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**THE PRESENTATION OF DEATH
IN L.N. TOLSTOY'S PROSE**

by

JOSEF METZELE

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
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Abstract

This study treats in detail one of the significant themes of world literature in the narratives of the Russian writer L.N. Tolstoy. The theme of **death**, its modalities, motifs and related aspects, occur frequently in all of Tolstoy's artistic and philosophical writings.

He presents this theme in connection with other dominant themes such as appearance and reality, falsity and truth, the attempts and failures to materialize individuals' objectives, all in various contexts of life — both private and public, and especially military life. The selection of themes such as sexuality, violence, or the transgression of moral laws, also affects the presentation of the theme of death. Instead of focusing on one pair of dominant semantic fields, Tolstoy (in the majority of his narratives) connects several of them equally. There are very few of his works in which one semantic field dominates.

In accordance with Realist poetics, Tolstoy presents the theme of death directly; references to death on an allegorical or symbolic level occur in only a few of his narratives. In his early works, Tolstoy varies not only the fundamental **modalities**, but also the basic **modes** of violent and natural death. The presentation of a theme in a narrative differs depending on the length of the narrative.

In his shorter prose fiction, Tolstoy concentrates the theme of death into specific passages, while its presentation in the longer narratives is distributed throughout the texts. In presenting the various characters, his narrators reveal their philosophies of life, which are particularly apparent in the borderline situation of death and dying. Members of different social classes display, as a rule, contrasting philosophies in revealing their attitudes and reactions — a trend which is again noticeable both in Tolstoy's major prose and in his late narratives.

The author's focus on **introspection** (although in his early prose members of the lower classes are excluded from this technique) continues to play an important role in his late work as well. The author uses typical narrative devices such as anticipation, retrospection, association and paradox in the depiction of this complex theme as he attempts to 'de-romanticize', 'de-sensationalize' and 'de-dramatize' this topic. Despite the general tendency to omit the actual moment of death, there are a few works in which the horror of violent death shocks the reader. As for artistic development in presenting this theme, Tolstoy continues to employ a basic stock of devices and techniques already manifest in his early works.

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Note on Transliteration

The transliteration of Russian names and Russian texts follows the transliteration rules of System II established by J. Thomas Shaw in his publication The Transliteration of Modern Russian for English-Language Publications, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967).

Exceptions are Slavic names already possessing well-established English spellings and used in English-language contexts.

Für die Meinen

Introduction

The main objective of this dissertation is to study the presentation of death in the prose fiction of one of the great nineteenth-century Russian writers and thinkers: Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy (1828-1910). This work attempts to explore some fundamental and practical criteria for the analysis of this complex theme in many of his outstanding fictional narratives.¹ The main method of this study is two-fold: (a) an analysis of the *manifestations*, that is, the specific thematic categories and semantic units pertinent to this topic; (b) the establishment of a *set of common and recurrent literary devices* used for the presentation of this subject, either as a central idea or secondary motif, in the texts in question. This dissertation will take into account the main functions of the fundamental constituents of the selected texts of prose fiction and the interrelationship of the theme of death to other thematic categories and units.

The fundamental constituents of prose fiction comprise the presence of a mediating narrator and a plot of events, which implies the existence of characters as well as space and time co-ordinates. The interplay of all these factors constitutes the fictional world of a text. Texts presenting imaginary worlds contain the strata of inanimate objects, the

¹These criteria for analysis can be applied to the main genres of drama and poetry as well; the different types of mediation of content in these genres, however, either require or exclude devices typical of prose fiction.

sphere of the animate world, human beings' physical and intellectual activities, as well as events, states and processes. In general, the overriding feature of presentation of content in literary works is its **verbalization**. This feature can combine and mediate modes of presentation characteristic of forms of art such as music and painting. Moreover, mediation in prose fiction can communicate characters' pictorial, acoustic, tactile, gustatory and olfactory perceptions.

The technique of presentation of content of narratives implies the presentation of its fundamental constituents through the principal rhetorical and stylistic modes: (a) **narration**, including **reporting** (narrative reporting of non-verbal events) and **description**, (b) **argumentation**, and (c) **rendition of characters' speech**. Among obligatory techniques of presentation one can distinguish **characterization** and the temporal and spatial arrangement of incidents and states. Characterization and the ordering of space and time are immediate constituents of the plot of events. As for specific **poetic techniques**, the authors of literary texts may select and combine devices such as de-familiarization, retardation, digression, anticipation, retrospection, association, repetition, variation, comparison and contrast.

In analysing the theme of death,² this study will point out the interconnectedness of this topic with other topics as

²Recent literary scholarship documents a growing tendency towards thematic criticism; see Werner Sollors, ed., The Return of Thematic Criticism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1993) which deals with basic and disputed concepts such as theme and

well as with related aspects.³ While literary texts, regardless of length, may concentrate on one dominant theme, most tend to comprise several different units of content, which can be grouped according to various **semantic (lexical) fields**. For the most part, the analysis of this specific theme in this work requires a combination of multidisciplinary and comparative approaches, since death in 'real' life and in fiction involves philosophical, psychological, biological, social, legal and economic aspects.⁴ Methods and approaches worked out by the disciplines of rhetoric, stylistics and linguistics will be integrated as well.

Death with its manifold aspects repeatedly affected Tolstoy all his life as a private person, as well as an artist and philosopher. His diaries, as well as his philosophical, religious and artistic writings, document his profound and lifelong occupation with this phenomenon. Tolstoy never

motif as well as with different approaches. This publication contains pertinent theoretical contributions by Menachem Brinker, Nancy Armstrong, Claude Bremond, Iurii K. Shcheglov, Theodor Wolpers, Michel Vanhelleputte, David Perkins, Thomas Pavel, Holger Klein, Léon Somville, and Marie-Laure Ryan.

³On a general level death and mortality are related to a group of concepts of spirit and matter, organic and inorganic matter, creation, the preservation and annihilation of life; the categories of animateness and inanimateness, free will and necessity, uncertainty of the moment of death vs. certainty and awareness of the inevitability and irreversibility of mortality, temporariness and eternity, the finite and infinite. On a concrete level, death manifests itself through motifs such as the re-evaluation of one's own life, the fear of death, longing for death, burial rites, and visions of the after-life.

⁴Samuel Southard, comp., Death and Dying. A Bibliographical Survey (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991). This annotated bibliography provides information on thanatological topics, including philosophical, religious, and anthropological views and attitudes towards death. It covers the knowledge contained in Eastern, Greek, and Roman philosophy and concludes with references to contemporary thinkers.

treated death and its related aspects in an isolated manner: his major characters in prose and in his plays do not simply die in order to reduce the number of characters. Their deaths manifest reactions, attitudes and philosophies of life, which represent possible answers to the existential problems raised by him.

The fundamental question which Tolstoy tackled repeatedly throughout his career was the search for the meaning of life. In this context — which is an integral part of the relation between the finite and infinity, as well as between life-creation and the destruction of life — the moment of death, human mortality and its transcendence, appear to be the touchstone, the criterion, for the unveiling of man's fundamental attitudes towards life and the after-life. Thus, death can fulfil a number of **functions**: revelation, manifestation, transformation, transition, merger, sacrifice, punishment, liberation, inspiration, enlightenment, paradox, return, re-birth and many others. The two extremes of attitude towards death may be defined as **atheism** and **belief** — that is, the rejection of the after-life on the one hand and the assumption or the belief in immortality and resurrection on the other. Death appears in Tolstoy's oeuvre in many different contexts and is presented from various perspectives.

