed by soldiers are not their own but “related to the whole course of history and predestined from eternity” (Tolstoy 556). Yet, in exploring the question of the utility of soldiers, Tolstoy contends that “[t]he spirit of the army is the factor which multiplied by the mass gives the product of the force” (942):

The strategic principle, that armies should act in masses on the offensive, and should break up into smaller groups for retreat, unconsciously confirms the truth that the force of an army depends on its spirit. (Tolstoy 942)

Tolstoy's belief that soldiers' morale can decisively change the course of war is further expressed in a passage in the novel between Andrey and another soldier, wherein Andrey passionately discounts all factors of an army that are commonly thought to be salient to the outcome of war – with the exception of human feeling:

‘...Success never has depended and never will depend on position, on arms, nor even on numbers; and least of all, on position.’

‘On what then?’

‘On the feeling that is in me and him,’ he indicated Timohin, ‘and every soldier.’

(Tolstoy 709)

Although Tolstoy rejects the notion that humans can exercise their own will in war, he does not reject the powerful role that the spiritedness of the army as a whole can play in affecting the outcome of war. The careful reader may wonder why Tolstoy even bothers to discuss the significance of the spirit of an army in a novel concerned with soldiers' vain and irrational tendency to adulate or actualize 'heroic' acts. An answer potentially lies in his admiration for the military profession.

The above passages from *War and Peace* illustrate that, while Tolstoy rejects both that a man's greatness can be used to explain or justify the events of war and the presence of men's will in war, he nonetheless believes that men can be great, and that they can powerfully influence whether or not victory is realized in war. In both his portrayal of General Kutuzov and of the Russian army as a whole, Tolstoy underscores a positive attribute of the army and consequently

demonstrates that – when considering certain facets of war within the fictional world that he creates – his writing is potentially guided by his implicit admiration for the soldierly profession.

Of course, not all of the soldiers that Tolstoy creates and places in his novels are of a commendable character. For example, Petritsky in *Anna Karenina* is a young lieutenant who is “of no especially high nobility, not only not rich but in debt all around, always drunk towards evening, and often ending up in the guard house for various funny and dirty episodes” (Tolstoy 112). But, I do not argue that Tolstoy’s esteem for the martial profession means that he is convinced that all those who become soldiers undergo a moral and/or intellectual transformation. Rather, I simply argue that he believes that the soldierly occupation offers a respectable choice whereby a man can attain a state of virtue, in the Rousseauian sense that I use the term ‘virtue’ in this paper. That choice thus represents a route that anticipates rather than causes the edification of characters when they immerse themselves in war.

How does Rousseau define ‘virtue’? As established in the Introduction of this paper, Rousseau’s virtues matched those of old-fashioned pagans, or individuals who didn’t worship dominant religions in the world. These virtues include productivity and civic engagement, as well as patriotism and courage. These latter two characteristics, coupled with the manner in which Rousseau legitimizes warfare, likely explains why Rousseau paints an environment which cultivates virtue as analogous in nature to that of a regiment of soldiers. This environment is summarized in Wootton’s Introduction to a text that includes both Rousseau’s *On the Social Contract* and “The State of War”:

Large, anonymous, unequal societies will foster vice, not virtue, because they will encourage competition, not a sense of solidarity. Rousseau thus offers a sociology of virtue. He also presents us with a profoundly uncomfortable conclusion: to achieve what

we are truly capable of as human beings, we need to live in a society characterized by proximity, equality, and similarity; if we do not live in such a society then we will always be at odds with ourselves. (Wootton, xxii)

As a political philosopher, Rousseau was interested in constructing an environment where human beings could not only meet their full potential, but also lead virtuous lives. As Wootton summarizes in the above paragraph, for Rousseau, such a community is structured in *On the Social Contract* and consists of several characteristics, like those of proximity and equality. First, in terms of proximity, Rousseau envisions “a very small state” where citizens can easily “gather together and...easily know all the others” (199). Second, a community of equality is distinguished by uniformity “in ranks and fortunes, without which equality in rights and authority cannot subsist for long” (199). According to Wootton, the last feature of this ideal environment is similarity, meaning that all citizens dwell in conditions that are analogous in their minimalism; to illustrate this point, he references Rousseau’s position that everyone should strive to live off of basic essentials as effectively as they can, or lead identical lives of “little or no luxury,” for added belongings or goods function as an obstacle “to the proliferation of public business and thorny discussions” (199). Although Wootton identifies this facet of Rousseau’s model society as an example of similarity, it also embodies Rousseau’s notion of simplicity, particularly because Rousseau specifically labels it as “a great simplicity of mores” (199).

Approximately one-third of *War and Peace* takes place during times of war, specifically the Napoleonic Wars of 1803 to 1815 (Briggs 43). Among these many scenes of war, one in particular exemplifies Rousseau’s virtuous society, wherein morality is encouraged and reinforced through the instilment of qualities of proximity, equality, and similarity in the

environment. The below passage captures the atmosphere of the Napoleonic Wars that exists separate of the battlefield:

Here in the regiment everything was clear and simple. The whole world was divided into two unequal parts: one our Pavlograd regiment, and the other – all the remainder. And with all that great remainder one had no concern. In the regiment everything was well known: this man was a lieutenant, that one a captain; this was a good fellow and that one was not; but most of all, every one was a comrade...and when occasion came, to do what was clear and distinct, defined and commanded; and all would be well. (Tolstoy 359)

The above passage describes the regiment of soldier Nikolay Rostov and parallels Rousseau's vision of an ideal society, one "that could not subsist without virtue" (199). Tolstoy's environment is simple, not just because everything in the division is depicted as being "clear and simple," but also because it lacks the complexity affiliated with the luxurious lifestyle he led within the realm of society; as detailed immediately prior to the start of the passage in the novel, here in the regiment, a regiment characterized by minimalist conditions and straightforward duties, "was none of all that confusion of the free world" where Rostov "did not know his proper place, and made mistakes in exercising free choice" (Tolstoy 359). Moreover, although the rankings of "lieutenant" and "captain" prevents men from being equivalent in terms of status, Tolstoy states that, "most of all, every one was a comrade," equalizing the soldiers in character and in brotherhood. Finally, the environment is overtly characterized by its proximity; while the reader can assume that regiments entail confined conditions, Tolstoy emphasizes the restricted space of the area by dividing it from "the remainder" of the whole world, labeling the war and everything that exists outside of it as "two unequal parts." It's easy for the reader to deduce to

what scale they are unequal – to what small degree the size of this regiment stands in comparison to the size of the rest of the entire world.

Tolstoy's description of the environment of a troop of soldiers between battles imitates Rousseau's vision of a virtuous society, and thus connects an environment of war to an atmosphere that nurtures the virtues that Rousseau believed should be adopted by all of humankind. Accordingly, it makes complete sense that, in this scene, Tolstoy accentuates the desire to improve, or the desire for virtue, felt by Nikolay Rostov. For example, Tolstoy details how the regimental life provides Rostov with "a sense of pleasure and relief" specifically because it serves as a place of atonement for him:

...he had resolved not to serve as before, but to atone for his fault by good conduct, and by being a thoroughly good soldier and officer, that is a good man, a task so difficult in the *world*, but so possible in the regiment. (Tolstoy 359)

The "fault" to which Rostov is referring is that of his formidable gambling debts, which have compounded his family's financial difficulties. While he is atoning for this calamity by requesting his parents send him eight thousand roubles less a year than per usual, he is also expressing his repentance by attempting to improve his character – by striving to become not only a better soldier and officer, but also a better man. Indeed, Rostov desires to enhance his own goodness, and, in alignment with Rousseau's philosophy, feels certain that this can only be achieved within an atmosphere of unquestionable virtue, within the military.

Moreover, Rostov declares his regiment to be "a home as unchangeably dear and precious as [his] parental home"; although he at first felt "himself deprived of liberty and nailed down within one narrow, unchangeable framework" he is eventually overcome with "a feeling of peace and of moral support" in this paradoxically violent environment (Tolstoy 359). In other



words, Rostov feels both morally heightened and freer in an atmosphere in which his freedom is ironically limited. Intriguingly, Nikolay's internal peace mirrors the disposition of Tolstoy when he donned his cadet's uniform for the first time, as "he felt curiously happy 'not to be free anymore'" (Troyat 90).

I have argued that, although Tolstoy viewed war with ambivalence throughout his life, his writings convey an implicit appreciation of the soldierly profession. This appreciation likely elucidates why the author valorizes not war itself but the individuals and relationships within it, and accordingly paints a regimental environment that is situated within the atmosphere of the Napoleonic Wars to parallel the virtuous environment envisioned by Rousseau in his *Social Contract*. It also elucidates why, in both *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, war is a key element of soldiers' edification.

### Analysis of Edification

Both Prince Andrey Bolkonsky and Count Pierre Bezukhov experience edification within the pages of *War and Peace*. In both instances, the actions of the characters in war yield their improved states; yet it is their internalized thoughts or, in the particular case of Pierre, both their thoughts and verbalized speech that demonstrate their moral and intellectual transformations.

Unlike Andrey and Pierre, Alexei Vronsky does not experience edification in *Anna Karenina*. Although action and language have been recognized as integral components of edification, to argue that Vronsky fails to experience edification is clearly not to say that he was a mute, or physically disabled. However, in foregoing his duties as a soldier, Vronsky does become metaphorically paralyzed; as F.S. Leavin argues, after leaving the army, Vronsky is deprived of "a purpose, a sense of function, a place in life, a meaning" (23). By the novel's end,

his figurative paralysis, and thus his unedified state, is further demonstrated by the fact that he feels only one route in life is left for him to take: that of death, which will be secured by his re-immersion into the war effort.

