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# Ravage, Rejection, Regeneration: Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* as a Case against Forgetting

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# Ravage, Rejection, Regeneration: Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* as a Case against Forgetting

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RAVAGE, REJECTION, REGENERATION: LEO TOLSTOY'S *WAR AND PEACE* AS A  
CASE AGAINST FORGETTING

By

Irina R. Nersessova

A Senior Thesis Submitted to the

Eastern Michigan University

Honors College

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## Introduction

The odyssey of the soldier, the destruction and regeneration of the land, and the forgetfulness in history are all cyclical forces in which the entirety of war history is reflected. The odyssey of the soldier is spiritual, ecological, and land based. The regeneration of the land is a self-regulated event that occurs after the destruction that is brought on by humans. The forgetfulness that allows for history to repeat itself is both supported by and fought against by the soldiers and the land. Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* depicts war through the use of such internal and external events.

The disillusionment of the individual is portrayed through the characters Nikoláy Rostóv and Pierre Bezúkhov. The journeys of Nikolay and Pierre are both autobiographical. Nikolay represents Tolstoy in his youth while Pierre presents an older Tolstoy. Nikolay serves as an example of the inability to transgress the boundaries of willing service and support of government upon witnessing personal and public events that disprove the illusion of freedom within military service. Pierre, however, does find spiritual and intellectual autonomy in his experience in war. He also finds this in his understanding of the forces in history as ones no individual can control, which is a perception based on the belief system of the narrator of *War and Peace*. Serving as an example of what happens when personal observations of the behavior of the powerful are neglected, Nikolay's journey is cyclical in its creation of a path that allows for a new generation of a patriotic army. It is an army that will never have access to the realities of war a forgetful soldier such as Nikolay suppresses and does not share due to his devotion to the government.

The regeneration of the land devastated by war allows for it to be destroyed again. When the land regenerates, it erases the memory it holds through the physical manifestation of war time

destruction; therefore, the cycle of nature causes the forgetting of events that, if remembered, would create an anti-war sentiment and prevent renewed military destruction of the land. Pierre's transformation is infinitely tied to this process because his story is characterized by the dismissal of the socially constructed and by his new-found connection to the land. For the subject of land regeneration, T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* will be used because of its relevant representation of the issue and because patterns lead to subsequent military actions. In this case, it is the Napoleonic Wars connecting to World War I.

The avoidance of historical patterns constructs an environment in which the creators and promoters of every war can convince the people that the war taking place at that particular point in history is a new, different, necessary war: a war like no other that preceded it. Tolstoy's narrator challenges the human longing for heroes in history by claiming that they do not exist because history is not made by "so-called great men" (as he refers to them); rather there are countless factors, some of them incidental, that compose history.

### Relapse of Reason: The Consequences of Rostov's Disillusionment

Before transgression is possible, one must allow for war time events to repudiate the belief system grounded in patriotism. In the case of Nikolay Rostov, initial steps outside of idealistic military bounds result in regression to his former state of confidence in government. Within a military regiment, it is necessary to replace the realities of war with a construct that is so intensely uncompromising as to prevent a soldier from transgressing the boundaries that are set by blind devotion to one's government. What is found in the rejection of such loyalty to one's government is that the denunciation of military action is not due to lack of devotion to one's nation because a nation consists of land and people who suffer in the hands of soldiers who carry out the wishes of the government. Transgression is the result of a deeper understanding of the society in which one is designed to carry out what the governing forces require in order to maintain and gain their power and control. In *War and Peace*, Leo Tolstoy describes a number of transgressions that take place in a time of war. For Rostov, the journey begins at his breaking point at the regiment, at which he frees himself from the beliefs he has attained through the militarized culture. He goes through a period of disillusionment during which the military world is being revealed to him, but the revelation is overwhelming enough to lead him into a state of severe longing to be proven wrong in his judgment of war and of those who help create it.

Rostov's breakthrough portrays how complicated it is to awaken from patriotism and to give up trusting one's leaders. Through the internal struggle with his transgression, Rostov becomes the perfect example of the prisoner in Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave," who upon being freed cannot face the sunlight because it is blinding and inconsistent with the reality he has been brainwashed into. In Volume II, Part II of *War and Peace*, Rostov begins to comprehend the hypocrisy in his society but is consistently unable to identify the exact source of his troubles.

This is due to his inability to give up the romanticized notion of a hero or great man in history. This inability is caused by social conditioning that has brought him to admire leaders whose power is characterized by a masculine, imperturbable attitude. Through his war time experiences, Rostov realizes that he cannot experience events unemotionally because it is in his nature to deeply reflect upon the events taking place around him. Such perception takes away power from the already accepted societal ideas governing individual actions. Rostov's struggle is whether he should trust the self or the world already constructed for him. Realizing that it is far safer to not stray from believing accepted ideals, his transgression is so ephemeral that it is terminated before he is able to act on his internal transformation.

Rostov's transformation is introduced with his positive emotions toward arriving at the regiment and with his ease in connecting the security of a home life to the regiment: "When Rostov was getting close to the regiment he began to experience the same kind of feeling that had come over him as he had approached his home in Moscow" (Tolstoy 426). As the officers come to greet him, "Rostov felt just as he had done when his mother had embraced him, and his father and his sisters, and the tears of joy welling up in his throat prevented him from speaking. The regiment was home too, a home as dependable, loving and precious as his parents' home" (427). The experience of comradeship becomes one that is identical to his sense of family, and the peace and moral support of family is replaced with the refuge that the military regiment provides. The military purposefully offers the youth family-like bonds because being able to escape the realities of an independent life is essential when the goal of the young man is to achieve immediate security; however, what this security grants Rostov is also what it takes away from his growth as an autonomous person, but the authorities do not call for soldiers to be self-governing when the government's laws and aims are already in place.



Feeling at home within the strict military regiment is characteristic of memoirs and fictional accounts of youth joining the army, who, with age, revisit the memory of joining the army as a longing for control in a world that is out of *their* control. Tolstoy contributed to this genre himself with the collection of short stories inspired by his military service during the Siege of Sevastopol entitled *Sevastopol Sketches* and through the autobiographical characters in *War and Peace*. The personal journey from patriot to pacifist manifests itself in Rostov's story. In this section of the novel, Rostov is still a patriot who does not see that he is giving up autonomy because absolute authority is the very idea the military relies on and cannot function without. Personal judgment is altogether forbidden through exploitative mind control when there are stronger forces that will provide one with commands to obey, which is dangerous manipulation of young men who cannot find purpose elsewhere. The structure of the environment is constructed before a soldier has a chance to assess any wartime situation and gain perspective: "Here in the regiment everything was settled: you knew this man was a lieutenant and that one a captain, this man was a good fellow and that one was not, but, most importantly, everyone was your comrade" (427). Through simplistic definitions and identifications of people, enemy construction becomes easy. Without any hesitation, Rostov identifies his way of life within the military as honorable while in the world that is outside of the military, he understands that the idea of morality is more complex and therefore more difficult to achieve. In the outside world, the enemy does not merely wear a different uniform and follow a different authority, but the soldier cannot choose whom to trust and whom to consider his comrade. His role is defined prior to him gaining a strong sense of self, and the control that is held over the soldier creates the false impression that the control is actually held by the soldier himself. For example, within the military regiment, Rostov finally feels that he has gained the control that was once out of reach

for him as a gambler (Tolstoy's gambling lost him the house he was born in), but the gambling was simply removed from his life because his focus was redirected on the military. This is simply replacing an addiction with another situation where one attempts to control inner demons. Once Nikolay realizes that he has no individual control within the regiment, his disillusionment with the military sets in.

