

READING BACKWARDS

An Advance Retrospective
on Russian Literature



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8. From Sky to Sea: When Andrei Bolkonskii Voiced Achilles

Svetlana Yefimenko

The ancient poet lives on in what others make of him.

Nora Goldschmidt and Barbara Graziosi, *Tombs of the Ancient Poets*¹

Tolstoy's engagement with classical literature, philosophy, and history, both Greek and Latin, lasted throughout his life. His thought drew on the work of Herodotus, Plato, Plutarch, and Stoic philosophers, and his interest in antiquity culminated in a sudden and passionate yearning to teach himself ancient Greek in the 1870s. However, Tolstoy's greatest debt is, arguably, to Homer. To state that Tolstoy's writing is Homeric is not a new insight, and critics like George Steiner² and Harold Bloom³ have famously pointed out the connections between the epic writers. What has escaped notice, however, is the possibility of reversing the direction of influence: perhaps the reach of Tolstoy's writing is so vast that it prodded Homer to pick up his lyre.

This paper presents a comparative analysis of the language of Tolstoy's Andrei Bolkonskii and the language of Homer's Achilles, approaching both characters as warrior archetypes. I will proceed by contrasting the Bakhtinian notion of stable and self-consistent epic heroes with a Tolstoyan epic heroism that is both unstable and self-contradictory. Such comparison will serve to illuminate latent tendencies in Homer's text and will also show us how select passages from the *Iliad* (8th Century BC) and *War and Peace* (*Voyna i mir*, 1869) rely on a self-reflexive, at times critical, multiplicity of voices. Reading Homer's Achilles as informed by Tolstoy's Andrei helps us glimpse how what Tolstoy took for granted

when writing, and perhaps more importantly, what readers take for granted when reading, can retroactively determine the meaning of ancient epic narrative.

The Epic Character

Approaching Achilles as Tolstoyan—or, more precisely, as Andreian—troubles the distinction between epic and novelistic writing put forth perhaps most comprehensively by Mikhail Bakhtin. In his typology of the novel, familiar to most critics in the humanities, Bakhtin characterizes the genre as fundamentally opposed to the epic in a variety of ways. Most relevantly, Bakhtin emphasizes the novel's inconclusiveness and internality. This ambiguity stands in contrast to the epic's external exhaustiveness. By virtue of its historical distance, the world of the epic is complete and knowable: 'In distanced images we have the whole event, and plot interest (that is, the condition of not knowing) is impossible'.⁴ Such a monolithic conception of epic, however, cannot account for the ambivalence of Homer's Achilles.

In Book 9 of the *Iliad*, Achilles receives an embassy of beloved and esteemed friends—Odysseus, Phoenix, and Ajax—who attempt to persuade the hero to re-join the battle against the Trojans. With characteristic articulacy, Odysseus begins by describing how the Achaeans are suffering; he appeals to Achilles' love and respect for his father, Peleus; he lists the splendid gifts Agamemnon offers, and finally adds that if these things cannot persuade Achilles, then perhaps he will be tempted by the great glory he will surely achieve. After Odysseus has spoken, Phoenix recalls his own long history with Achilles and recounts the story of Meleager⁵ as both an ethical example and a cautionary tale. Finally, seeing that they are getting nowhere, Ajax says the envoys ought to leave. Their visit was in vain, Ajax explains, because Achilles has no sense of camaraderie. The three envoys had appealed to multiple Achaean values: duty, loyalty, friendship, kinship, ethics, tradition, glory, and honour. Paul Friedrich identifies nine honour-linked values for Iliadic heroes: power, wealth, magnanimity, personal loyalty, precedence, sense of shame, reputation, courage, and excellence.⁶ Each of these values is present in some way in the offers, concessions, and arguments offered by the envoys.

In rejecting the embassy, Achilles rejects these heroic honour-linked values of warrior society for reasons of his own. These reasons certainly seemed incomprehensible to Odysseus, Phoenix, Ajax, and later even to Patroclus, who are closest to him as comrades and epic heroes. Readers, too, are bewildered by the passage, and the embassy to Achilles remains the most contested section of the *Iliad*.⁷ Donald Lateiner writes, 'Akhilleus penetrates the ruse and refuses the "king's ransom". Thus he confounds heroes trained keenly to scent booty (which presumably confers most of the desired honour) and at least eighty-one generations of critics.'⁸ Richard Martin and Seth L. Schein comment upon the unusual nature of Achilles' refusal; Schein suggests Achilles inhabits a world he 'qualitatively transcends but cannot leave', existing as 'a hero alienated not only from the world of the poem but from the world celebrated by hundreds of years of poetic tradition and cultural values'.⁹ How can Achilles exist within heroic epic and yet defy its ethos?

Describing the epic hero, Bakhtin argues that 'what is complete is also something hopelessly ready-made; he is all there, from beginning to end [...]. He is, furthermore, completely externalized. There is not the slightest gap between his authentic essence and its external manifestation [...] outside of this predetermined fate and predetermined position there is nothing.'¹⁰ Achilles *does* have a predetermined fate, and this is the source of his sorrow. However, Bakhtin is not referring to the inescapable prophecy passed on this hero's short life, but to the inability of heroes of epic narrative to question the validity of their lives in a non-trivial, meaningful way (perhaps even in a philosophical way). In Bakhtin's framework, Achilles has no choice but to reflect epic values because he cannot contradict them. If this is the case, then Achilles' refusal of the embassy's appeal is a fit, a temporary aberration, a brief bend in his familiar course until he knows better and returns to himself, unchanged. His narrative becomes an entertaining story with a moral: do not be angry like Achilles. This is precisely the sort of story Phoenix recounts: do not be angry like Meleager.

For Homer to have implied a deeper and more psychologically and philosophically complex meaning, Achilles would require an individuated, private self that is capable of reflecting on and transcending the epic horizon. If Achilles' tale is different from that of

Meleager, it is because Achilles himself differs from the type of hero Meleager personifies. Thomas Finan writes of Achilles:

It is so easy to see him as what he has been called, merely 'A magnificent barbarian', in reference to his relentless heart, his savage anger and paroxysmic vengeance. Even those who perceive the *Iliad* as a tragedy then find it all too easy to fit the pieces together in the traditional moralistic pattern [...]. Achilles is a great character with one big 'flaw', his 'temper' which becomes the ruination of him – until he 'purges' it [...]. This [...] puts the ceiling of the tragedy too low. It misses the vital centre of Achilles. It mistakes existential torment for a primitive force of nature, a 'restless heart' for a glandular condition, and rage against human finitude for a violent temper and want of virtuous self-control. It explains *away* the character of Achilles.¹¹

If concepts such as existential torment and rage against finitude seem like dubious qualities to assign to an ancient hero embedded in a traditional heroic context, it is because they are so thoroughly modern. Approaching Achilles as part warrior, part amateur philosopher who positions himself critically against the Homeric epoch might be regarded as the result of a complacent presentism; Kenneth Haynes notes that some critics¹² 'reject that reading as anachronistically imputing to Achilles modern forms of subjectivity and interiority'.¹³ The assertion that Achilles lacks interiority is reminiscent of Bakhtin's position. Justina Gregory, too, argues that such a reading introduces a 'subjective-individualist' concept of self which 'seems intuitive to moderns but is anachronistic in the context of archaic Greece'.¹⁴ However, if Achilles is displaced from his own time, modern readers may not be to blame. Perhaps it is not critics who are guilty of anachronism, but Homer.