Tolstoy deals with death in a variety of his non-literary works as well, e.g. his philosophical treatises Isповed' (The

Confession, 1880),⁵ and in O zhizni (On Life, 1887).⁶ Two of his articles “Ne mogu molchat” (I Cannot Be Silent, 1908), and “Smertnaia kazn’ i khristianstvo,” (Capital Punishment and Christianity, 1909) deal with capital punishment. In his works the problems of death, physical mortality, and spiritual rebirth — note the spiritual rebirth of Nekhliudov and Maslova in his novel Voskresenie (Resurrection, 1889) — are always connected with existential questions involved in the search for truth and the meaning of life. A character’s confrontation with death in his works almost inevitably leads to the re-assessment of his or her achievements, and the realization of his or her failures. This re-appraisal may include individual’s taking stock of assets and liabilities, reflecting gains or losses in his professional or economic life. In Tolstoy’s writings readers encounter in most cases a moral and ethical balancing, a judgement of virtues and vices. Like many philosophers before him, Tolstoy deals with the question “How to live well?” including death as a constituent part of life. Thus the question of meaningful conduct in life is reflected in coping with the question “How to die well?”.

In asking and answering the fundamental philosophical question of the meaning of life, Tolstoy in his treatise

⁵Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii. Iubileinoe izdanie. (Complete Works. Jubilee Edition.) (Moskva/Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1928-1962) vol. 23, 1-59. In citations from these primary works, the first number in the brackets will refer to the volume, the second to the page number: [23:1-59].

⁶ Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, vol. 26; the title of the treatise was changed from O zhizni i smerti (On Life and Death) to its final version On Life.

Confession begins his intellectual search with the objective of acquiring appropriate knowledge. In referring to some of the outstanding Western and Eastern philosophers and other sources of wisdom such as Buddha, Solomon, Socrates, and Schopenhauer, Tolstoy confesses to his failure to gain any satisfactory answers, which, in turn, leads him to a state of frustration and despair; moreover, this search has not eliminated his fear of death. On the contrary, it has also brought him to consider suicide as a solution for his dilemma. This epistemological crisis finds its solution as soon as he considers and accepts religion as a source of knowledge. The philosophical sources he studied repeatedly hinted at the absurdity of life and death; religion and belief, on the other hand, offered Tolstoy hope, excluding as they did the atheist and materialist view of death as a complete destruction, a permanent annihilation of man's body and mind.

Death affected Tolstoy in his private life in manifold ways. His parents died when he was a young boy; there were rumours that his father died a violent death; as a soldier Tolstoy witnessed violent death during his stay in the Caucasus and during the Crimean War in the 1850s. In Isповед' Tolstoy 'confesses' to have killed and to have instigated duels. In 1857, as a tourist in Paris, he observed an execution. In 1856 and in 1860 he was obliged to cope with the premature death of his brothers Dimitrii and Nikolai. As a parent he witnessed the death of his favourite daughter; four of his children died prematurely.

In his prose and his plays Tolstoy focuses primarily on situations in which characters face crises. Death may be seen as one of the extreme and ultimate **borderline situations** — and for some of his characters the ultimate crisis in their lives. In contrast to his philosophical writings, Tolstoy does not try to study and present systematically the theme of death in his fiction. Rather he focuses on characters' problems as they try to find appropriate answers. His fictional works often follow the pattern of searching for and finding solutions, a pattern which can also be applied to his presentation of death.

In Tolstoy's prose and in his plays physical, biological death contributes significantly to the presentation of characters, to their characterization. Characters in this context fulfil the function of representatives, of expounders of ideas and philosophies of life. Death reveals their reactions, attitudes towards and possible concepts about life. Tolstoy is unique in his presentation of the 'pre-mortal' phase,⁷ that is, characters' preparation and waiting for violent or natural death, as well as the processes of dying and other characters' bereavement — the latter following the often undramatic or even omitted moment of a character's death. These motifs affect the dying characters and those who observe the

⁷There are other literary movements which present the characters' 'post mortem' phase as well; cf. the motif of resurrection and transformation in folklore and the motif of the living dead in Modernist prose; Realist prose tends to exclude the presentation of the unreal.

processes and events in question; they are mediated by narrators or by other characters in the writer's prose works.

Literary criticism on Tolstoy encompasses different schools both before⁸ and after 1917, such as radical materialism, Marxist criticism, Populist criticism, Slavophile and idealist criticism, "Tolstoyan" criticism, aesthetic criticism, Symbolist criticism, formalism, structuralism, and psycho-analytical criticism. Scholars have studied Tolstoy's works from different viewpoints, focusing on social, political, philosophical, religious and literary aspects. In discussing both philosophical and artistic works, they either have broached or focused on the subject of death. As for Tolstoy's literary works depicting death, much attention has been paid to a rather small number of works, especially his remarkable novella, Smert' Ivana Il'icha (The Death of Ivan Il'ich, 1886).

The dominant approach in literary criticism in interpreting death in Tolstoy's works has been the philosophical, and to a lesser degree a psycho-analytical, psychological or medical one.⁹ In one of the recent sustained studies focusing on philo-

⁸Boris Sorokin, Tolstoy in Prerevolutionary Russian Criticism (Miami: Ohio State University Press for Miami University, 1987).

⁹Scholarly contributions on death in Tolstoy's works have treated this subject largely from a philosophical perspective: cf. (a) Käte Hamburger, Leo Tolstoj. Gestalt und Problem (Göttigen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1963) — cf. esp. Chapter 3: "Die Transzendierung des natürlichen Lebens," 62-140; (b) Jacqueline de Proyart de Baillescourt, "La représentation de la mort dans l'oeuvre littéraire de Tolstoj," Morris halle, ed. For Roman Jakobson, Essays on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday (The Hague: Mouton, 1956) 395-410; (c) Martin Schmid, "Das Problem: Der Mensch und der Tod in der Dichtung Lev Nikolaevič Tolstoj's," Die Welt der Slawen 14 (1969): 406-29; (d) Zoltan Hajnady, "Motiv smerti v tvorcestve L'va Tol'stogo," Studia Slavica 24 (1978): 19-38, and (e) Zoltan Hajnady, "Ivan Il'ič und das "Sein zum Tode" (Lev Tolstoj und Martin Heidegger)," Wiener Slawistisches Jahrbuch 36 (1990): 23-36; (f) Tolstoï et la Mort (Paris: Institut d'etudes slaves, 1985); (g) P. M. Bitsilli, "Problema zhizni i

sophical and religious aspects in Tolstoy's works, Richard F. Gustafson comes to significant conclusions as he discusses the interrelationship between life after death, the fear of death and love:

... death is the loss of consciousness of self as entity, a merging with the other in some new mode of existence. The fear of death for Tolstoy, therefore, takes two forms: the moment of recollection and the moment of awakening. Death recalls the past: the thought of death leads to a measurement of one's own life, an examination of conscience and an appraisal of one's mission and task. The fear of death is the assessment of failure. Death also calls to the future: the idea of death reminds one of the inevitable loss of self-awareness that awaits us, the awakening from the sleep of life to another mode of being when "I will not be." The fear of death is an anxiety of annihilation. In either case the fear is overcome only through love: love is the only mission and task in which one gives forth of self in a moment of loss which is simultaneously a moment of gain, a loss of self which finds itself in the other. The representation of death in Tolstoy, therefore, is grounded in the concept of love. Those who remain enclosed in themselves recollect their past with a sense of failing and fear of death; they

smerti v tvorchestve Tolstogo," Sovremennye zapiski 36 (1928): 274-304; (h) A.T. Lidskii, "Smert', bolezni i vrach v khudozhestvennykh proizvedeniakh L.N. Tolstogo," Russkaia klinika 57 (1929): 3-15; (i) A. Galkin, "Smert' ili bessmertie? (Dostoevskii protiv Tolstogo)," Voprosy literatury 36, 1 (1993): 157-72.

experience no passage and have no sense of eternal life or even eternal memory. For them death is an anxiety of assessment. Those who love, even if only at the last moment, overcome their fear and their failing and pass on.¹⁰

As far as scholarly contributions to the study of death in Tolstoy's works are concerned, one finds a variety of articles along with one comparative study,¹¹ which deals with the presentation of death in three works by Tolstoy and Thomas Mann (1875-1955). Walter Smyrniw provides a concise thanatological overview of a large number of characters experiencing death and dying in Tolstoy's works.¹² Diana L. Burgin's articles elaborate on death and its relationship to sexuality from a psycho-analytical (Jungian) perspective.¹³ Andrej Kodjak provides a useful classification for the subject of death, starting with the important aspect of one's perception of death, and pointing out Tolstoy's tendency to blur the distinction between life and death. Kodjak's views on the extension of mortality into human life as well as and the

¹⁰Richard F. Gustafson, Leo Tolstoy, Resident and Stranger. A Study in Fiction and Theology (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986) 325-26.