An early major point in Rostov's disillusionment is when he meets a poor, frail Polish man, his daughter, and her child, and Rostov takes them to his quarters to take care of them. When a comrade of Rostov's begins teasing him about the young woman, Rostov is overcome with anger, and this aspect of his breaking point explores how he perceives his comrades. Defining them as fully trustworthy is no longer possible. His response to the officer suggests that the closeness he feels toward people is not just a fraternal sense of military comradery:

Rostov took offence at this and flared up, saying such awful things to the officer that Denisov was hard put to stave off a duel between them. When the officer had gone away, and Denisov, who knew nothing about Rostov's relationship with the Polish woman, began to tell him off for over-reacting, Rostov said, 'You can say what you like...She's like a sister to me, and I can't tell you how much it hurt...because...well, you know...'  
(430)

His closeness to the young woman precedes his sense of fraternity with the military men. With the emotional reaction, Rostov refuses a part of the patriarchal tradition that joining the military is motivated by. In the following scene, the beginning of Rostov's distrust of the government is portrayed through a comrade being court-martialed for robbery for illegally taking some rations for his men because of the food shortage. Appalled by the accusation of robbery, Vasily Denisov yells: "'...Guess who's starving us all to death!' Roared Denisov, banging the table with the fist

of his recently bled arm so violently that it almost collapsed, and the glasses jumped” (433), and he goes on to explain that he beat Lieutenant Telyanin. With this scene, Rostov begins to see that there are a number of ideas about what morality is. If the ideas of morality are inherently unlike among people, the morality of the government cannot always correlate with the morality of all people at all times. Here war becomes a mere battle against one ideology for another ideology, but one has no freedom to consider which ideology is the one worth believing in. Perhaps neither ideology is commendable or worth fighting for. Freedom cannot exist when one is simply expected to fight for whatever ideology decided on by the nation one happens to inhabit in that particular time in history.

Upon entering the hospital in a small Prussian town, Rostov asks the doctor to see his sick friend Denisov. The doctor encourages Rostov to leave so that he doesn't catch typhus and states that he cannot help him find Denisov because he does not know who the patients are. This portrayal of the dehumanized soldier who is likely to simply become a body count allows Rostov to begin to see how soldiers are pawns created by an overly controlling government that realizes that it is essential for those who are in the military, as well as those who are not, to be trained to believe the idea that one is to trust and obey his or her nation unconditionally. Rostov does not give up and continues to describe Denisov. The doctor indifferently responds by saying he is probably already dead.

Walking through the hospital, Rostov hears the laughter of the patients and questions their ability to be happy: “How can they even live in this place, never mind laugh?” thought Rostov, with that stench of dead flesh from the privates' ward still in his nose. He had not yet escaped from those envious eyes following him on both sides, and the face of that young soldier with the eyes rolled upwards” (438). This passage is a depiction of the spirit that is present within people

who live under horrible conditions. Before being hospitalized, the men were simply machines designed to destroy a constructed enemy, and now destroyed by the war those who constructed their enemy have created, the soldiers may be too damaged or by then too invested in the war to entirely understand what has brought them there. Shortly after Rostov's return to the regiment, he describes soldiers who live in dreadful conditions but remain content by telling stories of heroes. The idea of a great man in history keeps their spirits up and prevents them from questioning their conditions. The hospital scene is reminiscent of the story telling Rostov witnesses earlier:

In spite of these appalling conditions, the soldiers and officers went on living as usual, though their faces were pale and swollen and their uniforms were torn...Off duty soldiers went on as before, lighting their fires, stripping off and steaming right in front of them, smoking, sorting out one or two sprouting, rotten potatoes for baking, and swapping Potyomkin or Suvorov stories or sometimes tales about folk heroes like Alyosha, prince of rogues, or Mikolka who worked for the priest. (429)

They have grown accustomed to using hero images to keep content. Whatever morale this results in is temporary and can only be prolonged with more patriotic, hero imagery. The story telling plays a role of a numbing drug that deadens one to suffering under the conditions soldiers live and die in. When he finally sees Denisov, Rostov talks to him about the war and the regiment, but Denisov is completely uninterested in the military life and is just as indifferent to freedom. After much convincing, Denisov agrees to request to be pardoned despite believing that he is not responsible for any wrongdoing. He hands Rostov the petition addressed to the Emperor.

Rostov, in his admiration for Emperor Alexander, is preoccupied with the image of the enemy: "In the army everyone still felt the same level of malevolence, fear and contempt for

Bonaparte and the French. Only recently Rostov had been in an argument with one of Platov's Cossack officers over how Napoleon should be treated if ever he were taken prisoner – as an emperor or a criminal?" (442). Rostov sees Napoleon as a criminal and cannot comprehend how a peace agreement can ever exist between an emperor and a criminal. Considering Tolstoy's criticism of the idea of a great man in history and Rostov's eventual disappointment in the Emperor, Rostov's debate reveals how criminals and rulers are alike. There is no great hero; a title is only a mask under which crime can be committed without punishment.

Preliminaries of peace are signed at Tilsit after the battle of Friedland, and Rostov is in the presence of Napoleon and Emperor Alexander. Rostov is astonished to witness that "Alexander was treating Bonaparte like an equal, and Bonaparte was completely relaxed, taking his familiarity with the Russian Tsar for granted as if it was something of long standing, and he seemed to be on equal terms with the Russian Monarch" (448). For Rostov to see such a comfortable exchange between the man he holds much faith in and the man he has been taught to perceive as the main enemy is exceptionally confusing. It is maddening for him to witness this when he has seen the sacrifices soldiers have made for their nations. This frustration will eventually lead him to see how much soldiers and civilians lose in war and how disproportionate the loss the people experience is to the loss rulers experience. When Denisov's petition finally reaches Emperor Alexander, he does not grant the pardon. Rostov's admiration for the emperor and his constant need to impress the authoritative figures in the military is greatly diminished when his friend, rather than protected, is wrongfully punished by the authorities.

Before this experience, Rostov's admiration for the great man in history was unbreakable. In a passage within the first volume of *War and Peace*, he daydreams about working directly with the Emperor:

‘The Emperor might meet me and give me an order, as if I was any old officer, and he’d say, “Go and find out about that over there.” I’ve heard so many stories about him getting to know an officer just like that and taking him on. Oh, if only he would take me on! Oh, how closely I would guard him, and I’d tell him the truth, I’d expose anybody who tried to deceive him!’ And by way of imagining his love and devotion for the Tsar more vividly, Rostov dreamt of some enemy or a treacherous German that he was about to enjoy dispatching and he would slap him across the face right in front of the Tsar. (282)

This level of devotion can no longer exist after witnessing the unjust treatment of his comrade. The loyalty he fantasizes about expressing is in conflict with actual experience, which causes a crisis for the soldier. There is no room for doubt in military life and the experience inclines him to reject such an existence; however, Rostov cannot deny the hold of patriotism, and this results in his eventual relapse into nationalism (the ultimate effect of which the reader sees in the epilogue).

To experience the leader’s refusal to protect his comrade persuades Rostov to understand the lack of virtue in patriotism and to begin to undo the effect of patriotism on his convictions. In “Patriotism or Peace: Letter to Manson,” Tolstoy explains that peace and patriotism are two incompatible ideas, and only with childlike naivety can people expect the two to coexist. The letter explains the anxieties Tolstoy experienced toward the state of the relationships between nations, and it clarifies how Nicholas is an autobiographical figure as someone who learned patriotism and othering in his youth and then unlearned it as a soldier in wartime. The political tensions concern Tolstoy as he sees war in the near future for several nations because of the patriotic attitudes that accompany these conflicts. Men, from childhood, are raised to believe in “the idea that power, wealth, and glory are the highest virtues” (470-1) and that it is honorable

for war to be used to acquire those virtues. Rostov is an example of those men, but seeing how hypocritical the leaders, who have attained the sought after power, wealth, and glory, can behave, leaves Rostov overwhelmed with the breakdown of his ideals. The letter also points out that the individual use of arms to steal and kill is looked down upon and is punishable by law, but in war, people find it praiseworthy to commit such acts. The message of power and patriotism in the symbol of weapons is broken down when the consequences of their use are witnessed. Once the use of arms in war is reduced to killing, rather than serving one's nation as a patriot, Rostov no longer trusts in the gratification of taking the life of an enemy. Tolstoy explains that nations pride themselves in believing that their well-being is above that of all others, and this desire for exclusive well-being produces war. Patriotism is forced on people, and the ultimate damaging effect of the exclusive loyalty is war. Once Rostov notices the lack of loyalty in the governing forces, he transgresses past carrying out acts of violence for the goals of those forces.