Heroes

To treat themes which are not readily available within the bounds of the writer's historical context is to participate in what Pierre Bayard terms 'an effect of dissonance' insofar as a text features a genre, theme, or concept 'used at a time when it had yet to be invented'.¹⁵ If we regard Achilles as a philosophically inclined temporal vagabond, he becomes a textbook case of Bayardian dissonance. How does the ancient warrior express such a historically implausible literary psychology? By borrowing the modern language of Tolstoy's Andrei Bolkonskii.

Andrei, it must be noted, is no hero if by *hero* we imply strict obedience to an internalized heroic code which consists of interdependent elements comprising status, performance, and reward.¹⁶ Heroes, whether on the plain of Scamander or the field of Austerlitz, perform bravely in battle and prudently in the assembly, thereby obtaining renown, admiration, and glory. James Redfield writes: 'In his nature the hero remains like other men, but culture bestows on him a value; he does not survive, but he is remembered [...]. His community sustains him and sends him to his destruction. On behalf of community he must leave community and enter a realm of force'.¹⁷ Andrei's father sends him to war with a weighty injunction:

'Remember one thing, Prince Andrei: if you are killed, I—an old man—will suffer... But if I learn that you did not behave as befits the son of Nikolai Bolkonskii, I will be... ashamed!' ¹⁸

Compare how Nestor reminds Achilles of the day Achilles' father Peleus prepared his son for Troy:

Remember your father's last commands? [...]
The day he sent you out of Phthia [...]
'Now always be the best, my boy, the bravest,
And hold your head up high above the others!' (*Il.* 2.912–37, p. 322)

As the sons of recognized heroes, Andrei and Achilles are to behave courageously, fight only in the front ranks, and achieve glory for themselves and their families. Their allegiance is to themselves, their fathers, and their community. What does it mean, then, when a hero rejects these obligations to family and community and refuses to fight? After all, this is precisely what Andrei and Achilles do.

First, their refusal separates Andrei and Achilles from typical, run-of-the-mill heroes, such as Prince Sarpedon (a Trojan ally) and the Greek warrior-king Diomedes in the *Iliad*, and the Russian army captains Timokhin and Tushin in *War and Peace*. What unites these latter figures is their fulfilment of martial duty without intellectual or moral deviation. Whether they are sung or unsung, whether they question the legitimacy of war or not, nothing interferes with their uncomplicated loyalty and their acquiescence to the way things are. It is such commitment that wins battles, as Andrei points out in the following passage, a notion Tolstoy surely seconded:

'Success never depended, and never will depend, on position, or equipment, or even on numbers, and least of all on position.'

'On what, then?'

'On the feeling that is in me, in him, [...] in every soldier.'¹⁹

It is this 'feeling' that prompts Prince Sarpedon's famous address to his captain Glaucus on the meaning of heroism in Book 12 of the *Iliad*. Sarpedon is no fanatical youth like *War and Peace's* Petia Rostov, inexperienced yet eager to fight the enemy. The Trojan ally has already glimpsed the brutal heart of war and so would much rather *not* be fighting. However, Sarpedon also understands that he must die one day, regardless, so there is no sense in cowardice now:

Ah my friend, if you and I could escape this fray
and live forever, never a trace of age, immortal,
I would never fight on the front lines again
or command you to the field where men win fame,
But now, as it is, the fates of death await us,
thousands poised to strike, and not a man alive
can flee them or escape—so in we go for attack!
Give our enemy glory or win it for ourselves! (*Il.* 12.374–81, pp.
335–36)

Sarpedon is open to the possibility of the enemy's triumph partly because he has no illusions about justice favouring either side. Tushin is the heroic equal of Sarpedon; he calmly remarks, '*pokorit'sia nado*' ('one must submit').²⁰ Like Sarpedon, Tushin's attitude is not one of resignation but of acceptance. He resembles the Anatolian Trojans when he sits squatting 'Turkish-style';²¹ in his own imagination, he identifies with epic heroes: 'He pictured himself as an enormously tall, powerful man, hurling cannon balls at the French with both hands'.²² Tushin's vision of himself is truer to his nature than his deceptively feeble appearance, and those who are also heroic, such as Andrei, see him this way, too.

Sarpedon, Timokhin, and Tushin do not challenge the justice of war because they do not challenge the justice of mortality; even if they do, they submit to both nonetheless. An unwillingness to submit is part of what separates Achilles and Andrei from typical heroes; it makes them worthy subjects of inquiry. It is also what makes epic character decidedly less one-dimensional than Bakhtin allows. F. T. Griffiths and S. J. Rabinowitz write:

Heroism manifests itself faster and more interestingly by its deformations than by its triumphs, which, narratively, must always be rare and climactic [...]. The normative hero being normatively heroic [...] plays no more than a supporting role in epic [...]. There is just no story in it.²³

While Homer's hearers and Tolstoy's readers respect and admire Sarpedon and Tushin, their story of quiet constancy is not the central story that one wants to read or hear. Readers of epic may expect the heroic, but readers of literature expect unique voices and the familiar made strange. We want to be surprised. Achilles surprised his comrades and continues to surprise readers today precisely because of his inconstancy, a quality I suggest he acquired from Andrei Bolkonskii.

Deformed Heroes

The recalcitrant and arrogant Andrei certainly fails to observe Tushin's maxim that 'one must submit'. Andrei has never submitted to the general mood:

'Why are you so gloomy?' Nesvitskii asked, noticing Prince Andrei's pale face and glinting eyes.

'There's nothing to be happy about,' answered Bolkonskii.²⁴

This exchange occurs early in the novel but might well have happened at almost any point, because Andrei's eyes are usually glinting feverishly and he broods often. Yet it is not his sullenness that marks Andrei as out of place. He is described in terms of his excesses—he is more intense, angrier, and more relentless than others. Overwhelmed by his impressions, he rejects a friendly gesture from Prince Nesvitskii:

Grown even paler, Bolkonskii, with a malicious expression on his face, pushed him away [...]. That nervous irritation the sight of [the Austrian general] Mack had caused him, the news of his defeat, and thoughts of what awaited the Russian army, found their outlet in exasperation at [junior officer] Zherkov's inappropriate joke.²⁵

Such 'nervous irritation' (*'nervnoe razdrazhenie'*) is not unusual for Andrei:

With an expression of nervous irritation [...]. His serious face trembled with nervous animation in every muscle; his eyes [...] now shone with

a bright, radiant glitter [...]. [It could be seen that] the less lively he seemed ordinarily, the more energetic was he during moments of sickly irritation.²⁶

The nervous energy which manifests itself in Andrei's gleaming eyes and sudden rages can be useful, too:

...[A]nxious, but not tired ([...] Prince Andrei could endure physical exhaustion much better than the strongest people) [...].²⁷

Andrei can endure more than the strongest people because he *feels* more. This well of feeling is not mediated intellectually—its source is primal. As with his passionate predecessor Achilles, Prince Andrei's greatest fear is dishonour. Yet this purely social fear is overwhelmed by the excess of powerful energy which is responsible for his outbursts and characterizes his inner, socially unmediated self. During a minor disagreement with an officer, Andrei becomes disproportionately angry:

[Prince Andrei saw] that which he feared most in the world, what the French call *ridicule*, but his instinct urged otherwise. [...] Prince Andrei, with a face disfigured by fury, rode up to him [...].²⁸