*War and Peace: The Edification of Prince Andrey Bolkonsky*

*I. Background*

Andrey flees to war in order to escape the weariness of his life in Moscow. One scene illustrating this weariness suggests that Andrey would enjoy an environment shrouded in violence – that is, an environment comprised of action and conflict rather than idleness and superficiality. Andrey “sat lolling” in the drawing-room of Anna Pavlovna “with half-closed eyelids” before beginning to speak to Pierre of both his unhappy marriage and the success of his hero, conqueror Napoleon Bonaparte, a conversation which stirred a change in his physiognomy (Tolstoy 24):

His dry face was quivering with nervous excitement in every muscle; his eyes, which had seemed lusterless and lifeless, now gleamed with a full, vivid light. It seemed that the more lifeless he was at ordinary times, the more energetic he became at such moments of morbid irritability. (Tolstoy 24)

Andrey yearns for “moments of morbid irritability” in a life that fails too often to deliver them, motivating him to pursue a life that is defined by them alone. It follows that, once Andrey departs Russia to join his regiment, “his former affectation, ennui, and indolence” evaporate from his being, no longer present in “the expression of his face, in his gestures, [or] in his gait” (Tolstoy 110):

He had the air of a man who has not time to think of the impression he is making on others, and is absorbed in work, both agreeable and interesting. His face showed more satisfaction with himself and those around him. His smile and his glance were more light-hearted and attractive. (Tolstoy 110)

While immersed in Russian society, everything Andrey does is tinged with his dissatisfaction with his own idleness. Yet, when Andrey is caught up in the activities of war, Tolstoy characterizes him as “one of those rare staff-officers whose interests are concentrated on the general progress of the war,” and who envisions victorious outcomes that produce in him rushes “of joyful emotion” (111). In general, the promise of impending violence and glory consumes Andrey with happiness; in closing his eyes and hearing “the firing of guns and cannons...echoing in his ears” he concurrently feels “the sensation of victory” (Tolstoy 134). Although the reader may at this point think that Andrey’s newfound sense of self-satisfaction conveys his edified state, Tolstoy informs the reader that the contentment he experiences, though immense, is only “the first instalment of some coveted happiness,” (134). Moreover, while at war Andrey has become more productive, he has yet to become knowledgeable of his own purpose, or the purpose of humankind (Tolstoy 134). In fact, what prevents Andrey from ascertaining this purpose is his obsession with heroism, particularly his ardent longing to become a hero.

A striking component of Tolstoy’s novel is his rejection of heroism and the adulation of heroes. He asserts the error of historians who idealize heroism as a factor in Russia’s victory in the Napoleonic Wars, and condemns any man who aspires to be a hero in war as “useless” (Tolstoy 858):

Those who were striving to grasp the general course of events, and trying by self-sacrifice and heroism to take a hand in it, were the most useless members in society; they

saw everything upside down, and all that they did with the best intentions turned out to be useless folly... (Tolstoy 858)

Andrey is part of this typology of uselessness. As a soldier, he desires to be the savior of the Russian army, and is titillated by the idea that he could be “the very man destined to extricate the Russian army” from their “hopeless position” (Tolstoy 145). He believes this achievement would lift him “for ever out of the ranks of unknown officers” and would finally carry him towards “the first path to glory” (Tolstoy 145). Indeed, in first entering the war Andrey cares for little more than attaining this glory and becoming immortalized:

...but if I want that, if I want glory, want to be known to men, want to be loved by them, it's not my fault that I want it, that it's the only thing I care for, the only thing I live for.

Yes, the only thing! I shall never say to any one, but, my God! what am I to do, if I care for nothing but glory, but men's love? (Tolstoy 238)

Andrey recognizes the irrationality of his longing to be glorified, but does not believe that his fixation on heroism can be ameliorated. He continues to admit to himself that he craves glory more than he fears death or loss, and more than he values the life of his father, sister, or wife (Tolstoy 238).

## *II. Initial Edification*

However, after becoming severely wounded, Andrey finally perceives the triviality of these aspirations, and, moreover, the triviality of his own existence. Struck by a hard blow to the head in the midst of combat, he is knocked to the ground of the battlefield. Instead of succumbing to fear or losing consciousness, however, Andrey studies the grey clouds traveling across the sky, and proclaims that “all is vanity, all is a cheat” except the infinite sky which stares back at him (Tolstoy 253). After the battle has concluded, he realizes that Napoleon

Bonaparte – his venerated hero – is standing before him, examining his body and believing him to be dead (Tolstoy 262). Yet, Andrey does not feel overcome with the same reverence he had felt for Bonaparte at earlier moments in the novel. Instead, he remains captivated by the “high, far-away, everlasting sky” before him (Tolstoy 263):

He knew it was Napoleon – his hero – but at that moment Napoleon seemed to him such a small, insignificant creature in comparison with what was passing now between his soul and that lofty, limitless sky with the clouds flying over it. It meant nothing to him at that moment who was standing over him, what was being said of him. He was only glad that people were standing over him, and his only desire was that these people should help him and bring him back to life, which seemed to him so good, because he saw it all quite differently now. (Tolstoy 262-263)

This epiphany epitomizes the initial edification of Andrey, wherein he is endowed with a greater sense of self-fulfillment and with a clearer comprehension of his own purpose as well as the purpose of humankind. As he lies there on the ground, bleeding profusely, he is not only consumed with a fresh appreciation for life, which suddenly “seemed to him so good”; he also gains a clear understanding of the shared insignificance of all humans, of which Napoleon Bonaparte is no exception. Simultaneously, he perceives the incalculable value of life, and desires in a way he never had before to remain a part of it. Additionally, he becomes intensely aware of our inability to understand everything, and especially our inability to understand that which cannot be understood, like the otherworldly, the ethereal. As Andrey pronounces, “[t]here is nothing, nothing certain but the nothingness of all that is comprehensible to us, and the grandeur of something incomprehensible, but more important!” (Tolstoy 264).

Fortunately, Andrey survives his injury, and successfully returns home to Moscow to reunite with his family, most of whom had supposed him to be dead due to his protracted absence and the lack of knowledge of his whereabouts. Arriving home, Andrey exemplifies his edified state, addressing his wife with patience and compassion for the first time in the novel, and sharing with her his nascent understanding of the mercy of the Lord: “My precious,” he states, describing her with an epithet “he had never used speaking to her before... ‘God is merciful’” (Tolstoy 295). Yet, in an ironic twist, Andrey returns from death just as his wife descends to it, and as his son is bestowed with the gift of life. That is to say, Andrey arrives home as his wife dies in childbirth.

Although Andrey has already experienced a full and tumultuous life by this point in the novel, his narrative has hardly begun. Following the Austerlitz campaign and his near death, Andrey “grimly” resolves to never again serve in the army, instead taking “service under his father in the levying of the militia, so as to escape active service” (Tolstoy 336). All the while, Andrey cannot help but regret his inaction, and in fact becomes angry at the realization “that the far-away life out there – in which he had no part – could trouble him” (Tolstoy 341). Even his sister Marie recognizes her brother’s incompatibility with a life independent of the army, informing Pierre that he “needs activity,” for “this quiet, regular life is bad for him” (Tolstoy 357).

### *III. Re-edification*

It isn’t long before Andrey re-enlists in the war effort, most overtly due to his re-emerged apathy for societal life; while he is traveling abroad on behalf of his father’s wishes, his beloved fiancée, Natasha Rostov, breaks off their engagement after she is manipulated and seduced by

Anatole Kuragin, a corrupt and deceptive hedonist who is secretly married to another woman.

With Natasha's betrayal, Andrey loses all of his positive interest and engagement in life:

Now he dreaded indeed those ideas that had then opened to him boundless vistas of light.

Now he was occupied only with the most practical interests lying close at hand, and in no

way associated with those old ideals...It was as though the infinite, fathomless arch of

heaven that had once stood over him had been suddenly transformed into a low, limited

vault weighing upon him, with everything in it clear, but nothing eternal and mysterious.

(Tolstoy 574-575)

Indeed, the spiritual well-being that had suffused Andrey's being, and had opened his mind and heart to the grandness of and joy inherent in life, collapses within him with the collapse of his blissful engagement to Natasha.

Still, it's important to recognize that Andrey doesn't rejoin the army only because of his contempt for all other facets of Russian life; he also receives an indispensable amount of relief and comfort as a soldier. As noted several times in the novel, of all the pursuits that Andrey chases throughout his life, "military service was the simplest and most familiar to him" (Tolstoy 575). Acting as if he had never known a reality aside from that of the regiment, he performs his duties as a general on Kutuzov's staff "with zeal and perseverance," actually surprising Kutuzov by his ardent "eagerness for work and conscientiousness" (Tolstoy 575). In fact, Andrey becomes so re-immersed in his martial duties that he abandons his senseless pursuit of Anatole Kuragin, suddenly deciding that it was unnecessary for him "to gallop back to Russia in search of him" (Tolstoy 575); "being at the centre of the immense war" effectively functions to relieve Andrey from "the idea of Kuragin" (Tolstoy 579). This incident demonstrates the virtue interwoven in the responsibilities of a soldier, for Andrey's involvement with his responsibilities

in the battalion dissuades him from pursuing a senseless and potentially fatal action. This incident additionally foresees the ephemerality of (or the approaching end to) his demoralized state of being.

Indeed, Andrey's transformed demeanor in the war largely anticipates a second and more profound moral and spiritual enlightenment. Not long into his re-entry in the service, Andrey becomes severely injured again, his body mutilated by the detonation of a grenade that lands only a few paces away from him (Tolstoy 742). Wounded, this time fatally, Andrey becomes re-acquainted with the boundless love and fresh understanding of life that had previously struck him. But this time, his comprehension of life has become so clear that he no longer fears leaving it. That is to say, the first time Andrey was gravely injured in battle, he experienced an unprecedented contentment and serenity, but did not experience these emotions to their fullness. He still felt troubled by the unknown, the "inconceivable...to which [he] could not appeal," with the God whose picture rested in a locket his sister had given to him:

'How happy and at peace I should be, if I could say now, 'Lord, have mercy on me!...'