¹¹Donworth V. Gubler, "A Study of Illness and Death in the Lives and Representative Works of Leo Tolstoy and Thomas Mann," diss. Brigham Young University, 1971.

¹²Walter Smyrniw, "Tolstoy's Depiction of Death In the Context of Recent Studies of the 'Experience of Dying'," Canadian Slavonic Papers 21 (1979): 367-79.

¹³Burgin, Diana L., "Jungian Dactyls on Death and Tolstoy's Verse Burlesque with Notations in Earnest," Anna Lisa Crone, and Catherine V. Chvany, eds., New Studies in Russian Language and Literature (Columbus, Oh.: Slavica, 1986) 27-38; as well as "The Anima of Death and Man's Struggle For Transcendence in Tolstoy," unpub. paper by the same author.

extension of vitality into mortality hints at the most common semantic transfers in presenting this topic in literature.¹⁴

In one of the pertinent articles, Jacqueline de Proyart de Baillescourt establishes a basic set of characters who experience death and dying in Tolstoy's artistic writings. This article deals with an extensive number of characters and works. Among them the following feature prominently: Maman, Natal'ia Nikolaevna and the housekeeper Natal'ia Savishna in Detstvo (Childhood, 1852), the aristocratic Lady Shirkinskaia, the peasant Fedor and the ash-tree in the short story "Tri smerti" (Three Deaths, 1859), the old Counts Bezukhov and Bolkonskii, Pierre's Bezukhov's wife H  l  ne Kuragina in Voina i mir (War and Peace, 1865-69), Nikolai Levin in Anna Karenina (1875-77), Ivan Il'ich in Smert' Ivana Il'icha (The Death of Ivan Il'ich 1886), Kholstomer, the old horse in Kholstomer (The Strider, 1885), the merchant Vasilii Brekhunov and his servant Nikita in "Khoziain i rabotnik" (Master and Man, 1894-95). All these characters die a natural death. In dealing with violent death, the French scholar cites Prince Andrei, Platon Karataev and Petia Rostov in Voina i mir, the death of Pozdnyshev's wife in Kreitserova sonata (The Kreutzer Sonata, 1891), as well as the suicide of Anna Karenina.

While scholars have recognized the significance of the role of death in Tolstoy's works, they have not approached this

¹⁴Andrej Kodjak, "Tolstoy's Personal Myth of Immortality," Andrej Kodjak, Krystyna Pomorska, and Stephen Rudy, eds., Myth in Literature (Columbus, Oh.: Slavica, 1984) 188-207.

topic systematically. No sustained study analysing the presentation of death with specific reference to **the combination of aspects of form and content** in Tolstoy's prose has been written.

Tolstoy's depiction of violent death is first noticeable in his Caucasian short stories and in his Sevastopol sketches: he depicts Ensign Alanin's death in "Nabeg. Rasskaz volontera." (The Raid. A Volunteer's Story., 1853) and the common soldier Velenchuk's death in "Rubka lesa. Rasskaz iunkera." (The Wood-felling. A Cadet's Story., 1855). Compare also the violent death of the anonymous soldiers in his first Sevastopol story, the violent deaths of the officer Praskukhin in the second, and the deaths of the Kozel'tsov brothers in the third. This mode of death features prominently in his longer narratives too: the young Cossack Lukashka kills a Chechen warrior and is in turn killed by one of his enemies in the novella Kazaki (The Cossacks, 1863). In his later masterpiece Khadzhi-Murat (Khadzhi-Murat, 1904), the common soldier Avdeev's violent death stands out in the exposition of the novella, while the climax of the work centres around the violent deaths of the main character and his entourage.

Apart from portrayals of the main physical modes of death, 'spiritual' death — that is, characters' meditation on the meaning or absurdity of life and death — can be detected in works such as the short story "Metel'" (The Snowstorm, 1856), where the first-person narrator ponders death. Witness also the officer Mikhailov in the second Sevastopol story, Nikolai

Levin in Anna Karenina (1874-77), and the madman in "Zapiski sumasshedshego" (Diary of A Madman, 1884-87); all of whom come close to death spiritually or emotionally and survive a death experience.

The presentation of themes and of content in general must be seen in terms of not only the author's philosophy, but also in the context of literary movements. Realist writers follow specific rules of presentation governing the selection of poetic devices. Among Tolstoy's numerous poetological statements in his early narratives, one can observe the tendency to disassociate himself from the tenets of Romanticism. In discussing the characteristics of **Realism**, Wallace Martin points out three of its obligatory requirements: the selection of ordinary or typical subjects, the striving for objectivity, and the doctrine of natural causality.¹⁵ That is why the presentation of content in works of this period follows the prerogatives of authenticity and credibility which are often closely related with the concept of a reliable narrator.

Another important aspect of Realist art — the category of potentiality — is pointed out by Johanna Renate Döring-Smirnov and Igor' S. Smirnov:

Разрыв между фактом и вымыслом реализм ликвидирует, обращаясь к категории возможного... [...] (ср. также актуальные для многих художников-реалистов темы проектирования и прогнозирования).

¹⁵Wallace Martin, Recent Theories of Narrative (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1986) 57-63.

[...] реалистический текст всегда показывает актуализацию иновозможности.¹⁶

These scholars consider the principle of **panoramirovanie**¹⁷ — the 'panoramization' of reality — as characteristic of Realism as a system of transitive relations:

Метод панорамирования удовлетворял сразу трем требованиям, выдвигаемым реалистической культурой: 1. постулату о полноте описания социофизического мира; 2. постулату о наглядности описания и 3. постулату о градуальности переходов от изображения одного жизненного фрагмента к изображению другого.¹⁸

Poets, dramatists and novelists have the choice of presenting the content of their works on different levels. Themes can be depicted on a realistic, allegorical or metaphorical level. In some of Tolstoy's artistic writings, the reader encounters the co-existence of the realistic and allegorical levels.¹⁹ In contrast with the Romanticist period, Realist authors focus on the 'internal' perspective of the dying

¹⁶Johanna Renate Döring-Smirnov, and Igor' S. Smirnov, "Realizm: diakhronicheskii podkhod," *Russian Literature*, 8 (1980), 25.

¹⁷The Realist writer strives for the effects of completeness, focusing on a detailed typical reproduction of reality and applying these postulates by presenting parts of the reality.

¹⁸Johanna Renate Döring-Smirnov and Igor' S. Smirnov, 27.

¹⁹The Russian scholar E. Poliakova provides an overview over this coexistence in several of Tolstoy's works in her article "Simvol i allegoriia v realizme Tolstogo," S. I. Mashinskii, ed., *V mire Tolstogo. Sbornik statei* (Moskva: Sovetskii pisatel', 1978) 315-50.

character, that is on the presentation of his or her internal processes, thoughts, and emotions.