Andrei's reaction is excessive; a face disfigured by fury (*'izurodovannym ot beshenstva'*) is an elemental, almost bestial thing. These unreasonable reactions never afflict self-possessed heroes who know how to submit. In their excesses of pride, anger, and obsession with honour, Achilles and Andrei can understand one another. In Book 1 of the *Iliad*, in the first of many instances of sudden anger, Achilles reacts violently to an insult from Agamemnon. Like Andrei confronting his brother officer, Achilles is consumed by pride, vacillating between controlling his rage and reaching for a weapon:

The heart in his rugged chest was pounding, torn...
Should he draw the long sharp sword slung at his hip [...]
or check his rage and beat his fury down? (*Il.* 1.223–26, pp. 83–84)

Athena intervenes and prevents Achilles from harming Agamemnon, yet Achilles remains furious:

But Achilles rounded on Agamemnon once again,
lashing out at him, not relaxing his anger for a moment. (*Il.*
1.262–63, p. 85)

Achilles' father, companions, and even Athena regularly remind him to control his pride and temper; Andrei receives a similar scolding from his sister, Mar'ia. Such admonitions are in vain because the defect of ill-humour is implicit in these warriors' superiority. Achilles' anger is disproportionate because everything about him is disproportionate—like Andrei, he is stronger and stranger than his fellows. Andrei and Achilles feel more intensely and suffer more deeply because there is more for them to feel and to suffer.

In a certain sense, unusual depth of anger is an asset to a particular type of fighter. Donna Orwin writes, '[t]he spokesman in *War and Peace* for righteous anger as the motivator of the warrior is Prince Andrei'.²⁹ Anger does not inspire Sarpedon or Tushin; it is a dangerous motivation, both for the warrior and for those who love him. Crucially, it also makes the warrior more complicated by disrupting the nature of his heroism. In their inability to submit and in their emotional and physical excesses, Achilles and Andrei distort the traditional shape of what heroism means. They are deformed heroes in a double sense: they themselves are disproportionate and so they are able to de-form the concept of the heroic.

Without question, however, Andrei *is* a hero. He runs with the standard into the most violent heart of battle, refuses to fall to the ground to avoid cannon fire, and will not let himself be afraid. His father calls him '*voin*' ('a warrior');³⁰ the diplomat Bilibin calls him '*un héros*';³¹ most tellingly for Tolstoy, General Kutuzov (in the book, an exemplar of what it means to be Russian) claims in a letter to old Bolkonskii that Andrei '*pal geroem*' ('fell as a hero').³² Later, he praises Andrei nostalgically: "'I remember you at Austerlitz... I remember, I remember you with the standard [...] I know that your path is the path of honour'".³³ Andrei enters the war expecting glory, and the two men he consistently admires most, his father and Kutuzov, expect him to be courageous and honourable. These expectations exist because, somewhat circularly, Andrei is a warrior and a hero. As with Achilles, heroism is Andrei's social role, determined by birth and by authority: the first as son of the illustrious Bolkonskii, and the second as adjutant to General Kutuzov, who regards himself as Andrei's second father.³⁴ Andrei's heroic role is then confirmed by practice, namely, success in battle. Andrei's two fathers have pre-determined and delimited the

horizon of his possibilities: 'The community asks of some members that they leave the community and enter the anticomunity of combat. There they must overcome mercy and terror and learn to value their honour above their own lives or another's.'³⁵

If Andrei's unwillingness to submit to acceptable social mores manifests itself in seemingly trivial ways—a shove here, a hostile remark there—ultimately, the excesses which motivate his insubstantial insubordinations well up into something very substantial indeed: the hero's rejection of his prescribed social role. After Austerlitz, Andrei is a warrior and a hero who renounces both roles. If Sarpedon prefers not to fight, it is because he has a family he misses and because war is cruel and hard. Andrei's withdrawal from the war has very different motivations: he has seen through the illegitimacy of the hero's position in society and the false association with glory that sustains it. Combat may exist outside the boundary of community, but so does freedom, which includes the overturning of conventions established by community. Combat is where Andrei and Achilles learn freedom from convention. In Andrei's brief moments with Napoleon, the warrior ethos collapses for him:

At that moment, all the interests preoccupying Napoleon seemed so insignificant to [Prince Andrei], his own hero appeared to him so trivial [...], that he could not reply to [Napoleon].

Gazing into Napoleon's eyes, Prince Andrei thought of the insignificance of greatness [...].³⁶

I began by asking what it means for an epic hero to refuse his role. First, departing from the 'typical' violent heroism of epic forms, a different sort of heroism is elevated to prominence, one which Griffiths and Rabinowitz identify by its deformations from the norm. There is a grandeur in rejecting honours, but only if the rejection is performed by one who has already earned them. Such a narrative implies a sort of virtue ethics: only an Andrei or an Achilles can refuse glory, and this refusal contributes to the deformation of heroism. Within the bounds of this deformed epic, heroes can take on the *novelistic* burden of rejecting the traditional values of epic, and their rejection is legitimized by their position within epic. If an unwarlike, weaker type, like Homer's grotesque Grecian soldier Thersites or Tolstoy's naïve civilian Pierre Bezukhov, concluded that violence is unjustifiable, we would suspect their criticism of cowardice or sloth, no matter how morally justified it

might be.³⁷ In Achilles and Andrei, epic is performing a self-reflexive, critical function which Bakhtin regards as typical solely of the novelistic genre: 'This ability of the novel to criticize itself is a remarkable feature of this ever-developing genre.'³⁸

In her writings on *molodechestvo*, Donna Orwin points out that the *molodets* figure is fundamentally positive for Tolstoy, especially because the *molodets* is usually engaged in defending *narodnye* (popular) interests: 'Freed from preoccupation with themselves, soldiers in this state throw themselves into communal activity in a way that mimics and indeed produces self-sacrifice.'³⁹ Pierre imagines the soldier type as occupying this ethical and almost supernatural height:

They—these people strange and unfathomable for him until now, *they* were clearly and sharply separated in his thoughts from all other people.

'To be a soldier, just a soldier!' Pierre thought [...]. 'To enter into that communal life with all one's being [...]. But how to throw off all this unnecessary, devilish stuff, all the burden of the outer man?'⁴⁰

What Pierre envies is the self-forgetful commitment so characteristic of Tushin and Sarpedon which, as Andrei understands, determines victory or defeat. Only those who have achieved this kind of self-abnegation can legitimately question it. A life of courage, vitality, and violence can be regarded as its own justification partly because it produces a unique space for sacrifice, of course, but also for the much more prosaic reason Sarpedon points out: such a life is not possible for most of us because it is painful and hard. Few of us, even if we choose it, would be able to endure it. Only after the prescribed and supremely difficult social role has been affirmed by inheritance, authority, and most importantly, successful violent action, can it be rejected. To be legitimate, judgement on violence must be passed by those who are capable of committing violence. An *ex-molodets* is a tragic, admirable figure.