But to whom am I to say that? Either a Power infinite, inconceivable, to which I cannot appeal, which I cannot even put into words, the great whole or nothing...or that God, who has been sewn up here in this locket by Marie?' (Tolstoy 264)

Now wounded once more and carried into a tent to be treated, Andrey is fortuitously placed beside a dying man whom he had desired to kill: Anatole Kuragin. But instead of feeling emotions of satisfaction and pride in witnessing Anatole's pain and mutilation, Andrey instead feels "a passionate pity and love" for the suffering Anatole, and feels his heart burst with happiness to sympathize with and forgive a man he had branded as his enemy (Tolstoy 745):



Prince Andrey wept tears of love and tenderness over his fellow-men, over himself, and over their errors and his own. ‘Sympathy, love for our brothers...love for our enemies; yes, the love that God preached upon earth, that Marie sought to teach me, and I did not understand, that is why I am sorry to part with life, that is what was left me if I had lived. But now it is too late. I know that!’ (Tolstoy 745)

Only now does Andrey fully understand the human purpose, and the import of his sister’s teachings: people exist to love universally, and especially to love those who are most difficult to love. He thus is struck with an even more consummate happiness than before, a “new happiness...[that] had something to do with the Gospel” (Tolstoy 838). And this happiness is rooted in his gratitude for life and simultaneous fearlessness to part from it:

‘But isn’t it all the same now?...What will be there, and what has been here? why was I so sorry to part with life?’ (Tolstoy 743)

Moreover, in his previous edification Andrey had merely grasped the triviality of human aspirations and desires, and thus the mutual insignificance of heroes and the attainment of glory. Yet now Andrey is also awakened to the absence of human volition in both love and warfare, for he is entirely unable to repress a divine sort of love for his enemy, a love that he feels is “the very essence of the soul” (Tolstoy 839). He learns that the faculties of the soul can act separate from man’s will, yet can be recognized and embraced by the mind, elucidating why he is unable to suppress the divine love that he feels not only for Anatole but for Natasha as well (Tolstoy 838). Indeed, Natasha, who had pledged her love to him and then betrayed him, now becomes one “whom of all the people in the world he most longed to love” with this “new, pure, divine love that had been revealed to him” (Tolstoy 840).

Andrey does not survive the length of the novel. Yet, under the masterful hand of Tolstoy, the death of the character delivers an experience for the reader that is unprecedented in both its authenticity and ethereality. For, in capturing Andrey's dying state, Tolstoy amalgamates the physical with the spiritual, and somehow shines clarity on an unfathomable mystery. That is to say, while Andrey approaches his death, his body and his mind are somehow simultaneously rooted both in life and in the afterlife. His soul is "not in its normal state," suspended in a liminal and paradoxical space between lucidity and powerlessness, as its faculties "were clearer and more active than ever" yet "acted apart from his will" (Tolstoy 838). He contemplates the divinity and the divine happiness to which he has been awakened:

Happiness beyond the reach of material, external influences on man, the happiness of the soul alone, the happiness of love! To feel it is in every man's power, but God alone can know it and ordain it. But how did God ordain this law? Why the Son?... (Tolstoy 839)

Although Andrey's mind has been partially enveloped by the unearthly, it still ventures back to the ordinary reality where he still exists, a reality symbolized by a fly buzzing around the room in which he lies. Indeed, his celestial-like train of thought is intermittently broken off by the soft "Piti-pitt-piti...ipiti-piti" of a flap of wings "incessantly beating time," counting down the limited moments of Andrey's life and, more generally, of life itself (Tolstoy 839). Indeed, Tolstoy creates a different reality for both Andrey and the reader that is uncanny in emulating the life we know and the life that we do not.

The reader feels secure in not only seeing that the death of Andrey is beautifully and carefully rendered, but also in seeing that he does not die in the heartbreak and apathy he had known most recently. He dies in an unprecedented state of happiness, with an unbounded knowledge of the value of both life and the afterlife. He dies an edified man.

*War and Peace: The Edification of Count Pierre Bezukhov*

*I. Background*

In describing the state of war, Rousseau briefly considers that men can become “irritated” and “could sometimes kill another, either openly or by surprise,” or in open, witness-laden areas or covertly (258). That is to say, he acknowledges that man can act violently for reasons separate from their inclination to preserve themselves; for example, one man can challenge another man to a duel. Yet, as previously established, Rousseau does not view such an “illegitimate” and “barbarous” act as exemplary of “a genuine state of war” (259). Rousseau’s criticism of dueling likely explains in part why Tolstoy designs the duel between Pierre and Dolohov as a direct result of societal gossip and Pierre’s short temper rather than something of greater consequence. It also explains why, unlike the war’s effect on Andrey, this element of violence in the novel does not produce Pierre’s edified state.

However, Pierre does eventually enlist in the war effort after witnessing the appalling treatment of French individuals by Russian citizens. Although Pierre initially cites the war’s incongruity with his own principles as his reasoning for not enrolling, prior to joining the war effort he credits “his vow to the Masonic brotherhood, which preached universal peace and the abolition of war,” and the deep shame he felt in comparing himself to “the great mass of Moscow gentlemen, who put on uniforms, and professed themselves patriots” as what initially deters him from becoming a soldier (Tolstoy 610). Regarding the latter point, it is Pierre’s perception of his own lowliness and debasement that distances him from the war and thus suggests that he is of a character ripe for edification, or some kind of transformation or improvement in spirit. Indeed,

Pierre is not only incapable of imagining himself as a soldier; he evidently prefers to subconsciously reduce himself to the value of a demonic beast:

A cause that weighed with him even more in not entering the army was the obscure conception that he, *l'russe Besuhof*, had somehow the mystic value of the number of the beast, 666, that his share in putting a limit to the power of the beast, 'speaking great things and blasphemies,' had been ordained from all eternity, and that therefore it was not for him to take any step whatever; it was for him to wait for what was bound to come to pass. (Tolstoy 611)

The above passage mirrors a theme central to this novel: a person is an imperfect and limited creature, and thus their ability to control their own fate, and especially to control the fate of something as formidable as war, is minimal. Pierre recognizes his own limits, and in this recognition he feels certain that it would be foolish of him to take action himself rather than to just wait till the path to which life would inevitably guide him is revealed. Although the reader may dismiss this passage as another example of Pierre's consistent acknowledgement of his own depravity, it actually functions to foreshadow Pierre's eventual enlistment in the war. For, if Pierre truly believes in the absence of volition in his own life, that his life and capabilities "had been ordained from all eternity," it makes sense that he would find himself in an environment – namely, a war zone – that epitomizes historical inevitability in its relation to the relative absence of power that essentially defines human beings. The Napoleonic Wars, as Tolstoy states, had no definitive cause, but "was bound to happen, simply because it was bound to happen"; when caught up in a war, a man consciously "lives on his own account in freedom of will," but at the same time, paradoxically, "as an unconscious instrument in bringing about the historical ends of humanity" (Tolstoy 554-555).

In finally enlisting in a regiment, Pierre's feelings strongly mirror those of Andrey when he had abandoned Russian society to become a soldier; he experiences a great level of self-satisfaction within his new surroundings, and is struck with a new purpose as ambitious and as absurd as Andrey's preoccupation with attaining glory: to kill Napoleon Bonaparte. Addressing the former point, Pierre is impressed with the spiritedness of his comrades, whose elation "became more and more marked" with every cannon ball that falls in their sight (Tolstoy 728). He notices how the faces of his fellow soldiers brighten and gleam "like lightning flashes" with the latent fire flying around them, and becomes "entirely engrossed in the contemplation of that growing fire," a fire which he "felt...burning in his own soul too" (Tolstoy 728). Addressing the latter point, although Pierre still feels an "overwhelming sense of his own pettiness and falsity" in comparing himself "with the truth and simplicity and force of that class of men," he remains in the war predominantly because he is driven to kill a man he had once deemed his hero: Napoleon Bonaparte (Tolstoy 820). That is to say, in entering the war, Pierre's cabalistic view of himself as the humanization of "the *Beast*" evolves; he now affiliates this *Beast* with Bonaparte, and feels that it is "necessary and inevitable," that he is in fact destined to rid the world of this creature by killing Napoleon (Tolstoy 821).

Yet, Pierre is too firmly enthralled by Rousseau's notion of human beings as "naturally peaceable and timid," and hence "not allowed to sacrifice the life of his fellowman except to preserve his own, and there it makes him feel horror at spilling human blood" (258). Indeed, when Pierre becomes aware that he may encounter Napoleon on the battlefield, he swiftly realizes that he cannot kill Napoleon because he lacks the capacity to kill another man:

Pierre felt it as praiseworthy and as beneficial as ever to slay the miscreant; but he felt now that he would not do it. He struggled against the consciousness of his own weakness,

but he vaguely felt that he could not overcome it, that his past gloomy train of ideas, of vengeance, murder, and self-sacrifice, had been blown away like dust at contact with the first human being. (Tolstoy 828)

Unable to deny to himself that his conscience prohibits him from taking Napoleon's life, Pierre no longer aspires to kill Napoleon, but only to somehow falsely "prove to himself that he was not renouncing his design, but was doing everything to carry it out" (Tolstoy 842). Indeed, like Andrey, Pierre does not acquire edification or new enlightenment as a result of striving to be a glorious and all-conquering soldier, although he had desperately wanted to become one. Instead, he becomes spiritually cleansed only after undergoing a period of great suffering, wherein he is taken prisoner by the French.