In Russian scholarly criticism, one of the pioneering works on Tolstoy's poetics was Boris V. Eikhenbaum's study Molodoi Tolstoj (The Young Tolstoy, 1922), treating formalist aspects of his works and distinguishing between the poetics of Romanticism and Realism. Eikhenbaum (1886-1959) examines the artistic devices employed in Tolstoy's diaries (1847-1852), and in his literary works written from 1852 to 1858. Eikhenbaum points out Tolstoy's emphasis on description (**opisanie**) and his preference for the device of 'detailed description' (**detalizatsiia**). Apart from these significant devices, the reader of Tolstoy's works frequently encounters the device of **generalization**, manifesting itself through classifications and definitions, which are usually part of philosophical and lyrical digressions. Eikhenbaum also refers to Tolstoy's tendency to de-emphasize plot: "— сюжетология остается в стороне".²⁰ The plot of events is in many cases only loosely connected. Eikhenbaum explains Tolstoy's preference for these devices as manifestations of his rejection of the poetic tenets of Russian Romanticism.²¹

In literary works writers 'present' content and form through specific artistic devices; they construct content with the help of binary oppositions, dualistic concepts, such as life

²⁰Boris M. Eikhenbaum, Molodoi Tolstoj (Peterburg/Berlin: Grzhebin, 1922) 38.

²¹Boris M. Eikhenbaum, (1922), esp. the third chapter "Bor'ba s romantikoi. (Kavkaz i voina)."

and death, appearance and reality, love and hate, war and peace, crime and punishment, Nature and civilization, art and reality. The fundamental categories of content such as themes, motifs,²² *topoi*, topics and symbols or lexemes are usually integrated around these concepts.

These categories can also be expressed optionally through **titles**.²³ The title of a literary work can name its dominant theme, motif, or leitmotif, or alternatively, the outstanding incident or turning point of the plot. Some titles, however, do not provide any significant reference to the content of the work, but draw on insignificant or trivial details rather than the dominant idea. Many 'unreliable' titles of literary works mislead or play with readers' expectations. As for titles in Tolstoy's works, in many cases they serve to frame their content, bearing witness to the reliability of the author and his narrators. Tolstoy's titles indicate the tendency to select either semantic concepts (based on opposition) or to name the main protagonists of the narrative. Sometimes they refer to significant events or stages in characters' lives or contain intertextual references to other literary, philosophical or religious works.

²²Gerald Prince, Narrative As Theme. Studies in French Fiction (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992) 4. The American scholar defines motif as a possible illumination of a theme, as "a member of the set of objects characterizing a theme extensionally." Then, he defines *topos* as "a stable configuration of motifs."

²³Titles of literary works have been studied from semantic point of view, with an analysis of their structure; cf. one of the recent studies of the poetics of titles in nineteenth-century Russian literature: Erwin Wedel, "Zur Poetik des Romantitels in der russischen Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts," Die Welt der Slawen 38 (1993): 360-80.

The content of literary works is structured around **variables** — i.e. original and specific patterns — and **invariables** — traditional patterns such as typical situations (a death-scene), stock characters (a dying patient, a priest, an undertaker), conventional symbols or recurrent leitmotifs (a cross, a skull). The reader encounters them both in highly schematized and in less rigidly patterned literary works.

In recent decades, traditional thematic or content-based analyses of literary works have been pushed to the background while other approaches dominated literary criticism and theory. Nevertheless, thematic studies have featured prominently in the fields of folklore and comparative literature. Only recently, **narratology** has re-discovered the units of content such as **thesis, theme, topos, motif** as significant components of texts.²⁴ In defining **theme**, narratology points out the abstract quality of a theme as a semantic macrostructural category or FRAME extractable from [...] distinct [...] textual elements which (are taken to) illustrate it and expressing the more general and abstract entities (ideas thoughts etc.) that a text or part thereof is [...] about.²⁵

²⁴Traditional literary criticism, rhetorics, and stylistics define these contentual units in texts differently.

²⁵Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology* (Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 1987) 97. The author achieves the status of dominance of a specific theme within a text after its introduction through recurrent reference, through its repetition and variation, as well as its combination with major characters.

By contrast, **motif** designates a more concrete unit of theme. In literary criticism, linguistics, and the theory of art there are different approaches to analysing concepts such as text, theme, motif or other content-based categories.²⁶

Traditional thematics considers themes and motifs as invariants occurring in various texts as well as in works of art, whereas structural thematics focuses on their compositional function within a single given text; cf. the function of coherence of recurrent motifs or leitmotifs. As for the general concept of thematics, Lubomír Doležel proposes two epistemological principles for structural thematics:

Deux principes épistémologiques, qui dérivent de l'axiome qui pose la structuration du contenu, se révèlent fondamentaux pour le projet d'une thématique structural:

- a) les thèmes ne peuvent être identifiés que dans la cadre de leur champ sémantique;
- b) les thèmes étant formulés comme des invariants sémantiques, on doit déterminer l'éventail de varia-

²⁶Cf. the studies by Boris Tomashevskii, Teoriia literaturnykh tematov (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1928) especially his chapter on thematology; further of interest are: Lubomír Doležel, "Narrative Semantics," PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature, 1 (1976): 129-51; Aleksandr K. Zholkovskii, Themes and Texts: Towards a Poetics of Expressiveness (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1984). In linguistics, the discipline of discourse analysis has introduced its concepts and definitions of text and theme; cf. the works of Teun A. Van Dijk, Text and Context. Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse (London: Longman, 1977); Robert A. de Beaugrande and Wolfgang Dressler, Einführung in die Textlinguistik (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1981), and Wolfgang Heinemann and Dieter Viehweger, Textlinguistik. Eine Einführung (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991). According to these linguists, who as a rule postulate one theme within a text, thematic unfolding within a text is brought about by the semantic relations of specification, integration and argumentation.

bilité dont ils sont susceptibles. Sur cette base, la thématique doit être considérée comme une subdivision de la sémantique littéraire.²⁷

Thus he establishes a link between themes, semantic fields, and literary semantics. First, the study of themes and other units of content involves the classification of meaning, that is, the semantics of lexemes, paragraphs, and ultimately texts. Then literary semantics establishes hierarchies or levels of meaning. For example, the level of organic vs. inorganic matter contains the levels of creation and destruction of life, or of life and death respectively.

The theme of **death**²⁸ is an optional category of content in literary works. Since it often deals with eternal questions, it has held an enduring interest for Russian and world literature.²⁹ Death appears to be present in most of Tolstoy's writings either as a dominant theme or a secondary motif; only a few of his works exclude this topic. In world literature, there are literary works which either (a) include death, the potentiality of death and related aspects, or (b) exclude the

²⁷Lubomír Doležel, "Le triangle du double. Un champ thématique." 64 *Poétique* 16 (1985), 463.

²⁸Cf. the articles "Death and the Individual" by Pamela Caswell and Sarah Webster Godwin, Jean-Charles Seigneuret, ed., *Dictionary of Literary Themes and Motifs*, vol. 1 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988) 328-46; and "Death" by Horst S. Daemmrich and Ingrid Daemmrich, *Themes and Motifs in Western Literature. A Handbook* (Tübingen: Francke, 1987) 78-82.

²⁹Marc A. Robinson, "From the Finite to the Infinite: Death and Altered Perspective in Russian Literature," diss., University of Illinois, 1991; the author covers the presentation of this topic, starting with works of Old Russian literature, including seventeenth- and eighteenth-century texts, and concluding with contemporary Russian literature.

tragic. In prose and in drama the death of a character can coincide either with the initiation of the plot, with its culminating moment, or even with its ending. The death of a character can either be 'mediated' through other characters or be presented directly through narrators in prose fiction. In terms of length of reference and presentation of physiological death, one may distinguish between long, detailed passages and short, concise statements describing the death of a single character.³⁰ The narrator may present the theme in a concentrated manner, or distribute parts of it throughout a text.