Second, the nature of the hero's ethical rejection of the epic role is reflective, at the level of both authorial and embedded narrative. A work which simultaneously celebrates "typical" heroism in a Sarpedon or a Tushin, but also interrogates war's validity in the deformed heroism of an Achilles or Andrei, is a self-reflective, polyvocal work, equipped to question its own foundations. The self-reflective epic takes the trouble to provide reasons and arguments for rejecting heroism, here articulated by Achilles and Andrei. These reasons do not necessarily echo the

reasons Homer or Tolstoy might have articulated, further complicating the multiplicity of voices. Ruth Scodel describes violent moments in the *Iliad* which beget moral disagreement between narrator and narrative:

When moral judgments appear in such passages, it is impossible to know exactly whose they are. Agamemnon convinces Menelaus not to spare the lives of any Trojans, 'persuading him in accordance with how it should be' (6.62): this is Menelaus' reaction, but by giving his voice to Menelaus' feelings, the poet hints that for Menelaus, the victim of Trojan outrage, this reaction is appropriate. Zeus waits for Hector to fire a Greek ship as the fulfilment of Thetis' 'excessive' prayer (15.598), inviting the hearer's agreement. When Achilles 'cruelly' sacrifices Trojan prisoners on Patroclus' pyre, the poet almost merges their viewpoint with his own. The technique is surprisingly modern.⁴¹

The conclusions of Achilles and Andrei can, and do, invite the reader's and hearer's disagreement, yet deformation enables them to see farther and more deeply, with a more philosophically nuanced vision motivated by something other than the pursuit of admiration. Tolstoy's autobiographical 1855 story *Sevastopol in May* (*Sevastopol' v Mae*) concludes that seeking traditional heroes is futile:

Neither Kalugin with his brilliant courage [...], nor Praskukhin, a vacant, harmless fellow although he fell in battle for faith, the throne, and the fatherland, nor Mikhailov with his timidity [...], nor Pest—a child with no firm convictions or rules, can be either villains nor heroes of a tale.

The hero of my novel, whom I love with all the strength of my soul, whom I have tried to represent in all his beauty, and who is, always has been, and will be beautiful—is truth.⁴²

This narrator can unite those who participate in battle heroically, faithfully, timidly, or naïvely because a narrative which undermines conventional values—a philosophical narrative—does not distinguish between great and trifling questions. Such a narrative privileges not typical heroism but the pursuit of truth, which involves estrangement and decontextualization. Tolstoyan heroes, who are not privy to the narrator's discourse, can nevertheless arrive at the narrator's assessment. Achilles' deformation of character alienates him from his comrades and enables him to conceptually remove himself from the action and take up a quasi-narratorial perspective. After stipulating that he detests a man who says one thing and means another—in other words, anyone who

does not privilege truth—Achilles collapses conventional epic distance between glorious and ordinary: ‘The same honour waits/ for the coward and the brave’ (*Il.* 9.386, p. 262). There can be no difference in honour between Sarpedon and Thersites when honour is a myth. Achilles’ ability to pass such a damning judgement on heroism is one of the ways epic overflows its categories, reaching beyond itself to wonder at, question, and even mock itself. For Griffiths and Rabinowitz,

In Homer, the glorious past does [...] maintain its absolute superiority over the present; but it is a glory that instructively dismantles, discredits, and analyses itself. If the ‘epic age’ is pre-philosophical and unreflective, the great epics are its most philosophical and least characteristic part.⁴³

However, the dismantling, discrediting and analysis belong primarily not to Homer but to one of his heroes. And thus Achilles is no conventional, Homeric hero—he is a Tolstoyan hero of truth.

Life and Thought

Andrei’s and Achilles’ unique position results in their mutual dismissal of heroism—for what? If glory and the social capital it brings are not good, what is good? Andrei’s answer to this question shifts from an elemental *home* to an intellectual *nothing*. When he awakens on the Pratzen Heights after the Battle of Austerlitz, Andrei is immediately conscious that he is still alive. Then he recalls the sky:

... [I]n the exact place where he fell with the standard in his hands, Prince Andrei lay bleeding [...]. Suddenly he again felt alive, and suffering from a burning, tearing pain in his head.

‘Where is it, that lofty sky [...]?’ was his first thought.⁴⁴

Andrei’s first experience is pre-discursive and somatic: he knows he is alive because he feels it. It feels like pain in his physical body as something is being torn in his head or, more likely, in his mind. The second experience is *thought* (*mysl'*): abstract, distancing, and clearly secondary to spontaneous awareness. After recognizing the voices of Napoleon and his attendants nearby as they inspect the field, Andrei’s focus returns to his body, dissolving Napoleon’s individual self into a general sense of humanity. Humans—it does not matter which

ones—come between Andrei and the sky, and they will help him return to life, which remains precious:

It made absolutely no difference to him in that moment who stood above him [...] he was simply happy that people had stopped above him, and wished only that these people would help him and return him to life, which seemed to him so beautiful, because he understood it differently now.⁴⁵

Humanity is the intermediary between Andrei and the sky, between the particular and the universal, and humanity's function is to restore the dying back to life, to continue and to contribute to life. Then thought (*mysl'*) returns. *Mysl'* follows the weakening of the body; it measures life against itself, that is, against abstract thought. The outcome of this comparison is a condemnation of life:

Everything seemed so pointless and insignificant in comparison to that severe and majestic course of thought which suffering, the near expectation of death, and the weakness caused by blood loss had called forth in him. [...] Prince Andrei thought of the insignificance of greatness, the insignificance of a life, the meaning of which no-one could understand [...].⁴⁶

It is important to note that it is not only Napoleonic grandeur that appears hollow to Andrei now; life itself becomes insignificant. There is a dichotomy here between the powerfully *felt* beauty of life, and the powerfully *thought* unimportance of it. Upon losing consciousness again, the solemn *mysl'* is replaced with visions of home and simple joys, which are then immediately subordinated to the thinking, doubting self again:

He was imagining a quiet life and serene family happiness in Bald Hills. He was already enjoying this happiness, when suddenly a little Napoleon appeared [...] and the doubts [and] torments began, and only the sky promised peace.⁴⁷

The heroism Andrei had previously sought is empty, while ordinary life among beloved family members is precious. However, just as Andrei begins to take pleasure in this prosaic comfort, he is overtaken with intellectual doubt that only the sky can alleviate. The solution of the sky is negative—it replaces doubt with nothingness because for the sky, individual life does not matter. It dissolves Napoleons into generalities, makes all human activity seem pointless (*bespolezno*) and insignificant

(*nichtozhno*), and silences communication—in thinking of the sky, Andrei has no need for the mediation of language.⁴⁸ The passage implies that Andrei reaches a “correct”, Tolstoy-approved conclusion—heroic glory is unimportant—yet he does so for the wrong reasons. This is because the sky is what Jeff Love describes as ‘infinite indifference, an equanimity that marks freedom from decision as well as the temptation to narrative that depends on it, indefinite indifference being a cultivation of nothingness as unaware of itself as it is of the need for authority’.⁴⁹ Yet life in the midst of this indifference is not possible. If home and family are life, and the majestic silence of the sky is nothingness and even death, then Andrei founders somewhere in between, where the unanswerable questions are.