## *II. Edification*

As a prisoner of war, Pierre meets a common but exceptionally wise former soldier named Platon Karataev, who becomes ingrained in his memory as "the personification of everything Russian, kindly, and round" (Tolstoy 884). Karataev is a man who apparently speaks without premeditated thought, and who, like the philosopher Plato, asks others questions in an effort to bring "out clearly the moral beauty of the action of which he was told" (Tolstoy 885-886). Only through his influence, his teaching by example rather than his formal, didactic instruction, does Pierre unearth the purpose of his own life and of human life in general:

And it was just at this time that he attained that peace and content with himself, for which he had always striven in vain before...He had sought for it in philanthropy, in freemasonry, in the dissipations of society, in wine, in heroic feats of self-sacrifice, in his romantic love for Natasha; he had sought it by the path of thought; and all his researches and all his efforts had failed him. And now without any thoughts of his own, he had

gained that peace and that harmony with himself simply through the horror of death, through hardships, through what he had seen in Karataev. (Tolstoy 922)

Indeed, Pierre finds self-fulfillment largely through his friendship with Karataev. Moreover, Pierre becomes intellectually enlightened in that he discovers the import of life: to be happy, particularly to find happiness in the simplicity of life, in accepting things as they are rather than how they might be. He ascertains how futile it is to deliberately search for happiness, discerning this search as an innate struggle that was “only given us for our torment” (922). Now, in captivity, he distinguishes “the highest and most certain happiness of man” as nothing more than the “absence of suffering, the satisfaction of needs” as well as “freedom in the choice of occupation” (Tolstoy 922). He learns that humans exist and are created “for happiness,” and “that happiness lies in himself, in the satisfaction of his natural, human cravings”; the world does not contain anything “terrible to be dreaded,” and every man is capable of being happy (Tolstoy 965).

Yet, Karataev’s companionship is not what alone transforms Pierre; his moral and intellectual enlightenment is also produced by his firsthand experience of the violence innate to war. As a prisoner of war, Pierre witnesses the execution of a number of other prisoners, an occurrence that initially ruptures “the spring in his soul,” and causes his life to collapse “into a heap of meaningless refuse” (Tolstoy 881). Paralleling Andrey’s state of mind after he had lost Natasha, Pierre feels his faith in the universe and its ordering, as well as his faith “in the soul of men, and in his own soul, and in God” disintegrate within him, as he is overcome by a new sense of hopelessness that he “had experienced before, but never with such intensity as now” (Tolstoy 881). But, after surviving a month as a prisoner of war, Pierre begins to view this traumatic experience with new eyes:

Those fearful moments that he had lived through during the execution had, as it were, washed for ever from his imagination and his memory the disturbing ideas and feelings that had one seemed to him so important. No thought came to him of the war, of politics, or of Napoleon. (Tolstoy 922)

Only after witnessing the executions does Pierre comprehend the senselessness of fretting over subjects that so obviously “did not concern him,” and did not require his judgment (Tolstoy 922). He now sees his wish to kill Napoleon as “ludicrous,” and realizes that the anger he harbors for his estranged wife, and the fear he retains of her disgracing his name, were “trivial” and “amusing” feelings (Tolstoy 922). In drawing a clear connection between the most violent episode Pierre experiences and his morally and intellectually transformed state, Tolstoy reifies the role of violence as an element in his characters’ edification.

The edification of Pierre is indisputable; he becomes intellectually enlightened in unearthing the secret of happiness and pure self-contentment, and morally enlightened in that he attains this happiness himself, and it remains with him for the remainder of the novel. Indeed, for the rest of his life Pierre often recalls his month as a prisoner of war, and only “with enthusiasm in his voice,” would speak of “those intense and joyful sensations” and “that full, spiritual peace, of that perfect, inward freedom, of which he had only experience at that period” (Tolstoy 923). Demonstrably, Pierre fully recognizes how he has profited from his epoch of suffering. Reuniting with Natasha, his future wife, and Princess Marie, the sister of the now deceased Andrey, Pierre reveals to them the gratitude he feels for his past harrowing experiences, his eyes all the while shining with a newfound “satisfaction with life” (Tolstoy 1016):

‘They say: sufferings are misfortunes...But if at once, this minute, I was asked, would I remain what I was before I was taken prisoner, or go through it all again, I should say, for



God's sake let me rather be a prisoner and eat horse-flesh again. We imagine that as soon as we are torn out of our habitual path all is over, but it is only the beginning of something new and good. As long as there is there is life, there is happiness.' (Tolstoy 1018)

Although the reader sees that Andrey morally and spiritually transforms twice in the novel, both times after nearly dying on the battlefield, he never explicitly expresses his appreciation for the sufferings he endures in order to come out the other end of it an edified man. It is therefore open to interpretation whether or not Andrey attributes his edification to his past ordeals. But, in Andrey's wake, Pierre explicitly states that he views his trauma as the gateway to his happiness and his edification; unlike Andrey, his edification is expressed not alone through his actions and unspoken thoughts, but through his actions, thoughts, and verbalized speech. He provides a voice for a perspective that Andrey could not articulate, and the reader can be forgiven for thinking that his position is representative of Andrey's, especially because Pierre articulates it in his own house, to the two individuals who were of the greatest importance to him in his life, and, in eventually marrying Natasha, adopts a life similar to that which Andrey would have led had he survived – as will be further discussed in the 'Counterparts' chapter at the end of this section.

When Pierre returns to Princess Marie's house the following day, he drives through streets located "between the charred wrecks of houses," silently admiring "the beauty of those ruins" (Tolstoy 1021). Within them he pinpoints "cheerful, beaming faces" staring back at him, unaffected by the pillage surrounding them (Tolstoy 1021). Although this scene most overtly functions to illustrate Pierre's renewed love for Natasha, and his excitement to once again see her on his visit to the house, it also symbolizes how easily and masterfully Pierre can now discern light within a dark landscape, warmth within an indifferent atmosphere, hope within a decimated

region. In *War and Peace*, Tolstoy identifies war as an event inherently “opposed to human reason and all human nature” (553). Yet, like Pierre, Tolstoy can decipher the good within an atmosphere shrouded in confusion and destruction, and he does just that in crafting a story that dismisses war as senseless and needlessly destructive to humankind and simultaneously as an element in the edification of the novel’s two male protagonists.

*Anna Karenina: The Non-Edification of Alexei Vronsky*

Sergei Ivanovich: ‘We have seen and still see how hundreds and hundreds of people, abandoning everything to serve a just cause, come from all ends of Russia and directly and clearly state their thought and aim. They bring their kopecks or go themselves and directly say why. What does that mean?’

Konstantin Levin: ‘In my opinion...it means that, among eighty million people, there are always to be found...tens of thousands of people who have lost their social position, reckless people, who are always ready – to join Pugachev’s band, to go to Khiva, to Serbia...’

Sergei Ivanovich: ‘I tell you, they are not hundreds and not reckless people, but the best representatives of the nation!’ (Tolstoy 807)

The above dialogue captures the dialectic of Levin and his half-brother Sergei Ivanovich, two men who are opposed in both character and principles. In reading this scene, one may initially wonder whether Tolstoy more closely identifies with the position of Ivanovich or that of Levin. Many might argue in favor of Levin, particularly because, as Briggs suggests, the character serves as a “thinly veiled reincarnation of Tolstoy himself” (65); and, like Levin, Tolstoy also had an older brother (though full, not half) named Sergei with whom he had a close relationship

(Troyat 42). But, Sergei was a man who Tolstoy admired so much – particularly throughout his childhood – that in describing him he once wrote, “I copied him, I loved him, I wanted to be him” (Troyat 16). Moreover, as a child Tolstoy established a code of behavior to become more like him, although he ultimately came to be more of “a caricature of Serge[i]” (Troyat 43). Indeed, although Tolstoy may have been more intimately affiliated with the character Levin, this doesn’t necessarily restrict him from aligning himself with the perspective of Sergei.

Still, Tolstoy’s intent in writing this passage may not have even been to express a personal position; perhaps he was merely trying to paint a comprehensive portrait of soldiers, one that is humanized by the soldier of greatest interest in *Anna Karenina*. Alexei Vronsky is a man who encompasses both the honorable commitment as well as the utter recklessness of soldiers, beginning the novel as an ambitious and determined aide-de-camp and leaving it as a non-committed, despondent combatant whose only interest in war is the death that it promises.

The character transformation at the center of *Anna Karenina* is that of its eponymous protagonist, who begins the novel as a universally venerated and envied woman in aristocratic Russian society and exits it as an adulterous harlot alienated from this society that once adored her. Yet, in the course of the novel, a number of other significant transformations occur, including that of Alexei Vronsky, Anna Karenina’s lover whose tireless pursuit of her results in her dissipated and despondent state. As established, Alexei Vronsky is raised to be a committed and diligent soldier who is both shaped and held in high esteem by his societal peers. Yet, at a turning point in the novel, Vronsky forsakes his service to travel abroad with Anna, and in doing so he assures the couple’s tragic end, wherein Anna commits suicide by throwing herself in front of a train and Vronsky re-enlists in the army essentially so he can die in war. Indeed, although the tragedy of *Anna Karenina* is the overt result of her illicit affair with Vronsky, Vronsky’s

abandonment of the army also signifies the immorality of the affair and foreshadows the characters' devastating final moments in the novel. Accordingly, I argue that Tolstoy deliberately casts Vronsky as a soldier because his desertion of the war effort is meant to augment the immorality of his trajectory as a character.

### *I. Vronsky's Morality as a Soldier*

From the time of his birth, Vronsky is fashioned to be a soldier respected and revered by all that cross paths with him. Vronsky is raised with militarism so deeply ingrained in him that, in the first stages of his turbulent romance with Anna – which fill “the whole of [his] inner life” with passion – he still manages to retain the equanimity of an external life composed of “social and regimental connections and interests” (Tolstoy 173). This is because “[r]egimental interests occupied an important place in Vronsky's life,” which Vronsky accepts “because he loved his regiment” and especially “because he was loved in the regiment” (Tolstoy 173). Indeed, as he was molded to be a soldier, a man who had “never known family life,” Vronsky is initially incapable of imagining himself in a context in which he is not a bachelor and wholly autonomous, and thus leading a kind of life existing outside of the military realm (Tolstoy 56):

Marriage had never presented itself as a possibility to him. He not only did not like family life, but pictured the family, and especially a husband, according to the general view of the bachelor world in which he lived, as something alien, hostile and above all, ridiculous. (Tolstoy 57)

Vronsky does not desire or even understand human commitment, explaining why he cannot fathom the conventions of romance, or how to properly court a woman. For example, when pursuing Kitty Shcherbatsky in the beginning of the novel, “a sweet, innocent society girl” who falls in love with Vronsky, he unconsciously acts selfishly, not recognizing that he is committing

“one of the bad actions common among brilliant young men” of luring a young woman without the intention of marrying her (Tolstoy 57). Vronsky does not perceive his actions as morally repugnant; he would have been “very surprised” to learn that Kitty would be distraught if he failed to marry her, for his self-consumed nature conditions him to not believe that “something which gave such great and good pleasure to him, and above all to her, could be bad” (Tolstoy 57). While he understands that “something had to be done” between himself and Kitty, he fails to perceive “what could and should be done” (Tolstoy 57).