Tolstoy's letter discusses the issue of breaking out of the masses (the act of rejecting constructed reality) and understanding the insignificance behind the "great men" who preach to them. However, in the novel, after the idea of great men in history has been challenged, Rostov reverts back to his initial patriotic sentiment because the reality that is being revealed to him is too inconsistent with what he has been taught throughout his life. At the end of Volume II, Part II, Rostov drinks heavily in a state of anguish and angrily expresses the longing to again fully trust the authorities:

'We're not officials in the diplomatic section, we're soldiers, that's what we are,' he went on. 'If they tell us to die, we die. And if we get punished, we must be in the wrong. Ours is not to judge. If his Majesty the Emperor feels like recognizing Bonaparte as an

Emperor, and taking him on as an ally, that's the way it must be. If we started judging and criticizing at every end and turn, well, nothing will be sacred. Next thing we'll be saying there is no God, no nothing' ... 'We've got to do our duty, kill the enemy and stop thinking. And that's your lot!' (452)

Following a hero figure is a religious experience for him, and at this point, he so desperately longs for a hero that losing faith in his government is identical to losing his religion. In a biography on Tolstoy, author Ernest Simmons discusses Tolstoy's view of significant historical events as not simply created by famous leaders, which contributes to the absence of a hero within *War and Peace*. Tolstoy believed in the power held by the common people and in their ability to create change, but for Rostov, realizing this power within himself is to surrender a set of patriotic beliefs, which is why, in this scene, he hysterically criticizes people's freedom to disagree with those who rule them. Tolstoy's "...insistence that emperors and so-called great leaders were not the real makers of history, and his belief that it was the common people, workers and peasants, who were the important factors in resolving the national crises of a country" (Simmons 7-8) is a continuous argument in *War and Peace*. The demonstration of who really is important in history compels Rostov to see beyond the limits of the construction of a soldier; however, before he can break out of the masses, an internal, personal battle has to take place, which interrupts the act of transgressing but more realistically portrays the experience of disillusionment. Tolstoy narrates Rostov's transgression and then has him take a step back, blinding himself with the alcohol that causes this final scene.

The fear that causes Rostov to regress is based on the ideals the characters are inspired by, which are nothing more than the goals their society imposes on them. In an article concerning the



character development of Nikolay, “Patterns of Character Development in Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*: Nicholas, Natasha, and Mary,” the young man is characterized as trapped in the romanticized notions of heroism and greatness in war:

In the early chapters of the novel, Nicholas is the victim of two closely related false ideals: that of achieving glory in war and that of sacrificing his life wholly in the service of the Emperor Alexander. Nicholas possesses, it is true, many admirable qualities: though lacking in much intellectual and spiritual depth, and though hot-tempered and imprudent, he has the saving Tolstoyan virtues of sincerity, spontaneity, ardent feeling, and natural good-heartedness, and he displays a gauche, naïve boyishness of considerable charm...Nicholas, like the other two male protagonists of the novel, Andrew and Pierre, is radically flawed at this point by having fallen into the youthful errors of romanticizing war and worshipping a supposed great man in history. (Hagan 236)

The novel begins with Nicholas as an impulsive young man who enters the military upon leaving the university under the impression that the military is his calling. His feelings are a typical symptom of the condition of being young and trying to escape being lost through committing oneself to something that promises to be identity building. Rostov grows weary of the mindless military routine that was so comforting to him in the past, and his ability to become brave enough to refuse the idea of a hero is why *War and Peace* does not need to portray heroes in order to depict strength. However, one of the final scenes of the book illustrates Nikolay defending the government that Pierre argues against. In discussing recent events, Nikolay turns to passionate support of one’s nation for the defense of his argument:

‘I can’t prove what I’m saying. You say everything’s rotten, and there’s going to be a coup. I can’t see it. But you also say our oath of allegiance is only provincial, and what I say is this – you’re my closest friend, as you well know, but if you formed a secret society and began working against the government – any government of ours – I know it would be my duty to obey the government.’ (1306-1307)

Nikolay clearly turns to belligerent jingoism in not being able to fully defend his beliefs while stating that he would fight against his friend. The inability to make an argument for his support of the government suggests that his belief system is based on indoctrination.

Tolstoy argues that human beings naively believe in being free and in every action or even lack of action as the expression of individual decision. Instead, Tolstoy sees the events of history as part of a universal force: “There are two sides to life for every individual: a personal life, in which his freedom exists in proportion to the abstract nature of his interests, and an elemental life within the swarm of humanity, in which a man inevitably follows laws laid down for him” (669). In order to create a swarm that can be governed as a population, there must be inspiration that maintains a certain ideology. This impact must be a representation of greatness that one can see in a leader, and Tolstoy’s idea of history simplifies the role of historical leaders: “History – the amorphous, unconscious life within the swarm of humanity – exploits every minute in the lives of kings as an instrument for the attainment of its own ends” (670).

The military cannot function if its members are autonomous individual, and Rostov’s own reaction to his transgression expresses not only his own apprehension but also the military’s and government’s anxieties regarding the changes autonomous individuals can cause. The period of disillusionment, as difficult and torturous as it is, does create a self-governing human being who

does not need to rely on the regiment and the constructions that once imprisoned him. However evanescent Nikolay's transgressive thinking, the portrayal of his journey serves as warning for the limitations fear sets. Military, patriotism, patriarchy, nationalism are all definable, disputable constructions that are relatively fragile in the presence of human ability to question. The refusal to deny certainty itself lies in Rostov's own longing for a sense of security.

### Pierre's Odyssey: Spiritual and Intellectual Freedom in Physical Imprisonment

Pierre Bezukhov experiences the most dramatic transformation in *War and Peace*. He transgresses out of the imprisonment of the high society life, stepping into an existence bound to the land and the spiritual. The Pierre Tolstoy first introduces is imprisoned by his lifestyle and by feeling compelled to think and philosophize, which he perceives as a negative because it overwhelms him and prevents stoicism. Personal regeneration takes Pierre through depression, spiritual death, rage, and passivity, until he finally arrives at spiritual and intellectual freedom and peace.

From the very beginning, Pierre finds his own creativity and inner life failing to function in the outside world. He believes that freedom lies in a life that is devoid of dreams and dilemmas and that life can only be bearable with a certain degree of callousness. This belief foreshadows his eventual disappointment in a conventional marriage that is based on status rather than love and introduces his disastrous quest for happiness. His admiration of Prince Andrey is described in a passage in which Andrey shares with Pierre his belief that Pierre still has his entire life ahead of him and that he is by no means a failure. Pierre dismisses the idea, and his thoughts about Andrey as a highly admirable man are discussed:

He regarded Prince Andrey as a model of all the virtues, because he combined in the highest degree all the qualities he himself lacked – they were best summed up in a single concept: will power. Pierre always admired Prince Andrey's ability to get on easily with all sorts of people, his remarkable memory, his wide reading (he had read everything, he knew everything and he could understand something about everything), and most of all his capacity for hard work and learning. If Pierre was sometimes struck by Andrey's

inability to dream dreams and philosophize (activities that Pierre was particularly prone to) he saw this not as a defect but as a positive quality. (31)

This statement greatly describes Pierre's lack of appreciation for his capacity to reflect and think deeply about the world around him. Pierre desperately wants to be productive and effective. His sensitivity to all things has created an addictive personality and an inability to approach issues with rigid, patterned logic. In the spirit of trying to become a man who is unable to dream and who has the capacity to survive in a world that rewards knowledge of unquestioned facts and the willingness to carry out the commands of others, Pierre becomes self-destructive. Tolstoy chose Pierre to represent a soldier's transformation because his own opinions are not limited to unquestioned facts. Tolstoy's view of history will return later to show the audience how it is not a collection of objective facts but rather a series of uncontrollable events (some remembered, others forgotten).