The disillusioned Achilles follows Andrei in his response to fighting: he too realizes that he wants to live at home instead of dying on a battlefield. The first words Achilles utters in the *Iliad*, long before Agamemnon insults him, are a plea to return home (‘Son of Atreus, now we are beaten back, I fear/ the long campaign is lost. So home we sail...’ [*Il.* 1.67, p. 79]). However, even after Agamemnon vows to take Achilles’ war prize, the girl Briseis, Achilles explains that he is not invested in the battle. He is angry at Agamemnon, of course, but he has obviously long been aware that the reasons for his participation in the war—presumably, the pursuit of glory—mean little to him. After a decade of fighting, Achilles contrasts the fury of battle with the vast expanse not of the sky, but of the peaceful sea, soil, and mountains:

It wasn’t Trojan spearmen who brought me here to fight.
The Trojans never did me damage, not in the least,
they never stole my cattle or my horses, never
in Phthia where the rich soil breeds strong men
did they lay waste my crops. How could they?
Look at the endless miles that lie between us...
shadowy mountain ranges, seas that surge and thunder. (*Il.*
1.179–85, p. 82)

This contrast, with its final emphasis on distance, is borrowed from Andrei, who observed that the vast sky is very different from the chaotic arbitrariness of battle, that untroubled expanse is ‘not like how we ran, shouted, and fought; not like how with angry and frightened faces the Frenchman and the artilleryman tugged the standard from one another’.⁵⁰

Achilles then announces that he is returning to Phthia since it is 'better that way by far, / to journey home in the beaked ships of war' (*Il.* 1.219–20, p. 83). The great warrior's immediate response to injury is desire not for vengeance and power, but for home and the father who waits for him there. Achilles thinks the best use for warships is a homeward journey. He wants to live, glory or no glory. When Agamemnon's insult comes, Achilles' keen perception pierces through the king's authority as Andrei's pierced through that of Napoleon, revealing his power as founded on nothingness: 'King who devours his people! Worthless husks, the men you rule [...] (*Il.* 1.270, p. 85).' By withdrawing from battle, Achilles is trying to shelter himself from pain and from his heroic role, which suddenly seems hollow.

If Andrei's *mysl'* is begotten by the infinite sky with which he has all but become identified, then Achilles' *mysl'* comes from the infinite sea, with which he is in constant communion. After Briseis is taken, Achilles wanders away from his friends:

Achilles [...] slipping away from his companions,
far apart, sat down on the beach of the heaving gray sea
and scanned the endless ocean. (*Il.* 1.413–15, p. 89)

Achilles finds solace in the expanse of sea. To reach the hero, his companions have to journey 'where the battle lines of breakers crash and drag' (*Il.* 2.243, p. 106). Achilles is not only physically situated near the sea, but emotionally akin to it; both qualities alienate him from others. In Book 16, Patroclus laments Achilles' inhuman excesses:

But *you* are intractable, Achilles! [...]
You heart of iron! He was not your father,
the horseman Peleus—Thetis was not your mother.
Never. The salt gray sunless ocean gave you birth
and the towering blank rocks—your temper's so relentless. (*Il.*
16.33–40, p. 413)

This passage eliminates precisely that which is personal about Achilles' association with sea—his mother Thetis, who dwells there. It also describes the sea and 'towering rocks', which recall the mountains Achilles mentioned earlier, as bereft of humanity. The nihilistic, inhuman wisdom that Andrei receives from the sky and Achilles receives from the sea prompts the latter to speak for both when he says:

One and the same lot for the man who hangs back
 And the man who battles hard [...]
 They both go down to Death,
 the fighter who shirks, the one who works to exhaustion. (*Il.*
 9.85–87, p. 262)

Achilles has now had time to think. His considered response, so different from his previous emotional one, is the radical and astonishingly modern conclusion that there is no meaningful difference between hero and loser, between himself and ‘cowards’. Death—whether represented as sky, sea, or nothingness—is the great leveller. Here Achilles is echoing Andrei’s earlier insight that everything is pointless and insignificant. Yet, after a few moments, Achilles has changed his mind again. Maybe going home is the answer, after all, because life among those who love you is more precious than glory or heroic death:

I say no wealth is worth my life! [...]
 Cattle and fat sheep can all be had for the raiding,
 tripods all for the trading, and tawny-headed stallions.
 But a man’s life breath cannot come back again—
 no raiders in force, no trading brings it back [...]
 To the rest I’d pass on this advice:
 sail home now! [...]
 [...] home in the ships with me
 To the fatherland we love. (*Il.* 9.488–520, pp. 265–66)

Achilles explains that his position as hero, as initiator of violence and destruction, cannot beget the kind of life that matters to him now. Having undergone a profound transformation, Achilles is here divided three ways between honour, life, and the perspective of the sea which makes either choice meaningless. Like Andrei, he is hurt and disillusioned, trying to *think* his way out of a deep uncertainty. In refusing the best solution made available to him by his epoch which the embassy proffers, namely, to accept Agamemnon’s gifts and fight, Achilles follows Andrei’s thoughts until they are both lost. Only one thing is clear to them: Andrei knew after Austerlitz that the honour which comes from human admiration is false, and so Achilles asks rhetorically, ‘What do I need with honour such as that?’ (*Il.* 9.740, p. 272).

From this socially and personally doomed but philosophically privileged place, Andrei and Achilles glimpse the same reasoning presented by the narrator of *War and Peace*:

The ancients left us examples of heroic poems in which heroes make up the entire interest of the story, and we still cannot get used to the fact that, for our time, such a history makes no sense.⁵¹

This is an overt reference to the *Iliad*, and the irony is that it is precisely that heroic poem which informed the scope and themes of *War and Peace*.⁵² After presenting a narrative of heroes and powerful individuals, the narrator says that they are unimportant. Yet the narrator does not argue that heroic history is never relevant, only that it is not relevant today. Achilles, however, realized this truth nearly three millennia ago, and the knowledge deformed him. The world for which epic narrative was valid could neither limit nor account for his insights, and he is a stranger to the heroes who are closest to him. Patroclus regrets that Achilles is intractable, and of course he is, but only because he is a novelistic hero in an epic poem.

What They Said to the Ambassadors

Bakhtin wrote that an epic hero cannot obtain critical distance from his epic context: 'He has no face for it, no gesture, no language'.⁵³ Yet language is precisely what Achilles has in excess. Richard Martin notes that 'the power of Achilles' representation [...] has persuaded readers since Plato that the words of the hero are somehow different from ordinary discourse'.⁵⁴ This assertion has been borne out by empirical studies on Homeric diction, which have demonstrated that Achilles' language is distinct from that of other Iliadic heroes. The distinction is not solely one of content, but of diction itself; signifiers as well as signifieds render the speech of Achilles idiosyncratic. Stephen Nimis has argued that, within an oral tradition in which systematic formulas underlie Homeric composition, innovative diction proceeds by a 'rule-governed creativity' which generates new meanings with conventional units, but that Achilles expands the linguistic conventions available to him by means of a 'rule-changing creativity' that utilizes, among other things, the rhetorical devices of poetry.⁵⁵

Such tools of rhetoric and syntax are manifested in Achilles' speeches in ways that are either exclusive to him or qualitatively different from that of the other speakers in the *Iliad*. They include, as Paul Friedrich and James Redfield have shown, repetitions that take the form of an expanding series (instead of the mere verbatim reiterations which other speakers make) and the ability to depict hypothetical images.⁵⁶ When Achilles lists Agamemnon's gifts, for example, he begins with those explicitly offered and ends with imagined gifts of which there are first 'ten times as much' then 'twenty times over;' then he moves from a city, to a larger city, to sand, to, finally, all the particles of dust:

I wouldn't give you a splinter for that man!
 Not if he gave me ten times as much, twenty times over, all
 he possesses now, and all that could pour in from the world's end—
 not all the wealth that's freighted into Orchomenos, even into
 Thebes,
 Egyptian Thebes where the houses overflow with the greatest troves
 of treasure,
 Thebes with the hundred gates and through each gate battalions,
 two hundred fighters surge to war with teams and chariots—
 no, not if his gifts outnumbered all the grains of sand
 and dust in the earth—no, not even then [...]. (*Il.* 9.463–71, p. 264)