While the reader may be repulsed by the evident narcissism of Vronsky, further analysis persuades the reader to prefer the arrogant and ignorant soldier to the arrogant and ignorant paramour, largely because the former favors peace while the latter causes destruction. In a scene that takes place in the French Theatre, Vronsky is seeking to reconcile a dispute in which “the interests of the regiment were involved” (Tolstoy 131). A fight had broken out between two officers of his regiment, and the regimental commander recruits Vronsky to resolve it, believing him “to be a noble and intelligent man” as well as “a man who cherished the honour of the regiment” (Tolstoy 132). Notably, any success that Vronsky has in resolving the conflict is attained because of who he is rather than what he says:

The regimental commander and Vronsky had both realized that Vronsky’s name and his imperial aide-de-camp’s monogram ought to contribute greatly to the mollifying of the titular councillor. And, indeed, these two means had proved partly effective... (Tolstoy 132)

Although Vronsky is not a particularly likeable character at any point of the novel, this scene exhibits his usefulness as a soldier; instead of causing destruction and ruin, as his abandonment of the regiment ultimately will, he is building peaceful relations between his comrades. In fact, in

this context Vronsky does not even perceive violence as a viable option that can be utilized in order to solve this particular dispute. In first becoming knowledgeable of the issue, Vronsky immediately distinguishes “all the unseemliness of the affair” and ascertains “that a duel was not possible”; instead, he understands that “everything must be done to mollify this titular councillor and hush the affair up” (Tolstoy 132).

In direct juxtaposition to this, when Vronsky finds himself in his own dispute with another man, Alexei Alexandrovich, husband to Anna Karenina, he views dueling as the sole means through which to resolve the conflict. Indeed, after Anna has informed Vronsky that she has revealed their affair to her husband, the first thought that occurs to Vronsky is the inevitability of a duel, a thought that never occurs to either Anna or Alexandrovich (Tolstoy 315). As he continues speaking with Anna about the matter, and holds a letter addressed to her from her husband that makes no mention of violence, he once again cannot escape the notion that a duel is inevitable:

...Vronsky, while reading the letter, involuntarily yielded to the natural impression aroused in him by his attitude towards the insulted husband...he involuntarily pictured to himself the challenge he would probably find today or tomorrow at his place, and the duel itself, during which he would stand, with the same cold and proud expression that was now on his face, having fired into the air, awaiting the insulted husband's shot.  
(Tolstoy 315)

The irony apparent in comparing the disputes of the regimental soldiers with that between Vronsky and Alexandrovich cannot escape the reader. As a soldier, Vronsky fights to preserve goodwill and prevent the outbreak of unnecessary conflict; but as a man consumed with his own hedonism and hubris, a man who allows his martial ambitions to retreat “into the background” so

that he may bind himself to Anna “more and more strongly,” Vronsky is no longer concerned with maintaining peace (Tolstoy 356). He prefers to romanticize duels as chivalric events in which he can sacrifice his life to “the insulted husband” in an action that Rousseau characterizes as “barbarous” and “illegitimate” (258) and that Tolstoy himself – in nearly facing men in duels at two separate times in his youth – surely felt to be actions driven by pride and inflamed by haughtiness (Troyat 221-224).

Conclusively, the reader should not dismiss Vronsky’s role in the novel to be that of the self-indulgent, one-dimensional villain. Tolstoy is meticulous in showing the reader that Vronsky is a character of multiple layers, and numerous capabilities; he had served as a valuable asset to his regiment, and been effective in preventing the ruin or death of others. Only in losing his interest in the regiment and ultimately resigning from his commission does Vronsky confirm his role as an inciter of needless destruction and violence, embodied by the gory suicide of Anna Karenina.

## *II. Pursuit of Anna Karenina as an Immoral Form of Warfare*

When beginning to pursue the affections of Anna Karenina, Vronsky addresses her as an inferior soldier would address his superior officer: “submissively,” “courteously,” and “respectfully” (Tolstoy 103). Vronsky’s obsequiousness to Anna further demonstrates his inability to shed his martial character in any context, how his military-oriented upbringing permeates every facet of his life. It is for this reason that Vronsky treats romance as a battle in itself, wherein the victory lies in the capture of Anna’s heart. Thus, when Vronsky loses interest in and then deserts his martial duties in order to pursue Anna Karenina, the reader should not interpret this action as a total escape from war. Merely, it is a descent into a more immoral and misguided form of warfare.

Even before meeting Anna Karenina and placing his pursuit of her above all other objectives, Vronsky interprets his romance with Kitty as a soldier might: as a fight between himself and another, wherein the victory of one must equate to the defeat of another. Although Vronsky had no intention of marrying Kitty himself, in learning that she declines Levin's proposal of marriage due to her infatuation for himself, "[h]is chest involuntarily swelled and his eyes shone" for he "felt himself the victor" (Tolstoy 60). Indeed, Vronsky was more infatuated with the notion of winning the preference of Kitty than he was with Kitty herself, exemplifying his combative, soldierly spirit.

After falling in love with Anna, Vronsky similarly cannot isolate the adversarial demeanor he exhibits as a soldier from that which he exhibits as a man in love. In speaking with her openly about his love for her, he asserts that from that moment onward they both could know no peace:

'Don't you know that you are my whole life? But I know no peace and cannot give you any. All of myself, my love...yes. I cannot think of you and myself separately. You and I are one for me. And I do not see any possibility of peace ahead either for me or for you. I see the possibility of despair, of unhappiness...or I see the possibility of happiness, such happiness!...Isn't it possible?' (Tolstoy 139)

Vronsky is not attempting to be theatrical in repeatedly arguing that he and Anna cannot know 'peace'. He genuinely views his pursuit of and resultant affair with Anna as an ongoing crusade, and thus cannot perceive any equanimity in their relationship. In the same manner that Vronsky had perceived Kitty's heart as the reward of a battle between two foes, he views the attainment of Anna's heart as a battle between despair and happiness. For Vronsky, the concept of romance is equivalent to that of a battle: alike to war, Kitty's decision would produce a victor and a loser;



similarly, Anna's decision would yield either one positive or one negative outcome, either a victory of "such happiness" and or a defeat of "despair."

It isn't long before the reader foresees that Vronsky and Anna's affair will result in the latter. Their mutual defeat is sharply anticipated the moment Vronsky finally beds Anna, for this is a scene that, more so than any other scene in the novel, illustrates the warlike nature of his pursuit of and affair with her. For, in finally satisfying the goal that had replaced all his "former desires" and "constituted the one exclusive desire of [his] life," Vronsky reduces Anna to a casualty of war (Tolstoy 149):

Alexei Vronsky: 'Anna! Anna!' he kept saying in a trembling voice. 'Anna, for God's sake!...'

But the louder he spoke, the lower she bent her once proud, gay, but now shame-stricken head, and she became all limp, falling from the divan where she had been sitting on the floor at his feet; she would have fallen on the carpet if he had not held her. (Tolstoy 149)

Instead of being overwhelmed with the "happiness" that Vronsky had promised her, Anna temporarily becomes an avatar of his actions. In underscoring the limpness of Anna's body, which "would have fallen" to the floor without Vronsky's support, Tolstoy compares her likeness to that of a corpse. Indeed, building upon this metaphor, Vronsky is described as "what a murderer must feel when he looks at the body he has deprived of life" (Tolstoy 149). The symbolism of these descriptions must not be overlooked; Vronsky and Anna's relationship emulates a battle, wherein each individual who lives is essentially a murderer, and each individual who falls is the murdered. Their affair is interchangeable with a continuous, prolonged murder, as the kisses Vronsky "covers [Anna's] face and shoulders with" are emblematic of a murderer who falls upon his dead victim "with animosity" (Tolstoy 149). This figurative

homicide anticipates Anna's near death after she gives birth to she and Vronsky's child, and her eventual suicide at a Russian train station. In both instances she is pushed to the brink of death by Vronsky's influence in her life, but only in the latter does she truly experience it due to the absence of his continuing, toxic presence. The arms that prevented her from falling onto the carpet and encouraged her to continue a descent into immorality were not there to save her from hitting the floor of the train tracks and escaping from this descent forever.

Tolstoy's employment of warlike language in this scene demonstrates Western novelists' tendency to connect "sexual and fighting instincts" (de Rougemont 244). Beginning in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, these novelists enriched the language of love with phrases and expressions that "had unmistakably been borrowed from the art of giving battle" as well as from "contemporary tactics" (de Rougemont 244). In fact, not only the language, but the entire trajectory of Vronsky's pursuit of Anna almost perfectly imitates de Rougemont's analysis of the narratives of Western novels that emulated the period of European romanticism:

*A lover besieged his lady. He delivered amorous assaults on her virtue. He pressed her closely. He pursued her. He sought to overcome the final defences of her modesty, and to take them by surprise. In the end the lady surrendered to his mercy. And thereupon, by a curious inversion typical enough of courtesy, he became the lady's prisoner as well as her conqueror. (de Rougemont 244)*

In regards to the last sentiment articulated in the above passage, Vronsky unquestionably becomes as much Anna's prisoner as her conqueror. Indeed, simply because Vronsky drives Anna to a figurative, then close, then actualized death does not mean that he himself doesn't suffer in the war he has initiated. During the short time period in which Anna appears to be dying

from childbirth-related causes and to be devoid of the love that she once held for Vronsky, her “murderer” attempts to commit suicide.