Pierre's intellectual depth is autobiographical. While Nikolay represents a younger, more naïve Tolstoy who gambles and does not allow for disillusionment to destroy his convictions, Pierre is an older, wiser Tolstoy. The Tolstoy that Pierre represents is dedicated to peace, yet his strong-mindedness is rooted in the hypersensitivity he viewed as an obstacle in his early years. This is addressed in a biography that discusses Tolstoy's commitment to peace:

... he was so easily moved to tears (though also to laughter, to awe, to ecstasy, to all sorts of extreme emotion). Even in adult life he seems to have been remarkably psychosomatic, so that his emotional upsets translated themselves into physical terms immediately... These transparent symptoms—revealing a childlike egotism—made him seem very unstable, and prevented him from embodying any one of his moods or self-images with any authority, so that he often counted for very little, in his own eyes as well

as in other people's. In his own, of course, he also counted for a great deal. He had a vivid sense of his own potentialities, but it was a sense that for a long time he could not trust. (Green 27)

It also takes Pierre a great amount of time to understand his own wisdom and potential. His feelings will eventually cease to overwhelm him, rather they will propel him to think deeply about matters of the uncontrollable and infinite. The same clarity of mind in Tolstoy provides him with the capacity to compose his works, especially a work as epic as *War and Peace*, which strives to include a great number of war time complexities such as soldiers' transformations, high society, violence, and the recording of history.

An early expression of emotional instability occurs when Pierre suspects that his wife has been having an affair with a man named Dolokhov. The enraged Pierre duels with him, but his violent behavior does not inspire pride, which is due to his emotional nature. The wounded Dolokhov panics and speaks of the emotional toll his death would take on his mother. He begins to cry stating:

'My mother. My mother. She's an angel, an angel, and I adore her, my mother.'

Dolokhov squeezed Rostov's hand and burst into tears. He took a few moments to compose himself and then explained to Rostov that he lived with his mother, and if she suddenly saw him half-dead she would never get over the shock. He begged Rostov to go on ahead and prepare her. (340)

Upon finding out that an individual with such an arrogant exterior happened to be a loving family man, Rostov is shocked. Pierre's hubris is immediately followed by regret as he wonders what has forced him to hurt the lover of the wife he never loved. The duel is Pierre's attempt at a masculine expression of overwhelming emotion, but upon regret, he learns that he cannot be

characterized by the stoicism he admires in men such as Andrey. While he initially blames the situation on his wife, he immediately proceeds to take responsibility for the situation stating that disgrace and honor are both relative concepts:

‘Louis XVI was executed because *they* said he was a dishonourable criminal,’ (the idea suddenly occurred to Pierre) ‘and from their point of view they were right. But so were the others who died an excruciating death acknowledging him as a saint...right and who’s wrong? No one is. Just live for the day...tomorrow you die...I could have died an hour ago. And why worry when you’ve only got a second to live on the scale of eternity?’  
(342)

Arriving at this conclusion in a moment of anger toward himself and toward his wife shows how he is learning how to apply his introverted, constant thoughts to gain peace of mind and composure. This is the beginning of self-containment in Pierre’s journey. Recognizing his relatively insignificant place in the universe calms him because it takes the weight of the world off of his shoulders. After the traumatic duel, he begins to perceive personal situations on a universal level instead of self-indulgently lamenting the violence he created.

In his initial search for tranquility, Pierre tries to find religious refuge in freemasonry. He does not see himself as capable of self-control; therefore, by becoming a part of an organized hierarchy with specific philosophies, he seeks structure that will prevent him from self-destructive behavior. In a state of profound despair, he is willing to give up his freedom for the calm of a dispassionate life. Upon explaining to the mason that he hates his life, the mason responds: “‘Thou loathest it. Then change it. Purify thyself, and as thou art purified, so shalt thou come to know wisdom. Look at your life, sir. How have you been spending it? In riotous orgies and debauchery, taking everything from society and giving nothing back’” (380). Explaining to

Pierre that he has done little to positively affect any people in his life or universally, the mason urges Pierre to make real change to his attitude and behavior. While their concern with Pierre's deprived behavior is criticism Pierre agrees with, the classist and hierarchical organization of freemasonry will fail to aid him in surviving alongside his emotional life. He will later find a more internal religious life in learning from a fellow prisoner who is connected to the land and lives humbly.

During Pierre's initiation, the ideas and virtues within freemasonry are revealed: "...the second aim, self-purification and personal regeneration, held little interest because at that moment he was relishing a sense of having completely renounced all his former vices and standing ready for nothing but goodness" (386). Already in a state of deadness, regeneration is the only process by which he can survive. Whatever convictions freemasonry wants to break down to replace with its own ideology, Pierre has surrendered himself to those ideals (prior to understanding them). His desperation to regenerate is clear in his immediate acceptance of freemasonry. The seven virtues of freemasonry are "1 *Discretion* (safeguarding the secrets of the Order). 2 *Obedience* (to the highest authorities of the Order). 3 *Morality*. 4 *Love for mankind*. 5 *Courage*. 6 *Generosity*. 7 *The love of death*" (386). The first major flaw seen in the organization is how matters of humanity come second to loyalty and obedience. Regeneration, in this case, is a matter of indoctrination and forgetting, which is repression of the depravity that will exist regardless of the effort involved in avoiding it. Despite the attempt to revise Pierre's approach, he is unhappy.

He soon abandons freemasonry returning to his old life and is in a constant state of despair. He no longer feels such loathing for other human beings when he begins to see that perhaps they too are victims of circumstance. While this portrays his ability to connect to people, he continues



to remain in isolation: “Pierre no longer suffered from his earlier bouts of despair, disillusionment and loathing for life, but the same sickness that had once manifested itself in acute attacks had now been driven inwards, never to leave him for a single moment” (590). He is not able to escape his mind any longer. His vain attempt at personal regeneration through freemasonry has failed, bringing him into a space that consists of his previous depression along with the failure of escaping this state. His perceived depression is rooted in his ability to philosophize passionately, which is a trait he does not appreciate in himself due to his admiration of stoicism. Left to his thoughts, he tries to escape the isolation:

‘What’s the use of anything? What is it all about? What is going on in the worlds?’ he asked himself in great bewilderment several times a day, allowing himself to be drawn forcibly into a search for meaning in all the phenomena of existence. But experience had taught him that there weren’t any answers to these questions, so he made every effort to wrench himself away from them by turning to a book, nipping down to the club, or calling in at Apollon Nikolayevich’s place for a good gossip. (590)

Pierre’s need to break away from the eternal search for meaning causes him to engage in passive, meaningless activities. Such hollowness of life temporarily calms his troubled approach to questions that have been asked, answered, and revised throughout the history of thought; however, Pierre carries the weight of such concerns individually, and the idea of not being able to solve them represents failure in his mind.

Once the war begins to threaten Pierre’s physical self, his mind is no longer able to escape through preoccupation with the mundane. The French in Moscow have reached the district Pierre is staying in, and he describes his new state of mind as increasingly hysteric:

After two days spent in isolation and unusual circumstances Pierre was in a state bordering on insanity. He was wholly obsessed by a single idea. He didn't know when or how it had come about, but he was now so completely obsessed that he remembered nothing from the past, and understood nothing of the present. Everything he saw and heard seemed dreamlike as it passed before him. (997)

His habit of internalizing the effect events have on him has almost brought him to insanity. The inability to answer the questions that plague him reaches a new sense of urgency, and not being able to answer morphs into a state of not being able to comprehend and remember. In the dreamlike state that consumes him, he becomes a part of the events taking place in the midst of the violence.

Witnessing the violence, he becomes active in coming to people's aid. He saves a child from a fire and shoves a French soldier to the ground in defense of a threatened Armenian woman. The soldier's comrade draws a sword on Pierre: "Pierre was in the kind of furious rage that made him oblivious to everything, and he had the strength of ten men. He flung himself at the barefoot Frenchman before the man could finish drawing his sword, flattened him and began hammering him with both fists" (1031). Pierre's newfound courage is inspired by the need for immediate reaction to the events unfolding before him. He does not seclude himself and lament; rather, he is brave and active in reacting against the soldiers.