At a syntactical level, Friedrich and Redfield identify the marked frequency of subjunctive verbs in Achilles' language along with an elaboration of emotive particles and vocative expressions which results in a free use of both terms of affection and terms of abuse. By plotting the syntagmatic and paradigmatic formulas in Achilles' speech,⁵⁷ Richard Martin has concluded that the hero's language includes phrases with unexpected juxtapositions and that his use of verbs deviates from traditional patterns used elsewhere in the *Iliad*.⁵⁸ Most idiosyncratically of all, Achilles employs what Martin terms the 'expansion aesthetic'⁵⁹ which inserts new words and phrases into formulaic patterns or connects them to other patterns. For instance, Achilles' famous retort to Odysseus' entreaties in Book 9—'I hate that man like the very Gates of Death/ who says one thing but hides another in his heart' (*Il.* 9.378–379, p. 262)—was produced by the poet's splitting of the traditional phrase *tetelesmenon estai*, 'and it shall be brought to pass,' which occurs elsewhere in the *Iliad* only in contexts of threat or promise, to insert the completely different material.⁶⁰

Achilles' language follows Andrei's to a surprising extent, with both speakers arriving at similar conclusions. Andrei, whom Gary Saul Morson describes as possessing a unique mastery of language, and as a 'character from another genre (the epic)',⁶¹ utters descriptions of and reflections upon his situation which become useful for an epic hero who must speak beyond the epic to convey his discontent. In the following section, we will examine the discourse both heroes use when their motives are questioned by their comrades and what it means.

Pierre visits Andrei as a sort of ambassador twice. First, at Bogucharovo where Andrei describes himself as being '*na bivakakh* ('bivouacking'),⁶² and again at Borodino, where Andrei is literally in a military camp. During the first visit, Andrei tells Pierre that he has become disillusioned with the war that has nearly killed him, that he cannot sleep until morning because of his endless thoughts (*mysli*), and that he seeks only to live near his family in his own quiet corner, busy with humble tasks like gardening:

'I lived for glory. [...] Thus I lived for others, and not nearly, but completely destroyed my life. [...] I have become calmer since I began living only for myself.'

'But how can one live only for oneself?' asked Pierre, growing heated. 'What about your son, your sister, your father?'

'But that is all also me, that is not others,' said Prince Andrei [...] 'I build a house, I cultivate a garden [...]. [...] I go to bed at three o'clock, thoughts come to me, and I cannot fall sleep, tossing and turning, I do not sleep until morning because I am thinking and I cannot stop thinking [...].'⁶³

When Achilles' embassy arrives at his camp to ask him to return to war, Achilles models his reply on Andrei's. He, too, has suffered and seen through the charade of glory which nearly killed him, cannot sleep at night in his bivouac, and wishes only for a quiet life with his father in a fertile land:

And what's laid up for me, what pittance? Nothing—
and after suffering hardships, year in, year out,
staking my life on the mortal risks of war [...]
Many a sleepless night I've bivouacked in harness [...]
Ah but now,
since I have no desire to battle glorious Hector [...]

once I have [...]

loaded up my holds

and launched out on the breakers [...]

you will see my squadrons sail at dawn [...]

[...] the third day out we raise the dark rich soil of Phthia.

There lies my wealth. (*Il.* 9.389–442, pp. 262–63)

While enduring the torment of battle fatigue and insomnia in a military camp (or its equivalent), Andrei and Achilles both wish for the exact opposite of everything a military camp represents. They want to participate in life in its most literal sense, which is why their respective words refer to gardening and fertile soil, both notions associated with peaceful activities of planting and harvesting.

In response to Pierre's query about whether Andrei will return to the army, Andrei rejects the notion in his characteristically extreme manner: "I vowed to myself that I would not serve in the active Russian army. And I wouldn't, even if Bonaparte stood here, near Smolensk, threatening Bald Hills, even then I would not serve in the Russian army".⁶⁴ So too, Achilles concludes his reply to his friends by asking them to tell Agamemnon the following:

I will not think of arming for bloody war again,

not till [...] Hector

battles all the way to the Myrmidon ships and shelters [...]

But round my own black ship and camp this Hector

blazing for battle will be stopped. (*Il.* 9.795–800, p. 273)

Achilles almost exactly repeats Andrei's promise, but softens its extremism. He will consider returning, but not until that which explicitly belongs to him—*his* shelters, *his* ships, *his* people—is threatened by the enemy. This is because Achilles in his camp, like Andrei in *his* camp, has self-protectively delimited the horizon of his loyalty.

The second time Pierre arrives at Andrei's camp is just before the Battle of Borodino. Predictably, Andrei is in one of his haunted moods, cynically describing the logic of battles. In his attitude to war, Achilles' pride is as great as Andrei's not for the apparent reason of his arrogance, but because it is underwritten by the same keen insight and suffering. On the eve of battle, Andrei realizes that he has been duped and has paid a heavy price:

'We played at war, that's what's vile, we act magnanimously and so on. [...] It's all nonsense. [...] [W]e were duped, and we duped others. They rob other men's homes, issue counterfeit notes, and worst of all, they kill my children, my father and they talk about the rules of war and magnanimity to one's enemies. Take no prisoners, but kill and accept death! Whoever reached this conclusion as I did, by means of the same sufferings...'⁶⁵

Reaching a pitch of emotional intensity typical of him, Andrei mocks the arbitrary nature of war:

Prince Andrei [...] suddenly paused in his speech because an unexpected tremor had seized him by the throat. [...] [H]is eyes glinted feverishly and his lip trembled when he began speaking again.

'If there were no such thing as magnanimity in war [...] there would be no wars because Pavel Ivanich insulted Mikhail Ivanich.'⁶⁶

A revelation about the cruelty of pillaging and killing, or the foundation of battle as grounded upon petty disagreements, does not astonish Andrei's hearers. However, when Achilles echoes Andrei in questioning the legitimacy of the pursuit of loot and honour upon which his heroism depends, he is doing something extraordinary, especially when he points out the arbitrariness of the battle's cause. Enduring the horrors of warfare because Paris insulted Menelaus is the absurd equivalent of going to war because Pavel Ivanich insulted Mikhail Ivanich. This cynical insight is anticipated by Andrei when he says that it can be achieved only as he achieved it, through suffering. Achilles becomes more and more emotional as he explains that it was through suffering that he glimpsed the foolish credulity of his position, that he has been duped, both by Agamemnon and by the apparent legitimacy of the battle cause:

Like a mother bird hurrying morsels back
to her unfledged young [...]
but it's all starvation wages for herself.
So for me [...]
[D]ay after bloody day I've hacked my passage through,
fighting other soldiers to win their wives as prizes.
Twelve cities of men I've stormed and sacked from shipboard [...]
And from all I dragged off piles of splendid plunder [...]
Why must we battle Trojans,
men of Argos? Why did he muster an army, lead us here,
that son of Atreus? Why, why in the world if not

for Helen [...]?
 But now that he's [...]

robbed me, lied to me—don't let him try me now. (*Il.* 9.392–418, pp. 262–63)

Whether Achilles' critique is accurate is less important than the fact that it occurs in a world prescribed by the values men like Sarpedon maintain via enthusiasm for battle and submission to hierarchy. Andrei and Achilles are emotionally paralyzed by the contradiction between what they expected from combat and what they found there.