In analysing the thematic presentation of death, as well as its related themes and motifs in literary works, one must first determine their function — that is, study the interrelations between themes and motifs in order to establish a thematic hierarchy or equilibrium; such relations may arise from the death of a central character or the deaths of minor characters. The quantitative aspect — that is, the number of deaths or references to the theme of death — does not necessarily indicate its dominance. In art forms in general, the theme of death is often combined with a variety of other themes and motifs: violent death is often an integral part of human aggression; it is also the obligatory part of highly schematized genres such as detective stories, war stories,

³⁰The kernel sentences expressing biological death are two-fold: character 'A' dies or died vs. character 'B' kills or killed character 'C'. The spiritual aspect could be expressed in a sentence such as: Character 'D' meditates about immortality.

funeral laments and tragedy. Thus, death can play an obligatory or an optional part in both highly and less patterned works of literature.

Literary texts deal with abstract relations and relationships between characters. Problems encountered by characters in the authors' portrayal are manifested through their concrete verbal or physical activities and corresponding situations, usually in crises. Human activities centre around the achievement of goals, the realization of which frequently depends on whether the individual can master them, either in personal crises or in conflicts with other individuals.

Texts dealing with **natural death** show characters facing the fundamental problem of human mortality; sudden **violent death** precludes the aspect of preparation. The latter motif implies conflicts rooted in the individual's striving for political or economic power and dominance. Literary texts imply characters' goal-directed activities, but natural death, unlike violent death and its variant **suicide**, in itself is not such an activity. Fiction texts deal with the individual's problems as well as with problems concerning the individual vis-à-vis other individuals or groups. These problems as well as the presentation of possible solutions form the core of every plot in prose fiction or drama. The poetics of these works follow a defined formula: setting of objectives, attempting to materialize these goals, followed by the final phase determining them as failure or success.

In analysing death in works of literature one may distinguish between categories of content and devices used for their presentation. Death, as a specific literary theme, implies certain modes and modalities. These in turn contain further categories and variants. In dealing with this complex subject, one may determine the existence of the four fundamental **modes** and **modalities** — based on the physical aspect of death: (a) **natural death**, (b) **violent death**, (c) **potentiality** and (d) **(f)actuality**. These criteria can be applied to other significant themes and motifs which affect the duality of body and mind such as love, eroticism, and sexuality. Both love and death co-exist as powerful forces in a significant number of Tolstoy's works.

In their choice of modality, writers must choose between **potentiality** and **actuality**, i.e., between a presumed, pretended, death (potential death) or a materialized borderline experience (actual death). They must also take into consideration any implicit allusions or explicit references to mortality and its transcendence. As for the intellectual, spiritual aspect of death, the fundamental philosophical criteria include its rejection as well as the belief in and striving for transcendence or immortality.

Apart from these fundamental criteria, which can be applied to the analysis of death in literary works, there is also a large number of recurrent categories involved in its presentation: the first important distinction is the one between **direct** and **explicit reference** on the one hand and **indirect**

or **implicit reference** to death and related phenomena in literary works on the other. Direct and implicit references may manifest themselves on a 'prosaic' level; the author selects names of phenomena related to death out of a specific **lexicon** belonging to this semantic field. He or she may choose lexemes such as *umeret* '(to die), *smert*' (death), *panikhida* (requiem), *mertvets* (corpse), or *potustoronnii mir* (the nether world). This topic may also involve different lexical fields such as attitudes towards death, the process of dying, the moment of death and the stage of bereavement.

Authors may also use another set of phrasemes referring to the process of dying, (cf. the English phrase 'kicking the bucket') *otpravit'sia v Mogilevskuiu guberniiu, otbrosit' kon'ki* or *vyt'ianut' nogi*. They may also resort to typical images, metaphors and symbols of ending, transition, transformation or rebirth, all of them expressing **change**. This manner of presentation is opposed to the indirect, metaphorical portrayal of the narrated world. In Tolstoy's works, while the reader may encounter death portrayed on symbolic and allegorical levels, the majority of the death-scenes, may be described as being **realist** in nature.

As is the case with other themes, the narrator may either present them in a concentrated or concise manner (**short form**) or else fragment this topic, distributing its elements throughout a longer narrative (**long form**). Thus, death can be portrayed in short and concentrated or in long and detailed passages.

Another significant distinction affects the *source of mediation*. The death of characters can be presented through narrators or other characters from an **external perspective**, in which case the dying character's attitude, the workings of his consciousness, is usually omitted, or through **introspection** — the internal focalization³¹ of a character's thoughts and emotions.

Still other important distinctions are: concrete **physical** versus **abstract** death; **sudden**, unexpected violent or natural, expected and anticipated death, the death of **individuals** and **mass** death (multiple deaths), death occurring in open spaces versus closed spaces. All these factors may put significant constraints on the literary presentation of death. Authors, like other human beings, face a particular problem in presenting death as a state of non-being,³² usually choosing to present either pre-mortal experiences of death, or characters' 'post-mortal' visions of the after-life.

In analysing the presentation of the death-theme in a representative number of Tolstoy's narratives, this study will take into consideration fundamental and specific categories of content, modalities, modes, variants and sub-modes as well as the pertinent multi-level devices discussed above. The goal is

³¹Traditionally, narratology has distinguished between the following techniques of introspection: free indirect discourse, stream of consciousness technique and interior monologue.

³²Garrett Stewart, Death Sentences: Styles of Dying in British Fiction (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1985) 3-17. The author of this study points out the impossibility and the inexpressibility of the artistic presentation of death.

to formulate a poetics of death. The analysis of the works in question will follow a chronological sequence so as to point out certain tendencies in the treatment of the subject, starting with Tolstoy's early narratives and concluding with his Khadzhi-Murat.

Chapter One: Early Narratives

Tolstoy's trilogy Detstvo. Otrochestvo. Iunost' (Childhood, Boyhood, Youth, 1852-1855) deals with developmental aspects affecting the stages of human life: the period of adolescence in particular.¹ It focuses on significant changes experienced by a boy, the main character of the trilogy, Nikolen'ka Irten'ev. The trilogy contains a large number of trivial, everyday-life events and situations as well as a restricted number of significant turning points in the life of the main character; two of the latter associated with the death of his mother and of her house-keeper Natal'ia Savishna. In the second part, Otrochestvo, the main character meditates about immortality. This intellectual confrontation with death is followed by the actual death of another character, his grandmother.

The first part of the trilogy covers the period between Nikolen'ka's tenth birthday and his mother's death — a period of approximately six months. Detstvo (1852) concludes with the description of Natal'ia Savishna's death, several months later. This narrative contains typical scenes of the private and social life of an aristocratic Russian family, such as attending private lessons, playing games, hunting, and festivities. Despite its formal fragmentation, Detstvo maintains

¹This stage of life, the status of the narrators' as well as the use of poetic techniques is dealt with in a study by Alexander F. Zweers, Grown-Up Narrator and Childlike Hero. An Analysis of the Literary Devices Employed in Tolstoy's Trilogy *Childhood, Boyhood and Youth* (The Hague/Paris: Mouton, 1971).

artistic unity through the presence of the third-person narrator and the concentration on three days in the life of the little boy.

The author presents a variety of themes in this work, attempting to evoke a complete picture of the life of the family and their relatives and friends. Death is not the dominant subject in this trilogy; rather it is equally represented along with other themes. It marks, however, a significant turning point in Nikolen'ka's life: it concludes his childhood: "Со смертью матери окончилась для меня счастливая пора детства и началась новая эпоха — эпоха отрочества." [1:93]

The dominant mode of presentation of content of this narrative is **direct** and **explicit reference**, that is, direct expression of the various themes and motifs, a tendency here clarified and supported by religious symbolism. The deaths in question are presented by the first-person narrator as well as some other characters. The adult narrators, Natal'ia Savishna in particular, as well as the mother, through her letter, complement Nikolen'ka's restricted point of view.