When Anna becomes fatally ill during childbirth, the doctors proclaiming that there is “no hope” for her survival, Vronsky still perceives their affair as an ongoing battle, rather than as a war that is nearing its end (Tolstoy 411). Meeting with Alexei Alexandrovich in his and Anna’s home, Vronsky addresses Alexandrovich as if the man were a combatant, insisting that he is entirely at Alexandrovich’s mercy and appealing to his pathos by humanizing himself:

‘Alexei Alexandrovich...I am unable to speak, unable to understand. Spare me! However painful it is for you, believe me, it is still more terrible for me.’ (Tolstoy 414)

Although Vronsky struggles to maintain his self-composure before encountering Alexandrovich, after speaking with him and learning that Alexandrovich forgives both himself and Anna for their affair, and is thus a character “lofty and even inaccessible to him in his world-view,” does Vronsky begin to consider the possibility of suicide (Tolstoy 415). Indeed, it is not Anna’s approaching death, but his own perception of himself as the loser, as the irreparably “shamed, humiliated, guilty” party within an ongoing battle for Anna’s love, that encourages Vronsky to end his life (Tolstoy 415). He is exposed to Karenin’s “rightness” and “his own wrongness” at the moment in which he loved Anna more than he ever had before, “to love her as he ought to have loved her” (Tolstoy 415). And thus he could not deny the clarity of his own defeat and Karenin’s victory:

The deceived husband, who till then had seemed a pathetic being, an accidental and somewhat comic hindrance to [Vronsky’s] happiness, had suddenly been summoned by her and raised to an awesome height, and on that height the husband appeared not wicked, not false, not ludicrous, but kind, simple and majestic. (Tolstoy 415)

Indeed, Vronsky sinks into a deep depression not precisely because he is a failure, but because he is not the victor. Because Karenin is too magnanimous of a being to end Vronsky's life for him, Vronsky feels obligated to do it himself with his weapon of choice. Pointing a gun to his chest, Vronsky pulls the trigger in his certainty of his own downfall, in his cognizance of his "happiness lost for ever" and of "the meaninglessness of everything he saw ahead of him" (Tolstoy 417).

Yet, Vronsky ultimately fails to kill himself, and shortly following the failed suicide attempt he aims to guide his life in a new and more virtuous direction. Declaring himself "washed...of the shame and humiliation he had felt previously," and now able to recognize the magnanimity of Alexandrovich without feeling himself degraded (Tolstoy 433), Vronsky accepts a martial assignment in Tashkent "without the slightest hesitation" (Tolstoy 434). But, alarmingly, as his time to depart approaches, the more difficult "became the sacrifice he was offering to what he considered his duty" (Tolstoy 434). Indeed, Vronsky is ultimately unable to join the regiment in Tashkent and decides to resign from the army altogether – but such an action should come as no surprise to the reader.

In attempting his suicide, the martial character Vronsky had adopted and that had guided the entirety of his life falls away like a loose jacket, signifying his uncoupling from the military. For, as Vronsky searches for a motive to live, "the habits and rules" or code of conduct that structures his life and evokes his soldierly upbringing abruptly seem to him both "false and inapplicable" (Tolstoy 415). If this is not indicative enough of Vronsky's transformation, the manner in which he fails to kill himself should be; although the shot he had fired "was dangerous," it was ineffective in ending his life because "it had missed the heart" (Tolstoy 435). Because Vronsky's heart, the symbol of his immoral love, remains uninjured, the reader should

anticipate his choice to continue fighting in this depraved battle rather than to abandon it so that he may immerse himself in an authentic form of warfare. It follows that, despite the veracity of Anna's claims that "there's something terrible" in their love "after all that's happened," Vronsky does what his former mode of thinking would have dismissed as "disgraceful and impossible" due to its appearance of impropriety to those "in high places": he declines his assignment to Tashkent, and at once resigns his commission (Tolstoy 435). He and Anna travel abroad without her and Alexandrovich's son and without confirming that Alexandrovich would grant her a divorce.

With his desertion of the war effort, Vronsky's private warfare only heightens in tension, depravity and idleness imbuing his post-soldier life. Abroad with Anna, Vronsky becomes rocked with boredom, fleeing from hobby to hobby in order to fill the gap left by his abandonment of his regiment. Although he has now secured the unimpeded devotion and love of Anna – who has deserted both her husband and her son to flee abroad with him – and "never showed the slightest regret" in "sacrific[ing] his ambition for her," he was far from being "fully happy" (Tolstoy 464-465). As Leavis asserts, "Vronsky, having given up his career and his ambition for love, *has* his love," yet nevertheless quickly begins "to give out...a vibration of restlessness and dissatisfaction" (23):

He soon felt that the realization of his desire had given him only a grain of the mountain of happiness he had expected. It showed him the eternal error people make in imagining that happiness is the realization of desires...He soon felt in his soul a desire for desires, an anguish. Independently of his will, he began to grasp at every fleeting caprice, taking it for a desire and a goal. (Tolstoy 465)

In specifying that Vronsky exercises will power “independent of his will,” Tolstoy suggests that Vronsky remains in battle despite his resignation from his commission. Indeed, in his relentless and will-less ennui, Vronsky is the picture of “a hungry animal” who “seizes upon every object it comes across” (Tolstoy 465). The once promising soldier now “quite unconsciously” tries to nurture his interests in a wide range of arbitrary subjects and activities, including politics, the exploration of new books, and painting (Tolstoy 465).

Yet, the politics, the reading, the painting, eventually the architecture – these, like Vronsky’s attraction to death – are fleeting interests. For example, Vronsky’s enthusiasm for painting wanes; he does not finish the painting he starts, certain that – like his relationship with Anna – “its defects, little noticeable in the beginning, would become striking if he went on” (Tolstoy 479). As Leavis argues, the ephemerality of Vronsky’s new vocations demonstrates that they cannot “give Vronsky what he lost when he left the army and the familiar milieu,” including “the friends and comrades with whom he had lived in his old career” (24).

Almost immediately after Vronsky shelves his passion for art, he and Anna decide to return to Russia and stay at Vronsky’s Petersburg family estate (Tolstoy 479). Yet, even there Vronsky remains insatiable, and Anna is not ignorant of it; as she reveals to one of the few friends she maintains after forsaking her home life:

‘Men need diversion, and Alexei needs an audience, so I value this whole company. We must keep it gay and animated, so that Alexei won’t wish for anything new.’ (Tolstoy 620)

Anna becomes increasingly anxious that Vronsky will not only grow weary of his new, haphazard lifestyle but of her as well; her chief concern, in fact, becomes “herself, in so far as she was dear to Vronsky” and “in so far as she was able to replace for him all that he had

abandoned” (Tolstoy 643). Yet, this concern only creates greater problems for herself and Vronsky, the latter of whom feels increasingly hampered by Anna’s presence. Indeed, Vronsky begins to cultivate an “ever strengthening desire to be free” and to not “have a scene every time he had to go to town for a meeting or a race” (Tolstoy 643).

Although Vronsky feels inextricably attached to Anna by his love, and Anna to him by the despondency of her situation, their relationship becomes plagued with never-ending conflict, which comes more and more to mirror the conflicts of war. In one of their more heated arguments, Anna rightly accuses Vronsky of being obsessed with being “victorious” over her, and of gazing at her with “hostility” in his eyes, as if she was his enemy rather than his lover:

...‘For you it’s a question of whether you are victorious over me, but for me...’ Again she felt pity for herself and she all but wept. ‘If you knew what it is for me! When I feel, as I do now, that you look at me with hostility – yes, with hostility – if you knew what that means for me! If you knew how close I am to disaster in these moments, how afraid I am, afraid of myself!’ (Tolstoy 705)

Tolstoy integrates a number of allusions to war in the language he employs following Anna’s emotional outburst. Anna’s last statement in the above passage overtly foreshadows her impending suicide and earns her “the victory” in her and Vronsky’s dispute (706). She is aware of her success, seeking to hide her “triumph[ant]” expression from Vronsky as she distinguishes his cold tone, a tone that “repented of having given in” (Tolstoy 605). In recognizing that her final words equate to “a dangerous weapon,” Anna internally promises herself that she could not use them again in their next conflict (Tolstoy 706).

Unfortunately, she does more than repeat these words: she acts on them, tossing herself underneath the carriage of a train, one of her final thoughts being that her action would be one

that punishes and thus defeats Vronsky (Tolstoy 768). Ironically, the first time the reader encounters Vronsky following Anna's death, he is on a train at the same station where Anna ends her life. Hiding his hands in his pockets and donning a "long coat," as well as a hat that was "pulled down over his eyes," Vronsky appears a man impatient to vanish from the world surrounding him (Tolstoy 779). Declaring that "[n]othing in life is pleasant" for him, Vronsky boards the train to fight in the Russo-Turkish War, at which his sole ambition is to die (Tolstoy 779-780). Indeed, Vronsky, like Carton, satisfies de Rougemont's portrayal of the typical character born from the period of European romanticism, for which passion requires death to "be the end of all things" (260). Gone is the "young and brilliant officer" who had so swiftly fallen in "with the ways of rich Petersburg military men" (Tolstoy 56). In his place is the defeated soldier, dead in spirit and eager to die in the forlorn reality in which he found himself:

'As a man...I'm good in that life has no value for me. And I have enough physical energy to hack my way into a square and either crush it or go down – that I know. I'm glad there's something for which I can give my life, which is not so much needless as hateful to me. It will be useful to somebody.' (Tolstoy 780)

After beginning his affair with Anna, Vronsky began "to lose his hair prematurely on top" (Tolstoy 180). Content in both his liaison and his venerated position, he hadn't given much attention to the physical defect, responding to someone's recognition of his bald spot with a merry laugh that revealed "his solid row of teeth" (Tolstoy 180). Now, conscious of his responsibility for the lifeless and "blood-covered body" that he had personally identified amongst a shed full of strange corpses, he felt "an incessant, gnawing toothache" nagging the solid row of teeth that had once paradoxically distinguished his joviality (Tolstoy 780). The pain is so sharp that it prevents him from speaking, imprisoning him to "his tormenting inner



discomfort,” and forcing him to remember his immoral warfare of the heart, and Anna’s ultimate victory. Indeed, he remembers her promise that he would regret calling their relationship “unbearable,” and regret not attempting to appease her after he had said that (Tolstoy 753). He remembers how “cruelly vengeful” she had been in her last moments, and mentally parallels this vengeance with how “triumphant” she now appeared after accomplishing her dreadful threat (Tolstoy 781).