The three sources of Achilles' sorrow—the deeply insulting loss of Briseis, the distance from his father, and the horror of war which leads to the death of Patroclus—find analogies in Andrei's brooding on the night before battle. Andrei is plagued by three very similar tragedies: the loss of Natasha and its implied insult to his honour, the death of his father, and the protracted war. The first of these sorrows is particularly bitter for both heroes as it is a matter of pride, and Andrei reflects on how Anatole seduced Natasha:

And suddenly he remembered how his love ended. 'He did not need any of it. He [...] didn't understand anything. He saw in her a pretty and *fresh* girl, with whom he did not condescend to link his fate. And I? And he is still alive and happy.'⁶⁷

When Achilles recalls the seizure of Briseis, he, too, is tormented by the gall of the rival as much as by the absence of the stolen girl:

[W]hen one man attempts to plunder a man his equal [...]

That's the pain that wounds me, suffering such humiliation.

That girl [...]

right from my grasp he tears her [...]

Treating me like some vagabond. (*Il.* 16.61–66, p. 414)

The 'treating me like some vagabond' is a restatement of Andrei's outraged 'And I?'. Achilles, as quick-tempered and dramatic as Andrei, loves Briseis as much as he is capable of loving, but it is his obsession with his own honour that makes her absence so painful for him (Achilles laments: 'Any decent man/a man with sense, loves his own, cares for his own/ as deeply as I, I loved that woman with all my heart' [*Il.* 9.414–16, p. 263]).

Yet it is their peculiar sense of their own mortality which is greatly emphasized by war that binds the heroes most of all:

Despite [...] how not needed by anyone and sorrowful his life seemed to Prince Andrei, just as in Austerlitz before the battle, he felt himself nervous and irritated [...]. The three great sorrows of his life commanded his attention. His love for a woman, the death of his father, and the French invasion, which captured half of Russia [...].

He gazed at the line of birches [...] shining in the sun. 'To die, so that I am killed tomorrow, so that I no longer exist [...] so that all of this exists, but I do not.'⁶⁸

What is striking about this passage is the pervasiveness of Andrei's pity for himself and his prophetic doom-consciousness. As he anticipates his death, nervous and irritated as usual, his thoughts are almost grandiloquent, and his own story as he retells it to himself is Iliadic in its epic scope. Before his final battle, Andrei thinks that his life is 'not needed by anyone';⁶⁹ he imagines himself dead. Achilles, before *his* final battle in the *Iliad*, repeats Andrei's lament about his own unneeded life while anticipating death:

I shall not return to my fatherland...
nor did I bring one ray of hope [...]
to [...] my steadfast comrades [...]
No, no, here I sit by the ships...
a useless, dead weight on the good green earth
I'll lie in peace, once I've gone down to death. (*Il.* 18.118–43, pp. 470–71)

In a passage that recollects Andrei's gazing upon the sunlit birches while contemplating death, the nymph Thetis repeats the juxtaposition of sunlight and mortality when she says of her son Achilles:

Never again will I embrace him
striding home through the doors of Peleus' house [...]
[L]ooking into the sunlight, he is racked with anguish. (*Il.* 18.513–16, pp. 481–82)

It is significant that Andrei and Achilles reflect on a life that they believe has been of no use to anyone immediately before they return to battle—where they will die. They can neither take refuge in intellectual ambivalence nor return home. Andrei's and Achilles' lives can be useful

again only if they fulfil their social role as heroes. This means that they must accept destruction. In their rage at this inexplicable unfairness, they will inflict destruction first. Their attitude to the enemy is hard: considering themselves deeply insulted and awaiting annihilation, they feel no mercy. Andrei explains it like this:

‘The fact is [...] whoever fights more wickedly and spares himself less, will win’.

[...]

‘I would not take prisoners. What are prisoners? It’s chivalry. The French [...] have insulted me and continue to insult me every second. They are my enemies [...]. They must be executed. If they are my enemies, they cannot be my friends [...]’.⁷⁰

It is important to note that Andrei *used* to subscribe to the notion of taking prisoners. However, he has changed. Taking prisoners is not possible for Achilles anymore, either. He, too, is possessed by the same sense of personal injury and so feels neither patience nor mercy. In one of the most oft-quoted passages of the *Iliad*, Achilles echoes Andrei when he mockingly calls the begging Lykaon ‘friend’ (*Il.* 21.119, p. 523). A Trojan cannot be Achilles’ friend any more than a Frenchman can be Andrei’s. Achilles, too, used to spare the enemy, but he now follows Andrei in describing the practice as foolish. Achilles has changed for the same reason Andrei has, and he now knows that whoever will fight more meanly and pity himself least, will win:

Fool,
 don’t talk to me of ransom. No more speeches.
 Before Patroclus [...]
 it warmed my heart a bit to spare some Trojans:
 droves I took alive and auctioned off as slaves.
 But now not a single Trojan flees his death [...]
 Come, friend, you too must die [...]
 There will come a dawn or sunset or high noon
 when a man will take my life in battle too. (*Il.* 21.111–26, pp. 522–23)

The changed attitude to sparing the enemy which manifests itself before battle is part of the deformation Andrei and Achilles undergo. As noted above, magnanimity—or ‘*rytsarstvo*’ (‘chivalry’), as Andrei mockingly calls it—is one of the honour-linked Iliadic values identified by Paul Friedrich to which Achilles and Andrei once subscribed. As readers

or hearers, we are not sympathetic to their deeply unethical logic, and we are likely to take Lykaon's side. However, this might be because we have not endured the suffering of deformed heroes. We are not capable of enduring such violence, so we cannot accept a legitimation for inflicting it. The position of Achilles and Andrei is not knowledge abstractly acquired but is an accretion of bitter experience. They are both hungry to kill while simultaneously accepting that they will die. They seek to follow Andrei's cruel and tragic advice against taking enemy prisoners. There is room in epic to sympathize with this bitterness, and yet encourage its critique. This critique becomes especially apparent when we consider that after the battle, Andrei and Achilles change once again into morally reformed heroes who take great pity on their rivals, in some sense returning to their better selves.

Griffiths and Rabinowitz write: 'The heroism that is the simple, static, ancient thing from which literary theory traces all the interesting variations and debunkings turns out to be [...] a more manageable inspiration than the disruptive heroes of Greek poetry. In epic, a heroic figure can include all manner of contradictions'.⁷¹ In the simplest terms, the static hero is an abstraction and a narrative function. As the centre of epic, he does not exist. Sarpedon and Tushin are introduced as a foil for Achilles and Andrei. Homeric heroes do not merely disrupt their own historical context but can reach into the future and take inspiration from modernity, because epic narrative includes its own contradiction.