The dominant philosophical attitude towards death coincides with the Christian concept of death and immortality. This manifests itself in the mother's belief in the after-life, in her hope for the immortality of the soul as well as in Natal'ia Savishna's conscientious preparation for and acceptance of death. The presentation of death follows a restricted number of stages, thus indicating its gradual development. The

narrator introduces death (that is, natural death) right in the first chapter of the narrative.² In approaching the topic, he establishes the mode of potentiality of death through an invented dream. Nikolen'ka anticipates a tragic incident — the death of his mother — in a nightmare.

The narrator varies the mode of potentiality by employing further references to an imminent death affecting the life of one of the members of the family. He has Grisha, the *iurodivyi*, predict a catastrophe, thus reinforcing the tragic atmosphere. One characteristic feature of the narrator's strategy is the deliberate oscillation between **indefiniteness** and **certainty**.

The narrator directs the reader to assume several possible outcomes of this narrative, despite the tendency to introduce and intensify the tragic in the beginning of this work. His basic options are a happy ending or a tragic outcome. The oscillation between the poles of uncertainty and certainty is also facilitated by two competing, co-existing modes of narration: **predictive** and **posterior**.³ The narrator starts with the presentation of events following the linear progression of time, but eventually deviates from this temporal ordering. This becomes obvious in the separation scene: the male persons of the family leave their estate and Maman for

²Violent death plays a secondary role in this narrative. Its non-materialization can be observed in the hunting-scene: Nikolen'ka is asked to help to kill a hare, a task which he does not fulfil; the hare survives.

³According to Gerald Prince, in a predictive narrative "the NARRATION precedes the NARRATED in time"; Gerald Prince (1987) 76.

Moscow. The presentation of the farewell scene includes certain remarks which could serve to classify it as a 'Last Farewell'.

The author's strategy of **indeterminacy** continues even in the mother's highly emotional letter to her husband. She summons her husband and her sons to return to their country estate to see her while she is still alive. The first part, written in Russian, excludes the tragic reality, focusing instead on a detailed description of her illness, while the second part, written in French, focuses on the acceptance of her imminent death and its consequences for her loved ones. The mother's acceptance of death thus co-incides with the point of turning from uncertainty to certainty, i.e., the materialization of the tragic. It is at this point that the author-narrator gives up his strategy of oscillation between uncertainty and certainty.

When the male members of the family arrive at the estate, the mother is about to die. Nikolen'ka is not allowed to witness his mother's death, and the author avoids or misses the opportunity of dramatization. Neither does the moment of his mother's death serve the function of a climax. Later, as Natal'ia Savishna mediates the last moments of the mother's life to Nikolen'ka, the narrator depicts her emotional reaction to the death of a loved one. In describing the mother's funeral, Nikolen'ka's own reactions come to the fore. His fear and the experience of shock at the confrontation with the corpse are contrasted with the ritualized behaviour of the adult mourners.

The narrator ends Detstvo by describing the last months of Natal'ia Savishna's life. Her philosophy of life transcends the mother's acceptance of death. Natal'ia Savishna, who organized the family household, organizes the last months of her life as much as possible. Her death co-incides with the happiest moment in her life; it is not a dreadful end but rather a positive closure of one's life:

Она оставляла жизнь без сожаления, не боялась смерти и приняла ее как благо.[...] Вся жизнь ее была чистая, бескорыстная любовь и самоотвержение. [1:95]

She dies without fear and successfully goes through the ritual of giving away her possessions and asking for forgiveness. The last chapter is narrated from an adult's perspective, i.e., 'reported' from the point of view of an omniscient narrator.

Maman's death dominates and frames a large portion of the narrative. The author-narrator begins this narrative employing the device of *in medias res*. He describes Nikolen'ka's awakening to a tragic reality. This is one of the common Tolstoyan motifs used in the presentation of death. Nikolen'ka's presentation of his 'invented' nightmare indicates **bipolarity** as the dominant feature of this work:

Я сказал ему, что плачу оттого, что видел дурной сон — будто маман умерла и ее несут хоронить. Все это я выдумал, потому что решительно не помнил, что мне снилось в эту ночь; [...]... мне казалось, что я точно видел этот сон, и слезы полились уже от другой причины. [1:2]

The vague and incoherent world of the nightmare allows the author-narrator to allude to a tragic event without informing the reader about the narrative's tragic outcome. The author also introduces **weeping** as an important and recurrent motif in this work.

The author connects this motif with the theme of death as he introduces Grisha. Within the context of religion, his predictions are unmistakably clear: "— О-ох жалко! о-ох больно!... сердечные улетят,... " [1:17]. He combines the motif of flying with the image of the flight of the soul. His message becomes even more obvious as he introduces the image of the dove: "... жалко! улетела...[...]. улетит голубь в небо...ох, на могиле камень..." [1:18]. Grisha's presence can be seen as an additional bad omen, and the narrator comments on this fact as follows: "Он с самого того времени, как вошел в наш дом, не переставал вздыхать и плакать, что [...] предвешало какую-нибудь беду нашему дому." [1:33]

The dualistic principle of indefiniteness vs. definiteness continues to dominate the farewell scene as well as the mother's letter. Maman expresses her belief in immortality and in the eternity of love. A particular passage in her letter is marked by the anaphoric repetition of the interrogative *zачем*, combined with the device of syntactic parallelism. In this passage she questions the rationality of death:

Зачем лишать детей любимой матери? Зачем наносить тебе такой тяжелый удар? Зачем *мне* умирать, когда ваша любовь делала для меня жизнь беспредельно

счастливою ? [1:80]

Her reasoning is understandable, since her death is premature, in contrast to the 'timely' and expected demise of Natal'ia Savishna.

The grown-up narrator finally visits the cemetery.⁴ The presentation of death is built around the narrative tendencies of oscillating between definiteness vs. indefiniteness, delaying the actual outcome of the narrative, in conjunction with the modalities of potentiality and realization of death. Furthermore, the author contrasts the mother's realistic death with the ideal attitude and behaviour of Natal'ia Savishna as well as the anticipatory tendencies and the retrospective narration of the last chapter. The thematic cohesion and variety as well as the artistic unity of the trilogy is maintained through the presence of the first-person narrator.

In the second part of this trilogy, in Otrochestvo (Boyhood, 1854), the narrator focuses on experiences involving his studies. In spite of certain similarities in composition, death plays a less significant role than in Detstvo. It does not function as a temporal marker indicating a new developmental stage in Nikolen'ka's life, but is associated with more abstract motifs and events describing death, above all with Nikolen'ka's meditation on immortality preceding the presentation of his

⁴Visiting the cemetery is an important and recurrent motif in world literature; the main function of these scenes is to move the visitor and the reader, cf. the ending in Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev's (1818-1883) Ottsy i deti (Fathers and Sons, 1862).

grandmother's death. Furthermore, this narrative includes Nikolen'ka's non-materialized threats to commit suicide as well as his vision of a soldier-hero who kills enemies.

The developmental marker in *Otrochestvo* co-occides with Nikolen'ka's change of awareness, a shift in his perspective, his *Weltanschauung*. This change is brought about in a dialogue with a girl, Katen'ka, on their way to Moscow:

Такого рода моральная перемена произошла во мне в первый раз, во время нашего путешествия, с которого я считаю начало моего отрочества. [2:15]

Along with a reference to maman's death in Chapter IV, death as a significant event, motif, or subject of meditation plays an important role in the exposition of this narrative.

The narrative focuses on the description of the German teacher Karl Ivanych Mauer's past life. Several digressions unveil the first manifestations of Nikolen'ka's philosophical thinking. They are concentrated in Chapter XIX, entitled "Otrochestvo". In searching for eternal truths, the main character meditates about the meaning of life, the concepts of happiness, fate, the immortality of the soul, and the process of philosophizing itself [2:56].