His actions lead to his imprisonment, which results in his most dramatic development. A fellow prisoner, Platon Karatayev, introduces him to the human depth of simplicity in lifestyle. Pierre describes Platon as speaking "...in the gently soothing sing-song voice of an old Russian peasant woman" (1075). The maternal quality in Platon's speech is significant in its relation to the greatest feminine character in *War and Peace*, which is the city of Moscow that Tolstoy

argues foreign invaders cannot understand the power of. The same way the spirit of the land is underestimated by Napoleon, a character as modest as Platon is misjudged. It is, after all, his humble connection to all living things that transforms Pierre. In this scene, Platon first introduces himself and reflects on his situation (which appears to be horrible to Pierre) and the situation in Moscow stating: “‘we’re at large but God’s in charge’” (1077). Religion is at the heart of Pierre’s journey to find the individual self in a time of war. Surrendering some of his unanswered questions to God allows him to finally feel a sense of peace in a time of war. Pierre’s previous struggle with his thoughts and ideas is caused by the alienation of his over-indulgent, self-destructive lifestyle (which cannot take place when imprisonment forces him to learn physical survival).

In learning how to survive as a prisoner, Pierre’s physical transformation occurs:

Pierre’s clothing now consisted of a dirty, tattered shirt, the only thing left from what he had been wearing, a pair of soldier’s drawers tied round the ankles with pieces of string on Karatayev’s advice, to keep the warmth in, and a peasant’s coat and cap...A beard and moustache covered the lower part of his face; his long, matted hair, crawling with lice, gave him a thick cap of curls. There was a firm, calm look in his eyes, the kind of sharpness and alertness that Pierre’s face had never shown before. (1121)

His physical self now represents necessity and no aspect of his life is trivial at this point. His habits are that of survival, and he finally processes the tranquility and sanity he has been searching for in other pursuits. All efforts for contentment have failed to make him happy, yet the suffering and torment of war have set him free. Ironically, he first experiences freedom as a prisoner. Pierre has been trying to find peace and certainty for the entirety of his life: “He had sought it through the power of thought, and all his struggles and various experiments had ended

in frustration, And now without noticing it he had gained that inner peace and harmony simply through the horror of death and hardship together with what he had observed in Karatayev” (1124-5). The concerns that previously had the power to bring Pierre into a state of despair seemed petty. His journey consisted of wanting to achieve religious salvation through freemasonry and desiring to find love. The former led him back to self-destructive behavior and the latter resulted in a disastrous marriage. Upon experiencing imprisonment, he finds religion that is not based on set rules or dictated virtues but on peace and freedom from the material. The unexpected way in which he finds freedom in imprisonment is rooted in his relationship with the land. He now takes from the natural world minimally, and because he is no longer able to overindulge, he is able to find joy in the simple acts such as eating when hungry. His suffering also brings him closer to Natasha. Their relationship is based in mutual understanding of the misery they have allowed to transform them and to free them from caring for the materialistic.

After suffering the course of his imprisonment, Pierre lives comfortably but is no longer dependent on lavishness or overindulgence nor is he overwhelmed by the realities of the world. His ability to philosophize and dream is no longer an oppressive force:

A blissful sense of freedom – the complete and inalienable freedom inherent in man that has made itself felt only at that first halting-place outside of Moscow – began to flood through Pierre’s soul during his convalescence. He was surprised to find his inner freedom, which did not depend on external circumstances, now transformed into outward freedom seemingly decked out with luxury and excess. (1229)

Because his freedom is not dependent upon the external, it is true freedom. Once he recuperates from his post prison physical ailment, he takes notice of his appreciation for life. It is the

independence from the previous self that creates a space in which Pierre's thoughts compose intellectual and spiritual clarity.

In the end, Pierre succeeds where Nikolay has failed. The personal regeneration that fails to occur in Nikolay Rostov's life does happen in Pierre's. Pierre is able to transgress the expectations of high society, and he escapes the corruption that is accepted along with such lifestyle. Finding freedom and tranquility, Pierre moves from a state of war to peace just as the events of his environment. His personal regeneration occurs along with historical events.

### Forgetting through Regeneration: The Importance of Post-War Memory

Tolstoy's focus on the land in *War and Peace* is a foreshadowing of the political conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The land itself is a major protagonist whose odyssey guides the spiritual and intellectual journeys of the human characters. As the dead bodies on the battlefields disappear into the earth and give way for regeneration, the role of the land complicates the human will to learn through history. The cyclical nature of the land correlates to the cyclical nature of war history. War destroys the land causing it to have to regenerate, but regeneration allows for the land to erase the past, which results in continuous battles among humans who cannot learn from a past that the land veiled by regenerating.

The time, when the land has not yet regenerated or is not able to regenerate fully, aids understanding that war does not end upon the return of the soldiers or the casualty count. War lives on in generations of people and in the land. With time, *War and Peace* becomes only more relevant as wars destroy in greater numbers (especially when it comes to the civilian population), and damage increasingly more land (often without the attacker's presence) that many inhabitants depend on. People who are lost in war and those who return shape the future generations. Those who die are lost along with what they have learned, and those who return may choose to forget or tell their interpretation of the events in their personal story, but the land is simply present. It dies and regenerates and speaks without words, for the language of the land is decipherable to only those who reflect on the visual. Just as the destruction of the land occurs along with the breaking down of political and social constructions a human victim of war previously believed in, the biological regeneration of natural life happens alongside the spiritual rebirth of the human. Therefore, regeneration can occur without forgetting, but only if the human historian does not ignore the events that have occurred and realizes what those events have caused. The objective

must be to avoid using the process of regeneration as a way to rid of evidence of the suffering of all life. Tolstoy would argue that regeneration presents a second chance the way spiritual rebirth does.

The journey of the land is physically static, so its story is each onlooker's own personal interpretation because what each personal sees when looking at the land is individual. Works that involve land in the discussion of war and its effects allow for land to become a force that is revealing and influential as opposed to a passive, silent victim. Land becomes more than a witness when human beings connect to it and realize its importance to their personal story. Personal stories can morph into collective histories when told and retold in the context of events. As any other character would struggle through their personal story, the land and the regeneration of the land faces a difficulty in its transformation. If the land remains the same after war, it embodies what history may want to erase or misrepresent; however, it is natural for the land to regenerate, and this can aid the forgetting of personal and collective history.

Tolstoy uses the images of the sick, ravished land in order to communicate the effects of war. After Vasily Denisov, an officer and Nikolay's comrade, is sent to a hospital due to his wound and to avoid trial, Rostov wishes to visit him. The location of the hospital is described as "a small Prussian town which had been ravaged twice by Russian and French troops. With the countryside around looking so pleasant in the early summer weather this little place looked particularly dismal, nothing but shattered roofs and fences, filthy streets and aged inhabitants, and sick and drunken soldiers wandering about everywhere" (435). The town itself is sick, which connects to the ailments of the soldiers he will see in the hospitals. The location exemplifies what war creates and destroys. The small town, because of the destruction within it, is a representation of the unhidden during wartime; additionally, the portrayal of this location as a

small, ravaged town makes the description consistent with Tolstoy's overall dislike of the urban environment due to the way its anonymity interrupts the peacefulness a rural area provides. Such peacefulness is linked to the sense of community that living close to the land cultivates. His idea of the city is one of an example of how civilization is removed from nature. Tolstoy describes the surrounding area as beautiful and blames what has become of the town on the war. In an article describing Tolstoy's feelings toward urban and rural environments, Harold K. Schefski explains Tolstoy's belief that the urban environment clashes with one's spirituality and emotion because of its overpowering social structure. According to Schefski, the characters in *War and Peace* self-reflect and experience clarity of mind in rural areas, while in urban areas, people are reduced to lifestyles of "social conformity" and "bureaucratic subordination" (28). Consequently, the insincere environment eliminates the possibility of a personal journey for a character.