Notes

- 1 Nora Goldschmidt and Barbara Graziosi, 'Introduction', in *Tombs of the Ancient Poets: Between Literary Reception and Material Culture*, ed. by Nora Goldschmidt and Barbara Graziosi (Oxford; New York NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 1–20 (p. 5), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198826477.001.0001>.
- 2 George Steiner, *Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky: An Essay in the Old Criticism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 71.
- 3 Harold Bloom, *Where Shall Wisdom be Found?* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2004), p. 71.
- 4 Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 38–75 (p. 53).
- 5 Phoenix compares the angry Achilles to Meleager, the Calydonian boar-hunter and warrior, who withdrew in anger from a war but eventually allowed himself to be persuaded to rejoin the fighting. Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. by Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 9.639–729, pp. 269–71. Hereafter, all translations of Homer, unless otherwise indicated, are by Fagles.
- 6 Paul Friedrich, 'Sanity and the Myth of Honor: The Problem of Achilles,' *Ethos*, 5 (1977), 281–305 (pp. 290–93).
- 7 Justina Gregory, *Cheiron's Way: Youthful Education in Homer and Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press: 2019), p. 92, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190857882.001.0001>.
- 8 Donald Lateiner, 'The Iliad: An Unpredictable Classic', in *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*, ed. by Richard Fowler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 11–30 (p. 15), <https://doi.org/10.1017/ccol0521813026.002>.
- 9 Seth L. Schein, *The Mortal Hero: An Introduction to Homer's Iliad* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 107–10, <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520341067>.
- 10 Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel', p. 55.
- 11 Thomas Finan, 'Total Tragedy and Homer's Iliad,' *The Maynooth Review/Revieú Mhá Nuad*, 5 (1979), 71–83 (p. 77).

- 12 Consider, for example, this passage from James Redfield's introduction to his seminal *Nature and Culture in the Iliad*: 'Homeric man, being objective, has no innerness. He expresses himself completely in words and acts, and is thus completely known to his fellows.' James M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad: The Tragedy of Hector* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 21.
- 13 Kenneth Haynes, 'Text, Theory, and Reception', in *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, ed. by Charles Martindale and Richard F. Thomas (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 44–54 (p. 52), <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470774007.ch4>.
- 14 Gregory, *Cheiron's Way*, p. 94.
- 15 Pierre Bayard, *Le Plagiat par anticiapation* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2009), p. 107, <https://doi.org/10.4074/s0336150009214104>. My translation.
- 16 Gregory, *Cheiron's Way*, p. 68.
- 17 Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, p. 101.
- 18 Lev Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 90 vols (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo 'Khudozhestvennaia Literatura,' 1928–1964), IX, p. 135. Hereafter, Tolstoi, *PSS*. All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.
- 19 Tolstoi, *PSS*, XI, p. 208.
- 20 *Ibid.*, X, p. 138.
- 21 *Ibid.*, IX, p. 167.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 235.
- 23 F. T. Griffiths and S. J. Rabinowitz, *Epic and the Russian Novel: From Gogol to Pasternak* (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2011), p. 40, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1zxshz3>.
- 24 Tolstoi, *PSS*, IX, p. 153.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 154.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 183.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 203.

- 29 Donna Tussing Orwin, 'Leo Tolstoy: Pacifist, Patriot and Molodets', in *Anniversary Essays on Tolstoy* ed. by Donna Tussing Orwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 76–95 (p. 86), <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511676246.005>.
- 30 Tolstoi, *PSS*, IX, 121.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 200.
- 32 Tolstoi, *PSS*, X, p. 33.
- 33 *Ibid.*, XI, p. 173.
- 34 "But remember, my young friend, that I am a father to you, a second father..." [said Kutuzov]. Prince Andrei told Kutuzov everything [...]' Tolstoy, *PSS*, XI, p. 172.
- 35 Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, pp. 104–05.
- 36 Tolstoi, *PSS*, IX, pp. 358–59.
- 37 In Book 2 of the *Iliad*, the unattractive Thersites, despised by the Greeks, insults the Achaean heroes and calls for a swift return to Greece:
 The Achaeans were furious with him, deeply offended.
 But he kept shouting at Agamemnon, spewing his abuse:
 'Still moaning and groaning, mighty Atrides – why now?
 [...]
 How shameful for you, the high and mighty commander,
 to lead the sons of Achaea into bloody slaughter!
 Sons? No, my soft friends, wretched excuses –
 women, not men of Achaea! Home we go in our ships!' (*Il.* 2.260–75, pp. 106–07)
- 38 Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel', p. 6.
- 39 Orwin, *Molodets*, p. 87. Orwin defines a *molodets* as 'a youth fine in body and spirit. The word *molodechestvo* with its abstract suffix "-stvo" indicates the essence of such a youth, so it should be, and fundamentally is, positive. Although the concept is applied quite frequently in a broader context, in folk poetry it is associated with war' (p. 78). Alan Forrest describes the French soldiers as reacting positively to what they perceived as the nobility of their Russian enemy since both French and Russian soldiers subscribed to similar codes of honour. Forrest notes: 'Russian *molodechestvo* was not so very different from French *élan*.' See Alan Forrest, 'The French at War: Representations of the Enemy in War and Peace', in *Tolstoy on War: Narrative Art and Historical Truth in War and Peace*, ed. by Rick McPeak and Donna Tussing Orwin (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2012), pp. 59–73 (p. 67), <https://doi.org/10.7591/9780801465895-007>.

- 40 Tolstoi, *PSS*, XI, p. 293.
- 41 Ruth Scodel, 'The Story-teller and His Audience', in *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*, ed. by Robert Fowler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 45–56 (p. 52), <https://doi.org/10.1017/ccol0521813026.004>.
- 42 Tolstoi, *PSS*, IV, p. 59.
- 43 Griffiths and Rabinowitz, *Epic and the Russian Novel*, p. 31
- 44 Tolstoi, *PSS*, IX, p. 356.
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 357.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 359.
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 360.
- 48 'Although, five minutes prior to this, Prince Andrei could say a few words to the soldiers who carried him, now, directing his gaze straight at Napoleon, he was silent [...]. In this moment all the interests occupying Napoleon seemed so insignificant to him, so trivial seemed to him his hero with this trifling vanity and joy in victory, in comparison to that lofty, just, and kind sky, which he had seen and understood, that he could not respond to him.' *Ibid.*, pp. 358–59.
- 49 Jeff Love, 'Tolstoy's Nihilism', in *Tolstoy and His Problems: Views from the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Inessa Medzhibovskaya (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018), pp. 22–38 (p. 28), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv7cjwt6.6>.
- 50 Tolstoi, *PSS*, IX, p. 244.
- 51 Tolstoi, *PSS*, XI, p. 185.
- 52 Quoted by Maksim Gorkii in *Reminiscences of Tolstoy, Chekhov and Andreyev*, trans. by Katherine Mansfield, S. S. Koteliansky, and Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth Press, 1948), p. 57.
- 53 Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel', p. 57.
- 54 Richard P. Martin, *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the Iliad* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 147.
- 55 Stephen Nimis, 'The Language of Achilles,' *Classical World*, 79:4 (1985), 217–25 (pp. 219–20), <https://doi.org/10.2307/4349869>.

- 56 Paul Friedrich and James Redfield, 'Speech as a Personality Symbol: The Case of Achilles', *Language*, 2 (1978), 263–88 (pp. 272–73).
- 57 Martin, *Language*, pp. 167–70.
- 58 *Ibid.*, pp. 170–85.
- 59 *Ibid.*, p. 206.
- 60 *Ibid.*, p. 210.
- 61 Gary Saul Morson, *Hidden in Plain View: Narrative and Creative Potentials in 'War and Peace'* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 245.
- 62 Tolstoi, *PSS*, X, p. 109.
- 63 *Ibid.*, pp. 111–12.
- 64 *Ibid.*, p. 113.
- 65 Tolstoi, *PSS*, XI, p. 210.
- 66 *Ibid.*, p. 211.
- 67 *Ibid.*, pp. 212–13.
- 68 *Ibid.*, pp. 203–04.
- 69 *Ibid.*
- 70 *Ibid.*, pp. 209–10.
- 71 Griffiths and Rabinowitz, *Epic and Russian Novel*, p. 40.