### *III. Conclusion*

Clearly, the narrative of Alexei Vronsky is unlike that of Prince Andrey Bolkonsky or Count Pierre Bezukhov, two soldiers Tolstoy created 10 years prior to creating Vronsky. The purpose of analyzing Vronsky is to juxtapose his tragic trajectory with those of Andrey and Pierre and thus to establish Tolstoy’s view of the military profession as a potential gateway to edification. By committing themselves to the war effort, Andrey and Pierre both achieve edified states; in contrast, in eschewing the war effort, Alexei Vronsky leads a life devoid of the two components of edification: morality and the attainment or knowledge of human purpose.

Importantly, this is not to say that Tolstoy’s novels are grounded in the argument that violence and suffering are essential for characters to realize their edification. Rather, the author appears to simply be arguing that one can achieve edification through pursuing careers in military combat, that violence can be an element of edification. In other words, Vronsky does not precisely fail to achieve a moral status because he dissociates himself from the military and thus from an atmosphere of organized combat; his tragic ending is a direct product of his immoral and passionate affair with Anna. Why Vronsky’s status as a soldier is significant is because his military career deliberately symbolizes a virtuous route apparent in his life, and thus functions to emphasize the immorality inherent in his decision to venture away from it.

## Counterparts

### *War and Peace*

Andrey is mind, intellect, calculation. Pierre is emotion, soul, spirit. (Briggs 47)

While *Barnaby Rudge*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Anna Karenina* all contain one character each of interest to this paper, *War and Peace* contains two: Prince Andrey Bolkonsky and Count Pierre Bezukhov. These two characters stand in dialectical relation to each other, and accordingly serve as each other's counterparts in the novel. Each are equally worthy of discussion because – unlike the characters who perform the same complementary function for *Barnaby Rudge*, Sydney Carton, or Alexei Vronsky – they follow analogous trajectories wherein violence is an integral element of their edification.

I have already addressed a number of ways in which the lives of Andrey and Pierre both juxtapose and parallel one another. Like Andrey, who was fixated with becoming showered with glory, Pierre seeks to fulfill his own absurd and irrational goal after enlisting in the war: to kill Napoleon Bonaparte. And, like Andrey, Pierre experiences immense gratification in joining his regiment and becoming affiliated with the other soldiers. Most pointedly, I have shown how, after surviving the war effort, Pierre adopts the life Andrey would have led had he survived the war, marrying his ex-fiancée Natasha Rostov and developing closer relations with his sister, Marie Bolkonsky. Indeed, while it is an accepted convention that individuals are survived by the family that they leave behind, Andrey is survived by the most intimate friend that he leaves behind.

Demonstrably, there are a multitude of ways in which Tolstoy crafts an implicit but profound connection between Andrey and Pierre. What will be addressed in this section are how

the respects in which they counter one another anticipate and reinforce their edification in the novel. Indeed, had Tolstoy eschewed including either Andrey or Pierre in his narrative, the moral and intellectual enlightenment of either character would not have been made as clear or logical to the reader.

As Briggs suggests, Andrey represents the logos of the novel, and Pierre the pathos. The former is “a very handsome man, of medium height, with clear, clean-cut features” (Tolstoy 12), while the latter is oppositely “clumsy, stout, and uncommonly tall, with huge red hands” (Tolstoy 19). Andrey is a vigorous and dutiful soldier, son, brother, and father, as well as an apathetic husband to an artificial woman for a brief time in the story. Meanwhile, Pierre is the idle and illegitimate son of a father he loses early in the novel, as well as the estranged husband of an artificial woman for nearly the entire novel. Their storylines mirror and oppose one another in prominent ways throughout the lengthy text, but Tolstoy establishes quite early on that they function as each other’s counterparts. The passage below, for example, establishes conspicuous similarities and differences in their characters as well as the dynamic of their friendship:

Prince Andrey: ‘...I am setting off now to the war, the greatest war there has ever been, and I know nothing, and am good for nothing...’

Pierre: ‘It seems absurd to me...that *you, you* consider *yourself* a failure, your life wrecked. You have everything, everything before you. And *you*...’

Pierre regarded Prince Andrey as a model of all perfection, because Prince Andrey possessed in the highest degree just that combination of qualities which in Pierre was deficient, and which might be most nearly expressed by the idea of strength of will.

(Tolstoy 25)

Both Andrey and Pierre begin the novel dissatisfied with their ruts in life, the former deeming himself as “good for nothing” and the latter implying that it is he who is a “failure” (Tolstoy 25). They both desire improvement, and Pierre in particular believes his character would be enriched if he were more like Andrey, a man who he thinks possesses all of the good qualities that he personally lacks. The passage certainly anticipates both characters’ edification in demonstrating how profoundly they both aspire to better themselves. It also anticipates an ending in which Pierre emulates the “model of perfection” that he believes is personified by Andrey, leading a life that his deceased friend desired but never fully attains. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that Pierre’s evident reverence for Andrey’s “strength of will” is peppered with irony, as both he and Andrey become the most “perfect” versions of themselves only after entering atmospheres where Tolstoy argues the will loses its agency.

Although the characters’ paths do not cross often in the novel, their narratives often imitate and juxtapose one another. For example, both Pierre and Andrey marry women they do not love, and who either indirectly or directly drive them into combative environments. Andrey argues that everything “good and lofty” in him has been compromised by his loveless marriage to Princess Liza, and enlists in the war in order to retrieve these virtues (Tolstoy 12). Rumors of Ellen’s infidelity and knowledge of Ellen’s depraved character embolden Pierre to challenge her supposed lover to a duel, an action that he himself recognizes as senseless (Tolstoy 283). Moreover, just as Andrey twice enrolls in the war effort in order to escape the artificiality of Russian society, with its “[d]rawing-rooms, gossip, balls, vanity, frivolity,” Pierre eventually registers as a soldier partially for the same reasons. Indeed, Pierre was drawn to “the very thick of the battle” in Mozhaisk by both his “craving for sacrifice and suffering through the sense of

the common calamity” as well as a fresh hatred for the elitism that permeated his everyday life (Tolstoy 821):

The other [factor] was that vague and exclusively Russian feeling of contempt for everything conventional, artificial, human, for everything that is regarded by the majority of men as the highest good in the world. (Tolstoy 821)

Perhaps the most overt similarity between Andrey and Pierre is their mutual love for the young Natasha Rostov. Andrey is engaged to Natasha for a number of months before Anatole Kuragin, who she afterward discovers is married to another woman, seduces her. Although she reunites with Andrey once he has returned home from war for the second time after suffering a fatal injury, she is forever separated from him by his untimely death. It is Andrey’s passing that finally enables her and Pierre (who loses his estranged wife Ellen to a botched abortion) to be together. This actualizes a dream that Pierre keeps mostly suppressed throughout the novel, and allows him to inherit the life that Andrey would have led had he survived the war.

Natasha’s nascent love for Pierre produces a scene of dialogue between herself and Marie in which they acknowledge how different he and Andrey are in demeanor and appearance, yet how equal they are in their love for one another and especially in their edified conditions. Natasha in particular comments that Pierre appears as if he has just emerged from “a moral bath”:

‘...He has become so clean and smooth and fresh; as though he had just come out of a bath; do you understand? Out of a moral bath. Isn’t it so?’

‘Yes,’ said Princess Marya [Marie]. ‘He has gained a great deal...I can understand how *he*’ (Prince Andrey) ‘cared for no one else as he did for him,’ said Princess Marya.

‘Yes, and he is so different from him. They say men are better friends when they are utterly different. That must be true; he is not a bit like him in anything, is he?’

‘Yes, and he is such a splendid fellow.’ (Tolstoy 1019)

While the differences between Andrey and Pierre further illustrate how they act as each other’s counterparts, Marie and Natasha dually emphasize the significance of the similarities that they share, which includes their analogous plot trajectories, their mutual respect for one another, and especially the edification that they achieve by the novel’s end.

### *Anna Karenina*

Although Vronsky’s counterpart in *Anna Karenina* does not appear nearly as frequently in the novel as the other counterparts that have been analyzed, he serves an important role within it. Particularly, he personifies the successful life Vronsky would have led had he remained with the military instead of chosen to pursue an illicit affair with Anna Karenina, and thus foreshadows and underscores his lack of moral or intellectual improvement at the novel’s end.

Before Vronsky’s devotion to Anna extinguishes his commitment to the Russian military, Vronsky greatly admires his regiment and was greatly admired by the other soldiers within it:

They not only loved him, they also respected him and were proud of him, proud that this enormously wealthy man, with an open path to every sort of success, ambition and vanity, disdained it all and of all interests in life took closest to the heart the view the interests of his regiment and his comrades. (Tolstoy 173)

Indeed, it is often indicated throughout the novel that Alexei Vronsky boasts the potential to become a great soldier and to lead a rewarding life. At the beginning of the text, Vronsky thrives

in his position in the regiment; he is well aware of how highly his comrades regard him, and feels it “his duty to maintain the established view of himself” (Tolstoy 173). Yet, the reader is quickly informed that Vronsky’s attachment to Anna effectively diminishes his intent to remain well-respected in his regiment by weakening his militaristic ambitions; in the same scene captured above, it is later revealed that Vronsky had recently “refused a post offered to him and important for his career” so that he would “be able to see Anna” (Tolstoy 174).