As for death, he acknowledges its omnipresence and potentiality in life and time. He juxtaposes the ideas of happiness, death, and the future, but excludes the latter two in order to reach this state — i.e., happiness excludes the ideas of time and temporariness. As for the immortality of the soul, Nikolen'ka muses about the unidirectional movement of the

soul towards eternity. He also speculates about a possible cyclical concept of time, cf. the aspects of re-incarnation and transmigration of the soul:

После жизни душа переходит в вечность; вот вечность – и я провел с одной стороны овальной фигуры черты до самого края доски. От чего же с другой стороны нету такой же черты? Да и в самом деле, какая же может быть вечность с одной стороны, мы верно существовали прежде этой жизни, хотя и потеряли о том воспоминание. [2:56-57]

This intellectual treatment of death in Chapter XIX, has been purposely selected by the narrator to prepare the reader for a tragic event: the death of Nikolen'ka's grandmother (Chapter XXIII). Again, as with Maman, the children are denied the experience of direct confrontation with death. They are sent away for a ride while their grandmother dies. A few days before her death, the narrator notices the symptoms of her illness, while upon returning from his ride on the day of her death he is confronted by another bad omen: his grandmother's coffin. The dead body serves the function of *memento mori* [1: 66].

As the narrator also points out, there is hardly any person who is in grief about this loss. This is due to the fact that the grandmother's death is not unexpected: her relatives have had the opportunity of experiencing preparatory grief. The servant Masha seems to be the only one who is able to mourn. The economic consequences of this death, closely

connected to the grandmother's will, overshadow any anticipated psychological reactions, and serve to crystallize her relationship with other characters.

In Chapter XV ("Mechty") Nikolen'ka imagines himself to be a soldier taking part in a battle. Surrounded by a huge number of enemy soldiers, Nikolen'ka succeeds in killing three of them before he is fatally wounded. He dies a heroic death and pays a visit to his former home as a ghost (II:46-47). Nikolen'ka's hallucinations introduce — for the first time in Tolstoy's works — the thematic frame of **military life**, the motifs of violent death and the vision of one's own death, all of which later manifest themselves in his early military tales as well as his major novels and his late novella Khadzhi-Murat.

The death-scene and the narrator's philosophical digressions on this subject in Chapter XVI are preceded by Nikolen'ka's references to suicide and his threat to commit suicide. His 'rhetorical' suicidal threats — "Я не могу этого, я не маленький, я не перенесу этого, я умру, убью себя." [2: 49] — grow out of a sense of depression brought on by his bitter relationship with his French teacher, whom Nikolen'ka hates because of his isolation.

This is the first introduction of the motif of non-materialized suicide in Tolstoy's fiction. The announcement of the suicide belongs to the modality of potentiality of death. The composition of the secondary theme of death in this narrative is characterized by its dualistic structure: the spiritual aspect is juxtaposed to the physical aspect. The

first level is embedded in the general philosophical, metaphysical or religious context, the second is illustrated through the concrete death of a character. In his trilogy Tolstoy has already introduced a large number of fundamental constituents illustrating the theme of death. The fact that the majority of his works belong to a specific literary movement, favours the exclusive domination of **direct** and **explicit** representation of the content.

The selection of the fundamental modalities is implied in the depiction of the natural and materialized death of the three characters mentioned above. Violent death appears only as a possible variant such as in the hunting scene, in Nikolenka's threat to commit suicide, and in his imagined war-scene. The narrator's tendency towards anti-climactic composition explains his omission of the presentation of the moments of deaths of the characters in question. Thus, the presentation of characters' internal, emotional and mental processes is de-emphasized. Tolstoy's philosophy of ideal death is exemplified through the attitude of Natal'ia Savishna, who belongs to a lower-class group of people more likely to exhibit this philosophy.

Two major areas of presentation in Tolstoy's works are **private civilian life** contrasted with **public military life**. In his early military tales, Tolstoy succeeds in combining the dominant military context with scenes from the soldiers' private lives as well. In his treatment of military

life, Tolstoy uses settings and situations similar to those used by other Russian Romanticist writers, although his main objective is to distance himself from previous poetic movements:

Tolstoi says essentially the same thing he said of the Caucasus: people simply do not die the way it is usually written. Nature is not such as it is portrayed, war is not such, the Caucasus is not such, bravery is not manifested that way, people do not love that way, they do not live and think that way, and finally, they do not die that way.⁵

The presentation of this subject within the thematic frame of military life manifests similarities in the selection of characters as representatives of certain ideological positions. Inevitably, the narrators include the description of military activities such as raids, battles and other kinds of typical activities such as gambling. Apart from these common motifs, Tolstoy has characters recollect their past lives; he also introduces music and singing as another recurrent motif related to the presentation of death.

Among Tolstoy's early works, the military tales can be considered a specific self-contained genre (in contrast to the longer narratives of the trilogy) comprising shorter narratives, characterized by a reduction of the number of secondary characters, and accompanied by a thematic concentration — a preference for presenting a single major event or incident.

⁵Boris Eikhensbaum, The Young Tolstoi Gary Klein, transl. and ed. (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Ardis, 1972) 109.

The common denominator for these short narrative 'sketches' (*rasskazy*) is their common setting in the Caucasus and their common thematic frame of military life. Tolstoy frequently declined to characterize his narratives as belonging to a particular genre.

The narrative "Nabeg" (The Raid, 1852) is sub-titled "Rasskaz volontera" (A Volunteer's Account), identifying the first-person narrator as the dominant source of information — a choice which pre-determines the corresponding features of this mode of narration. The title designates the central event of the plot: an attack by Russian soldiers followed by an enemy counter-attack. This event forms a temporal juncture, where representatives of two different ethnic groups use violence in order to achieve their strategic goals. The Russian soldiers attack and occupy a Tatar village in the Caucasus, later withdrawing following a rather successful outcome of the skirmish.

As in the trilogy, Tolstoy again juxtaposes the philosophical and physical (external) levels of the theme of death. The kernel of the thematic structure contains the re-defined quality of valour which is opposed to inexperience, stupidity and youth. A re-defined notion of valour, based on pragmatics and Plato, as well as soldiers' experiences of life, leads to a tendency to avoid life-threatening situations and ultimately to survival — this in contrast to the 'romantic' and irrational notion of bravery, which is closely connected to risking one's

life and to violent death. This motif evidences the proof of the thesis implied in the narrator's and Captain Khlopov's statements. It is also illustrated in the tragic ending of the story.

The concepts of pragmatic and irrational bravery are exemplified through two characters: the old and experienced Captain Khlopov (one of the central characters) and the young Ensign (*praporshchik*) Alanin. The first-person narrator sides with the former and his philosophy. The motif of violent death is introduced through the captain in a conversation with the inexperienced and curious narrator: "...вам просто хочется, видно, посмотреть, как людей убивают?..." [3:16]. He tries to dissuade the narrator from participating in a dangerous event. This kind of life, however, includes both the potentiality and the materialization of violent death.

In preparation for the central scene, the narrator describes the captain's premonitions about his possible demise. Thinking of his old mother, the captain explicitly refers to the possibility of their not seeing each other alive again: "...приведет ли еще Бог свидеться." [3:18] This statement implies the possibility of his violent death along with her natural death. As the characters move through space to approach the skirmish, they also become aware of the likelihood of death. Captain Khlopov's assumption later proves a truthful statement:

Нас вот, положим, теперь 20 человек офицеров идет:
кому-нибудь да убитым или раненым быть – уж это

верно. Нынче мне, завтра ему, а послезавтра
третьему: так чему же радоваться-то? [3:21]

This device of foreshadowing is reinforced by the narrator himself: "Как будто нельзя было и предположить, что некоторым уже не суждено вернуться по этой дороге!"