Tolstoy also describes the bond one can develop with the city of Moscow despite its urban environment. Moscow is greatly affected by the war and is a city that the Russian people connect with due to its maternal essence and femininity, which clash with the masculine ideals of military life. These ideals only fall apart for Nikolay and Pierre when they realize the effects of war. In *Disarming Manhood: Roots of Ethical Resistance*, David A. J. Richards examines Tolstoy's desire to join the military. He is one of five men in history Richards chooses to focus on because he believes that Tolstoy's service in the Crimean War was an attempt to be part of a patriarchal tradition. He was a patriot inspired by the same politics he would one day criticize. Richards does not present Tolstoy as completely understanding the source of human brutality or expressing violence as being rooted in patriarchy, rather he discusses Tolstoy's struggle with this idea:



Tolstoy struggled for an artistic and ethical voice that resisted patriarchal violence. But through idealization based in desolating loss, he experienced a crisis of vocation in terms of artistic versus ethical voice. In the end, he found an ascetic ethical voice that, in disowning his artistic voice and achievements, called for nonviolence even as he tragically inflicted violence on people he loved or believed he loved. (42)

Tolstoy's ideas on violence and military always approach but never arrive at complete comprehension of where such behavior originates and how it is maintained. He recorded the Siege of Sevastopol (entitled *Sevastopol Sketches*) is a series of short stories about his experience and disgust with war. The stories are evidence of his personal struggle for an anti-war voice within the patriarchal system that controls the military. Richards argues that *War and Peace* has a primarily feminine viewpoint and denies male authority. This argument is partly inspired by the marriages within the book, including Nikolay Rostov's, as a part of the spiritual journey. Another significant aspect of Rostov's journey is based in nature as he transforms from soldier to farmer with a family (from one who takes life to one who gives life), which illustrates how he moves from war to peace literally. While Tolstoy neglects to address the role of sexism in military values, Rostov's rejection of the "cult of male honor" is an extremely significant aspect of the way of thinking that leads him to question authority. If spirituality is found in one's connection to the land, the hypermasculine military must be rejected because it is based on notions of masculinity that are far removed from the natural world and because they cause the destruction of the land.

Tolstoy's own affection toward Moscow complicates the military code of honor. Napoleon, as Tolstoy presents him, is someone who is ignorant in his approach to the land. In *War and Peace*, he describes Napoleon looking down at the city of Moscow as a foreigner unaware of the

city's maternal significance to Russians; however, Napoleon does see the city as feminine expressing in thought that "An occupied city is like a girl who has lost her virtue" (968). His description of the city before him is one of a raped woman: a woman he does not understand but wants to possess simply because that is a part of war and masculine, military identity:

And this was how he looked on the oriental beauty that he was seeing for the first time as she lay there before him. He had a strange feeling now that the desire burning within him for so long like an impossible dream had been gratified. In the clear morning light he looked first at the town and then at the plan, checking its details, excited and overawed by the certainty of possessing it. (968)

In planning what to do with the occupied city, he thinks only of what would hurt Alexander in their rivalry. The city's existence is denied when Napoleon reflects on it as a procession that can be used for male rivalry; however, because the city is land that regenerates, it is a self-regulating, independent being.

Pierre's eventual escape from the material world through a spiritual quest connects him to the land in a profound way. He regenerates just as the land does. He falls and suffers before he reaches enlightenment. Through Pierre, Tolstoy argues for the necessity of suffering in achieving spirituality and freedom. Pierre's isolation is eventually alleviated through his relationship with the land as the isolation develops into his ability to separate himself from the ideals of the military culture (connecting with the land instead). The Pierre whom we meet at the beginning of the novel is isolated in a far different manner. He is in the midst of everything yet barred off from participation as if in a fishbowl or a cage: an environment where he is wary of staring, judging eyes, but all he can do is stay in his confined space experiencing the limitations of detachment. In a fishbowl, he cannot have a clear perspective because he is still in the middle of

everything, which can be observed in his trying to function in the pretense of high society. This is what Pierre experiences at the lowest point of his crisis, but when he reaches his enlightenment as a prisoner, he is standing on the outside looking in at the rest of the world. To be on the outside looking in is to have a sense of autonomy and an opinion on the world one observes; however, while Pierre's disillusionment leads to eventual independence from war time constructions, it also foreshadows a grim future for him. If he is truly like the land, he is bound to deteriorate again in seeing another tragedy occur.

Regeneration allows for land to be an eternal character of war. It is a silent protagonist not confined to Tolstoy's work. After each war, a shattered land is left to deteriorate and eventually regenerate only to be destroyed again. The First World War is the next major link in this cycle, and to observe and discuss this link, T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* will serve as an example of how the land carries along to future conflicts as the perpetual character.

*The Waste Land* addresses the aftermath of war as it leaves lasting marks on land and people. The land becomes a desert plagued by the dryness that makes regeneration painful, and the void, the dust left of the war torn areas creates an atmosphere of fear and hopelessness; consequently, the land becomes much like a soldier or civilian suffering from post-war trauma. The land is anthropomorphized and becomes a major character throughout *The Waste Land*. The experiences of war and of post-war life vary from individual to individual, yet the effects of war on land are uniform. History can take away the voices of the deeply affected soldiers, civilians, and entire nations, but it cannot deny what has happened to the land when it physically and unapologetically manifests the results of war. Due to the impossibility of denying what is physically present in significant areas, the land serves as the immediate materialization of war.

The social trauma of WWI will result in political movements that vary from nation to nation as the people grow more disappointed in the social systems that have failed to protect them from such suffering. Yet eventually, these movements will serve as veils for new corruption plaguing the modern world; therefore, whatever regeneration breeds will be destroyed again in search of a new identity after trauma. “The Burial of the Dead” foreshadows the unsuccessful regeneration. It opens with the month of April, the season of rebirth, which breeds new life and is expected to erase the memory of the preceding destruction:

April is the cruellest month, breeding  
 Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
 Memory and desire, stirring  
 Dull roots with spring rain.

Eliot’s spring is unlike the month of renewal that is expected. The lilacs rising out of the dead land are mocking. The surrounding dryness that has overtaken the wasteland and the very idea that such harsh surroundings can produce lilacs is ironic in its disregard for events that have taken place before the “breeding” of the lilacs. The new season also fails to erase memory (both individual and collective memory), rather it mixes memory with a thirst for what the war has taken away. For Eliot’s speaker, regeneration is terrifying and takes him out of his numbness and confronts him with memory and desire. The land, by regenerating itself, allows its history to be forgotten, but there are those who remember. The people with this memory would be those who are forced to witness the destruction of the land, which is most likely to include those that depend upon the land. Those who die sink into the land and take all of their memories along with them. Regeneration certainly does not erase the memory of the speaker who would not find the

land in bloom to be cruel if he was not aware of what took place on this land. In an article addressing the month of April, the opening of the poem is presented as lamentation:

April is cruel because the birth that it brings is also a reminder of death. Its cruelty is the cruelty of the symbol, which mixes memory and desire, the world we have lost with the world we hope to gain. By means of the symbol, we do not so much represent nature as lament the nature we have lost, and long for the new nature that we are promised. The cruelty of the symbol lies in the ultimate identity of the lamentation and the promise. The act of divine destruction is also a promise of new life and redemption. (Garet 1814)

Redemption, however, is hollow because it does not end what makes regeneration necessary. As history repeats itself, regeneration becomes a process by which the slate can be wiped clean and the nations may simply wait for the recovery of the land. True redemption would rescue the land from further warfare rather than simply allowing it to renew in preparation for the next attack. This cycle of destruction and regeneration cannot be interrupted unless nature ceases to exist. The failure of recorded history lies in allowing for regeneration to substitute for concrete government action that will prevent the suffering of the land.