Who would Vronsky have become had he never crossed paths with Anna Karenina? Although most readers may argue that such a question is impossible to answer, Tolstoy integrates a character into the novel that humanizes the attainment of the martial ambitions that were “the old dream of [Vronsky’s] childhood and youth” (306). He is Serpukhovskoy, a man “[o]f the same age as Vronsky and his classmate” and whose success in the corps reawakens “the worm of ambition that gnawed” at Vronsky with “renewed force” (Tolstoy 306):

His childhood comrade, of the same circle, the same wealth, and a comrade in the corps...who had graduated in the same year, had been his rival in his class, in gymnastics, in pranks, and in ambitious dreams, had come back from Central Asia the other day. (Tolstoy 306)

Indeed, Tolstoy incorporates a character into the novel who is of the same age and same socioeconomic and academic background as Vronsky, as well as triumphant in the same occupation.

What chiefly distinguishes Serpukhovskoy from Vronsky are their respective statuses in the military; while the former is a general who “expected an appointment that might influence the course of state affairs,” Vronsky, despite being “independent and brilliant and loved by a charming woman,” was “only a cavalry captain” (Tolstoy 306). To suppress his jealousy of

Serpukhovskoy, Vronsky reminds himself that he could rise to his position within a short number of years, contemplating “[i]f I resign, I’ll be burning my boasts. By remaining in the service, I won’t lose anything” (Tolstoy 306). Indeed, the presence of Serpukhovskoy not only rekindles the martial ambitions threatened by Anna’s influence but also encourages Vronsky to remain in the service for as long as he can. Of course, had Vronsky actualized these aspirations, he would not have become entangled in the immoral form of warfare with and against Anna Karenina.

Serpukhovskoy epitomizes the good and noble life Vronsky disregards in his pursuit of an affair with Anna. But Serpukhovskoy’s success in comparison to that of his friend does not cause him to look down upon him; in contrast, Serpukhovskoy recognizes Vronsky’s good standing in the military and his potential to rise through the ranks, likening himself to Vronsky in saying that society needs “a party of independent people like you and me” (Tolstoy 310). Moreover, because Serpukhovskoy has faith in Vronsky’s capabilities as a soldier, he advises him of how to most effectively keep his priorities in check: by using marriage to mitigate his hedonistic desires:

‘Women are the main stumbling block in a man’s activity. It’s hard to love a woman and do anything. For there exists one means of loving conveniently, without hindrance - that is marriage...it’s as if you’re carrying a *fardeau* and doing something with your hands is only possible if the *fardeau* is tied to your back – and that is marriage...dragging this *fardeau* around without marriage – that will make your hands so full you won’t be able to do anything.’ (Tolstoy 312)

Demonstrably, Serpukhovskoy does not singularly embody the military success Vronsky forsakes to be with Anna. He also acts as a commanding voice of reason within the novel: had Vronsky chosen to heed the advice of Serpukhovskoy and love “without hindrance,” he would



have accordingly been required to end his affair with Anna, who is not a small hindrance to him because he does not intend to marry her, but a tremendous hindrance to him because he does not even have the option to marry her. Indeed, although Serpukhovskoy's prophecy that inconvenient love will keep Vronsky so occupied that he "won't be able to do anything" is peppered with a vain, patronizing, and misogynistic attitude, it is an accurate prophecy nonetheless, and uttered by one who actualizes all that Vronsky had once hoped to achieve.

Moreover, although Tolstoy may not necessarily agree that men need to marry in order to diminish their self-indulgent passions, he does paint marriage as an edifying and virtuous option available to Vronsky. When courting Kitty, Vronsky declares that he loved the Scherbatskys' residence predominantly because he felt that he became "better there myself" (Tolstoy 58). This statement signifies the improvement potentially held in store for Vronsky should he have chosen to propose to Kitty, to take a wife.

Some readers may argue that Serpukhovskoy merely functions as an arrogant soldier who lacks the complexity of most characters in the novel and whose abbreviated presence does not warrant extensive analysis. Yet, Serpukhovskoy does appear multiple times throughout the text – both in person and in the psyche of Vronsky – and each time he appears, he evokes the socially sanctioned path readily available to and longing to be traveled upon by Vronsky. For example, when romanticizing a duel between himself and Alexandrovich, Vronsky recalls the advice of Serpukhovskoy – "that it was better not to bind himself" – and immediately resolves not to discuss the potential of a duel with Anna or further consider the needlessly destructive idea for the time being; his sudden silence on the subject recalls his earlier dismissal of duels, specifically when he prevented one from breaking out between two soldiers in his regiment (Tolstoy 315). Moreover, after Vronsky believes that his affair with Anna has come to an end following her

near death in childbirth, it is Serpuhovskoy who offers the assignment for him in Tashkent that he refuses so that he can travel abroad with Anna, in effect refusing an honorable alternative for a romance steeped in immorality. Most notably, Serpuhovskoy influences a pivotal action in the text – though his presence in the scene is confined to the imagination of Vronsky. When contemplating suicide, both Anna and Alexei Alexandrovich are weighing heavily on Vronsky’s mind, but Serpuhovskoy is the last person Vronsky considers before pulling the trigger:

‘Ambition? Serpuhovskoy? Society? Court?’ He could not fix on any of them. That had all meaning once, but now nothing remained of them. He got up from the sofa, took off his frock coat, loosened his belt and, baring his shaggy chest in order to breathe more freely, paced up and down the room. ‘This is how people lose their minds,’ he repeated, ‘and shoot themselves...so as not to be ashamed.’ (Tolstoy 417)

The person of Serpuhovskoy is grouped with three other facets of Vronsky’s life that have suddenly become purposeless, fallen to “nothing” due to his all-consuming affair with Anna: ambition, society, and court. What exactly Vronsky is contemplating in recalling Serpuhovskoy is left up to the reader’s interpretation, but it is likely in connection with the concept that Vronsky considers immediately beforehand: his ambition, and how Anna’s influence has caused it to vanish from his life. Serpuhovskoy personifies the product of that ambition, yet rather than arousing determination and initiative in the soul of Vronsky as it once had, it now signifies the emptiness and meaninglessness that remains in place of it. Indeed, in this scene, Serpuhovskoy’s presence in the novel foreshadows Vronsky’s swift desertion of the regiment – which occurs shortly after his failed suicide attempt – and Vronsky’s ultimate inability to experience edification.

## Conclusion

In examining the work of Tolstoy and Dickens, I have chosen not to emphasize the numerous respects in which their novels differ. Dickens, an Englishman, wrote texts that explore how the lives of lower to middle-class English citizens become upended by the political corruption and turmoil that beset the city of London and the country of France in the late 1700s. Meanwhile, Tolstoy, of Russian descent though of European consciousness, interweaves depictions of the formal conventions and complexities of war with the cultural conventions and complexities of Russian aristocratic society in his first masterpiece, *War and Peace*, and focuses primarily on the latter in his second, *Anna Karenina*. In terms of history, Dickens and Tolstoy place their fictional characters within different settings based on or coinciding with true historical events, including the Gordon Riots of 1780, the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, and the Serbian-Turkish War. The various ways in which the novelists engage with their own cultures in their texts, as well as the ways in which they enter historical conversations by incorporating historical events into their texts, all merit further consideration and analysis.

In truth, there are many formal, historical and experiential ways in which I could have discussed Dickens, Tolstoy, and their novels. I could have highlighted how their texts differ in style and genre, or the ways in which the novels elicit different effects upon the minds and emotions of their readers. Yet, I have chosen to subordinate these differences and the infinite number of other differences distinguishing the work of Dickens from that of Tolstoy in order to elicit a certain universal and philosophical but very human aspect of experience.

Why have I chosen not to elaborate upon these ideas? The simple answer is that I cannot possibly address all of them in the span of one paper. The more holistic answer is that my paper is chiefly concerned with the shared edification of Dickens and Tolstoy's characters – an early

and intuitive apprehension I had of the novels on first reading them – which does not warrant or necessarily invite attention to and analysis of their particular cultural, historical, or artistic ontologies, or the limitless other ways in which their novels differ.

Indeed, the purpose of this paper lies not in where the authors differ, but in where they converge. To focus on where they converge, I have illuminated the universality of their novels, and I have treated the novelists as if they are in universal conversation with each other. I have exemplified how their narratives link violence to moral and intellectual improvement, and hence I have reified their analogous belief in the indefatigable ability with which human beings are able to improve in spirit and grow in self under the most difficult of circumstances.

Each character examined in this Thesis pursues actions in their shared search of a sense of fulfillment, and satisfy this search by improving both morally and intellectually after entering circumstances of war, riots, or executions. Barnaby Rudge contributes to the mayhem of the Gordon Riots in his desire to be of value to the ‘No Popery’ movement, which he falsely believed would make his mother proud. Sydney Carton languishes in idleness and an entrenched feeling of self-loathing until he sacrifices himself at a public execution. Andrey goes to war to pursue a life that exists outside of the weariness and artificiality of Russian society, and Pierre devotes himself to a wide array of new experiences, including marriage, Free Masonry, and finally to the war effort, in his struggle to improve himself and the condition of the life he leads. Finally, Alexei Vronsky aspires to heighten his prestige in the military before deciding to instead fulfill his life through the pursuit of an illicit affair with a married woman. Indeed, in the four novels that I have analyzed, the experience of edification demonstrates that human nature can evolve and become enlightened through action and interactions, and, ironically, especially through those that are rooted in violence.

Yes, some of these novels are bleak in ending, and all of them grapple with harrowing concepts of death and senseless destruction. But because they all share this admittedly peculiar component, I cannot consider the essence of these novels as anything other than life-affirming. And hence I cannot dismiss my belief that they were partially created to voice the authors' shared faith in humankind.

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