Narcissism in human interaction with the land answers why history tolerates forgetfulness. In Eliot's discussion of the land, narcissism perpetuates the view of the world as bound by humans and the lack of connection with the land itself. The exploitation of the land is noted in the presence of the shadow in *The Waste Land*. The prophet in "The Burial of the Dead" wants to show humans something different from the outline of self-image that the shadow presents:

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow  
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,  
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only  
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,  
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,  
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only  
There is shadow under this red rock,  
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),  
And I will show you something different from either  
Your shadow at morning striding behind you  
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;  
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

If the inhabitants only care for what is made in their self-image, they cannot recognize the presence and well-being of the land. The prophet describes the waste land as something out of focus with the presence of broken images and the dust. Outside of the biblical references to the land, the son of man is a force that destroys the land and knows little of its value and significance. Eliot refers to human beings as exploitative of the land in their individualistic pursuit of power. By participating in the exploitation of the land, people receive power by proxy; meaning, the power of their leaders fuels the people's self-image and the narcissistic stabilizes the means by which land is destroyed. This is a topic that is explored by Tolstoy in his presentation of the admired Alexander I of Russia and of Napoleon.

What can the self-absorbed human know about the land outside of the piling objects that cover it since the natural is no longer so easily distinguished from the unnatural? This is why it is a must for Tolstoy's characters to connect with the land prior to spiritual enlightenment. Human narcissism takes the land into destruction, and war is the eternal reminder of this. People fight for ideology, personal glory, glory of the nation, and glory of the leaders. Nationalist ideology comes from the idea that one's nation is of political and moral superiority to such an extent that it can use any means to push its ideology without being questioned. The questioning of nationalism would be considered unpatriotic and punishable by treason.

The shadow in the above passage from *The Waste Land* echoes the lines in Eliot's early poem titled "The Death of Saint Narcissus," which Eliot was inspired to write after seeing a performance of *Narcisse* in Paris:

The two performances, I would suggest, coalesced in Eliot's imagination to produce this subtly erotic poem, which presents the figure from Greek mythology as a religious martyr who recounts his various metamorphoses and then, to escape the lure of the flesh, becomes "a dancer to God": "Because his flesh was in love with the burning arrows / He danced on the hot sand/ Until the arrows came." As Smith points out, several of its lines reappear in "Gerontion," *The Waste Land*, and *Ash Wednesday*. (Hargrove 70-72)

"The Death of Saint Narcissus" contains the lines "And I will show you something different from either / Your shadow sprawling over the sand at daybreak, or / Your shadow leaping behind the fire against the red rock." These lines not only echo the previously mentioned "The Burial of the Dead" passage, they also affirm that what Eliot discusses here is indeed the issue of the land being destroyed by human narcissism. The narcissism of man and its connection to the

destruction of the land in Eliot's work is also discussed in Lyndall Gordon's article entitled "The Waste Land Manuscript":

With "The Death of Saint Narcissus" Eliot first introduces the desert with its hot sand and rock, ultimately glimpsed in part I and developed at length in part V of the completed *Waste Land*. Narcissus, carried away by his own beauty and his willingness to be transformed, deliberately seeks out the desert as the proper spot for a religious drama. He goes to become "a dancer to God," but to his dismay discovers no divine light, only his own flaws—his self-enthralment, his indifference to others, his masochistic delight in the burning arrows. The ordeal leaves him dry and stained, with the taste of death in his mouth. It is crucial, I think, to see *The Waste Land*, indeed all of Eliot's subsequent work, in the context of this martyr's tale, the story of an unsuccessful saint. (Gordon 558-559)

Man's connection to the land cannot be found by drowning in his self image, but it can be found in a death that causes one to become a part of the land. To become a part of the land is to fertilize it and give way to new life that blooms in the battlefields. The religious references throughout works that deal with land suggest that the spiritual self is found in the land. To seek sainthood does not bring Narcissus closer to God, as he wishes; rather it brings him closer to a self-absorbed death.

The land as city also shows evidence of the effects of warfare on war-torn nations. Eliot calls this the unreal city, and its deterioration captures the despair of how an environment that has been looked upon as greatness can easily fall. And because the city is land shaped by human narcissism, its destruction not only devastates the land but also injures the human ego. His first mention of the city is characterized by the lives lost:



Unreal City,  
 Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,  
 A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,  
 I had not thought death had undone so many.

Eliot's choice to reflect upon the lost lives rather than on what has happened to the city is rooted in the connection between the experience of the human being and the experience of the land. The human and the land emotionally and physically manifest the state of being war-torn. Eliot uses the color brown to imply decay and employs a season prior to the land's regeneration as he mournfully reflects on the great number of lost lives. The Unreal City reappears in "The Fire Sermon" with the following lines: "Unreal City/Under the Brown fog of a winter noon." This time the city is Smyrna (now Izmir). During WWI, Greece lost Smyrna to Turkey in the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922). In September of 1922, when Smyrna was lost to the Turks, a fire broke out due to all the chaos. The Great Fire of Smyrna lasted four days. In *Revisiting The Waste Land*, Lawrence S. Rainey discusses the idea that Eliot's poem forces the reader to "face dying civilizations" and serves as an "obituary" of the powerful empires (110). In war, civilians and soldiers die, become ill, return with wounds, and/or are plagued by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The land also grows ill, is in broken ruins, and becomes a place of lament for the people. The land's capability to evoke the emotional places it as one with the human experience of war. The manifestation of the land's post traumatic experience eases the stigma of depression in the hypermasculine military. The land is a touchstone that openly displays the effects of war that are so often denied in the soldier.

"The Burial of the Dead" closes with an image of an attempt to end the cycle of regeneration with the lines: "That corpse you planted last year in your garden, / 'Has it begun to sprout? Will

it bloom this year? / ‘Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?’ Eliot’s reference to corpses used in fertility rituals points out that the dead bodies are actually a key component in regeneration. When humans turn to dust, they are closest to the earth because there is no other way to connect to the earth in the modern times. The lines echo the mockery of the lilacs rising out of the battlefield fed by the dead soldiers. The corpse garden is expected to bloom once again, which suggests that the speaker of those lines knows that this garden has already regenerated, been destroyed, and will now regenerate again. The lines not only recognize the past of warfare but also foreshadow the future.

This passage continues with: “‘Oh keep the Dog far hence, that’s friend to men, / ‘Or with his nails he’ll dig it up again!’” The dog must be kept away from the planted corpse because of the fear that it will be dug up. The image of man’s friend with his nails dug into the soil trying to prevent regeneration suggests an awareness of the fate of a blooming land. Land only regenerates to be destroyed once again, according to history’s patterns. The dog is trying to prevent man from such a fate and wishes to dig up what will fertilize the dead land. With this, *The Waste Land* becomes a eulogy. One must deal with what the land has become because corrupted humanity is bound to destroy it again. To regenerate the land before looking at it and recognizing man’s error’s in judgment is to allow for nature to build a superficially clean slate from which battle can continue.

As the poem concludes, the images built up to an apocalypse that the modern world has created. The conclusion echoes the previous sections of the poem. In “What the Thunder Said,” Eliot returns to the desert and again describes the wasteland as a place where life cannot thrive: “Here is no water but only rock/Rock and no water and the sandy road,” and the twenty lines that

follow become very repetitive in discussing the lack of water. The dryness of the wasteland begins to resemble a warning to those who may be waiting for regeneration to come once again.

The restoration and rebirth that people may expect after major events will not occur, and the major cities are rebuilt only to be destroyed again. The images in “What the Thunder Said” are that of a desert that has consumed the world and of crowds that bring death without hope of the world rebuilding after crisis created by the modern world. The dryness, the near silence, and empty land reflect on the idea of abandonment, which is a description of post-war battle lands. The fall of Jerusalem in the Old Testament is described as having left Jerusalem a widow:

What is that sound high in the air  
Murmur of maternal lamentation  
Who are those hooded hordes swarming  
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth

Maternal lamentation in connection to the earth is crucial to what Tolstoy sees in war-torn land. In a character study of Natasha, Nicholas O. Warner argues that Natasha is the most complex and multilayered character (her journey described as spiritual and epic), whose individual fate corresponds with the fate of the nation, and who in marriage becomes a “nourishing mother earth figure” (1017). Considering that the land is maternal and Pierre connects with the land as a part of his odyssey, his marriage to Natasha is a significant aspect of his spiritual bond with the land.

In the following passage from *The Waste Land*, the cities of the world are plagued by destruction. The color violet is mentioned several times within the poem, which creates a feeling of darkness as Eliot presents destroyed cities that the audience cannot feel will be functioning again:

What is the city over the mountains

Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air

Falling towers

Jerusalem Athens Alexandria

Vienna London

Unreal

Much of this idea of the world ending can be a reflection of common fears of the end of the First World War. People observing the aftermath understood that as they move into modern times, wars will become more dangerous and destroy greater numbers of people with increasing violence and carelessness. The mention of exclusively famous cities is much like Tolstoy's description of Moscow as a city that every Russian understood for its fixed role. These are cities the public does not need to inhabit in order to feel an attachment to because they often serve as a representation of their nations.

The image of the falling city and ruins returns in the closing lines of the poem: "London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down" as the narrator concludes his grieving. The lines "Quando fiam uti chelidon—O swallow swallow" tie in the idea of the destruction of the world with the song of the swallow (a reference to Philomela's story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), which is a song of mourning and maternal lament. The Latin translates into "When shall be like the swallow?" once again foreshadowing a grim future that will require such song. The song of birds appears in several parts of the poem. The sounds of birds are often a lament or warning, which both function within the idea of the dead land because *The Waste Land* is an expression of grief toward a world being destroyed but the poem can also serve as warning to potential repeats in history.

The vicious way in which history repeats itself is rooted in the human ability to forget and neglect it. The experiences of the soldier are denied through forgotten events and the physical and emotional damage that escapes attention of the public and the authorities; however, the effects of war on land are not as easily avoidable due to its greater spatial existence. The land maintains an everlasting power of memory despite human exploitation. The conventional relationship between humans and nature is not a reciprocating one. While humans, who do not reflect on their treatment of nature, are greedy and demanding, nature has a tendency to be selfless and to give without taking. The land's constant rebirth is also exploited because it happens without human redemption or involvement and aids the forgetting, so as history repeats itself, land regenerates along with the repetition.

The nature of regeneration continuously foreshadows the future treatment of the land. Nature provides for humans without motive and never consents to being destroyed for the benefit of human war time goals, yet it renews itself to erase a past caused by humans. The answer to this issue of mistreatment of land is brought back to the topic of patriarchy in the writings of Iris Marion Young: "Since the exploitation of nature is bound to social processes that oppress people, and since the logic of these systems of domination is modeled on the logic of male domination, neither nature nor women will be liberated without an explicit confrontation with the structures of male domination" (175). Patriarchy comes down to making use of available resources for materialistic gain in its journey for profitability, abundance of commodities, trivial processions, and dominance. War is ultimate dominance and quest for power.

This seemingly unlikely connection leads to the conclusion of what one can look at for solution to denial. Denial is in recorded history, and Tolstoy's personification of the land suggests there is an answer to dealing with denial in looking at the land. People may be hidden,

their transgressions punished, their transformations ignored; however, the public cannot push aside a stubbornly present land with its deformations and evidence of violence. People's lives do not live in history, they live in the land. It is where they live, where they die, where they leave behind the most honest and brutal aspects of the human experience. Whether one is a soldier enthusiastically waiting to carry out whatever act necessary for his or her ideology or a soldier faced with a situation where his or her crime cannot be carried out, one is eternally bound to the land. Whether one is a civilian faced with an unexpected, undeserved act in war or a civilian taking on the role of a soldier fighting back for the land, for the people, or a different ideology, the land will be one's resting place. When one's body becomes part of the land, it will rot into it, and the lilacs will breed out of it. In history, this will be recorded as tragedy of the people, glory of the soldiers, and necessary, political acts of government.

## Conclusion

Nikolay's journey comes full circle from devotion to disillusionment to devotion again.

Upon being able to see outside of the constructed reality, he is blinded by the light and willingly returns to the world created for him. His move from war to peace manifests itself in his life as a farmer, yet he is not able to argue against the government he cannot even intelligibly defend. By contrast, Pierre escapes the shadows and sees the highest reality, the truth (even meeting Platon himself). In *War and Peace*, Pierre quickly takes the stage as the eternal pacifist. His voice is that of Tolstoy, and what tortures him and gnaws at his intellectual and spiritual life is the expression of Tolstoy's own dilemmas. In a heated debate on the subject of war, Pierre argues "...that a time would come when there would be no more war" (425) to which old prince Bolkonsky responds: "'Drain all the blood out of men's veins and fill 'em up with water, then there'll be no more war. Women's talk. Women's talk'" (425). The old prince's suggestion that war is not only a natural and inevitable part of life but also that anti-war sentiment is women's nonsense places him within the text as the manifestation of the irrationality and the bigotry that exist in power. The idea that war is inevitable results in the mind-set that people should fight each other instead of fighting war itself because the former is natural and the latter is impossible; therefore, the actions carried out during a time of war are not to be held to peace time standards, and the consequences of war are not considered preventable atrocities.

While some may view war as mass murder, for others, its crimes seem more like deleterious errors taking place at a tragic yet necessary time. The issue lies in the notion of war time crime as non-existent. As the narrator explains the beginning of the war, he states:

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of June, the forces of Western Europe crossed the Russian frontier, and war began. In other words, an event took place which defied human reason and all human

nature. Millions of men set out to inflict on one another untold evils – deceptions, treachery, robbery, forgery, counterfeiting, theft, arson and murder – on a scale unheard of in the annals of law-courts down the centuries and all over the world, though at the time the men responsible did not think of these deeds as crimes. (667)

Essentially, through *War and Peace*, Tolstoy fights for recognition of war time violence as it takes its toll on the people and the land. The old prince's suggestion that delusional senselessness is a product of the feminine is responded to by Tolstoy's feminization of the land through the use of the Prussian town, the city of Moscow, and praise for humble life that is connected to the earth rather than manufactured pretensions.

The land is the rumination of human error and ability to regenerate, and the patterns of human rebirth are intimately tied to historical forgetfulness. To avoid the forgetfulness that historical repetition results from, Tolstoy argues that the illusion of freedom must be let go: "In the eyes of history the acknowledgement of human free will as a force capable of influencing historical events and therefore not subject to any laws is what the acknowledgement of free will in the movements of the heavenly bodies would be to astronomy" (1355). When people begin to see themselves as a part of something greater, they will see the patterns and laws that govern the events, and they will proceed to understand the events through observations of the universe.

A part of recognizing greater forces that guide history is the dismissal of heroes: "When it comes to events in history, so-called 'great men' are nothing but labels attached to events; like real labels, they have the least possible connection with events themselves" (671). The use of heroes is employed to escape the big picture and in order to avoid the more difficult explanation of events. Historians have to deal with the impossible and cannot rely on history's characters for explanations because the heroes do not have the individual freedom to create history: "Every



action they perform, which they take to be self-determined and independent, is in historical sense quite the opposite; it is interconnected with the whole course of history, and predetermined from eternity” (671). Tolstoy’s disdain for history’s appointment of great men and contempt for confident attempts at explanations for events is rooted in the idea that history is made up of many smaller factors and that people do not have to wait for heroes (in most cases, people cannot afford to wait for heroes). One cannot search for causes in the will of one great man in history. History is an ongoing debate that should not claim to know the whole truth at any given time on any period of time.

The complexity of history must be accepted. Historians believe the force that moves nations is the power of heroes. To attribute this power to whatever individual they happen to be writing about will produce history that makes perfect sense; however, “The moment historians of different nationalities and attitudes begin to describe the same event, the answers produced lose all kind of sense, because the same force is interpreted by them not just differently, but often in exactly the opposite way” (1321). What Tolstoy wants the readers to understand about history is what Pierre comes to recognize about his own life: the human experience is uncertain, much is unknown, and the sensitive dependence the entirety of the history of life has on numerous, discrete, and seemingly unconnected circumstances precedes authoritative claims.

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