[3:24] Approaching the scene of the skirmish, the narrator introduces a character reminiscent of Pechorin in Lermontov's (1814-41) Geroi nashego vremeni — namely Rozenkrants, in addition to an unnamed general, who along with other soldiers react with a macabre sense of (gallows) humour as a coping mechanism of denial in regard to the forthcoming event. This is accompanied by an intensification in the tragic atmosphere and the depressed mood of the narrator and other characters. Describing the beauty and goodness of Nature, the narrator muses about the perversion of destruction:

Неужели может среди этой обаятельной природы
удержаться в душе человека чувство злобы, мщения
или страсти истребления себе подобных? [3:29]

On their way to the village (the setting of the skirmish), the soldiers pass another death-omen, a cemetery belonging to their enemies. During the enemy counter-attack, the narrator witnesses the violent death of an anonymous soldier, and later an unnecessary attack on the part of the Russians involving Ensign Alanin, who wants to show off and prove his valour. The ensign is wounded and dies but again the presentation of his moment of death is not included. In facing his death, Alanin accepts the tragic reality, whereas Rozenkrants and

other soldiers try to deny its possibility.

The thematic line of violent death crosses the plot line of events and meditative digressions several times, and decisively. The introduction of this motif is closely connected with the narrator's curiosity about the phenomenon of war, along with the motifs of bravery and inexperience. The motif of violent death marks the narrative's ending and leads to a re-defined concept of valour, represented and supported by Captain Khlopov and the narrator.

Tolstoy's short-story "Rubka lesa. Rasskaz iunkera" (The Wood-Felling. A Cadet's Story, 1853-55) is another example of a narrative dealing with military life.⁶ It is a fictional account about one strategically important military event in Russia's expansionist policy of the early 1850s. The story depicts the movement of a military unit on a particular day. Again, the narrator is one of the participants of the action, describing, evaluating and commenting on the external events and internal emotional processes of the characters — his fellow soldiers — involved in the event.

In the second part of the story, the narrator furnishes the reader with a classification of Russian soldiers. This analytical digression on military hierarchies and psychological and character traits is preceded and followed by a description of the concrete actions and behaviour of soldiers. In contrast

⁶Another short story which bears similarities to features of these sketches is "Kak umiraiut russkie soldaty" (How Russian Soldiers Die, 1854).

to the majority of the soldiers portrayed, the Ukrainian Velenchuk plays a central role from his introduction at the very beginning of the story, and especially in its ending. He is the only one to be killed in action, to die a violent death, as might be expected in a thematic frame of aggression and military actions.

Velenchuk is singled out as a special character in the first chapter: he stays behind as the unit is about to leave. He plays the role of a jester, or buffoon, entertaining his colleagues as they face the possibility of an imminent and violent death (cf. also the similar role of the private Mel'nikov in Sevastopol' v avguste 1855 goda). His coping mechanism towards this specific borderline situation is 'gallows humour' or black humour, which seems to have a contagious effect on the other soldiers (cf. the episode told by the soldier Chikin about an old woman who lies on a warm stove for two years, whose relatives realize only after this period of time that she must have died in the meantime). Thus the seriousness of this situation is mitigated by the humorous and cheerful atmosphere created by one or two soldiers.

The overriding context of the potentiality of violent death implied in the exposition is followed by specific motifs of death as the story unfolds, first as a static motif — the mentioning of a Tatar cemetery in Chapter I, later in Chikin's episode about the old woman, demonstrating the significance of the life vs. death dichotomy which underlies the structure of this work. The ever-present danger and fear of death are

shared by both the soldiers and the narrator, all of whom try to minimize the aspect of danger and later on deny the reality of death. Despite the spatial distance from their enemies providing an illusory security, it is the Russian soldiers who start the skirmish.

Chapter V centres on the characterization of the officer Bolkhov and the narrator's self-analysis. The former admits that he is not a hero endowed with courage: "...я не могу переносить опасности...просто, я не храбр..." [3:55] During the conversation between the narrator and this officer (they are discussing motives for joining the army and leaving Russia for the Caucasus) a paradoxical life-threatening situation occurs: they almost get hit by a projectile. While the narrator observes the flight of the cannon ball and becomes aware of the imminent danger, the officer, by contrast, is unaware of it. The proximity to death is reflected in the acceptance of death in the narrator's thought: "— Господи, прими дух мой с миром,..." [3:56].

The development of the theme of death — the introduction of the static motifs followed by the motif of fear of death — follows a climactic gradation. During the battle, as the danger intensifies, the narrator observes that one of his fellow soldiers is seriously wounded. It turns out to be Velenchuk, whose appearance and groans shock his comrades, evoking horror and disgust. Soon, they realize the seriousness of Velenchuk's condition: "... но по всему заметно было, что мысль о смерти пробежала в душе каждого." [3:58] This

event marks the turning point of the narrative: the general atmosphere changes, the tragic takes over.

In Chapter VIII the narrator continues describing the moments following Velenchuk's wounding. The effect of shock and disgust is soon followed by attempts to suppress these feelings by avoiding contact with the wounded soldier and the scene of violence. Velenchuk immediately realizes the inevitability of his imminent death. The narrator assumes the fictitious position of omniscience, anticipating Velenchuk's death before it occurs. In foreshadowing the death of this soldier, he shifts to a future point in time to present and comment on Velenchuk's thoughts. He also underlines the ongoing physical changes affecting Velenchuk, especially the aspect of accelerated 'ageing' — this process is compressed to a few seconds:

Здоровое, широкое лицо его в несколько секунд совершенно изменилось; он как будто похудел и постарел несколькими годами...[...], и на окровавленных лбу и носу уже лежали черты смерти.
[3:59]

Velenchuk also succeeds in solving his financial matters before he is carried away: he gives the narrator his savings and asks him to pay his debts. As the Russian soldiers retreat (Chapter IX), the narrator, in describing the enemy's counter-attack, once again mentions the Tatar cemetery [3:59].

In Chapter X the narrator comments on Velenchuk's behaviour, connecting it to a specific philosophy of life and

death, especially its consistency and overall harmony:

Последние минуты его были так же ясны и спокойны, как и вся жизнь его. Он слишком жил честно и просто, чтобы простодушная вера его в ту будущую, небесную жизнь могла поколебаться в решительную минуту. [3: 61]

This characterization comes close to the description of Natal'ia Savishna's philosophy of life in Detstvo. Velenchuk's positive traits of character — honesty, simplicity of soul, self-control, all based on Christian principles, are emphasized. Unlike the death of Ensign Alanin in the short story "Nabeg" — which can be attributed to his inexperience and 'false' notion of heroism — the death of Velenchuk is motivated by coincidence and fate.

At this point the narrator digresses into a reflection on the character traits of the Russian soldier, including the willingness to sacrifice one's life for a higher cause, to die for others — cf. the episodes of self-sacrifice in the preceding chapter [3:71]. As they sit around a bonfire, they learn the news about Velenchuk's death. This news again moves them deeply, and they react to it with a prayer [3:72]. As is often the case, the narrator, employing the technique of association, has one of the soldiers, Antonov, relate an episode about the death of another common and unknown soldier.

This narrative is built around several thematic levels: on a general level it comprises the life-death dichotomy, more specifically it is embedded in military life involving a specific

military event — a context which allows the narrator to focus on the different characters and their motives for joining the army and fighting in Caucasus. The typology of characters is based on concrete observations; their actions and behaviour in a borderline situation correspond to the proposed typology. This narrative focuses above all on soldiers' lives in a specific historical situation, including the potentiality and probability of violent death, as an integral part of their life. The narrator juxtaposes the soldiers' duties with the private side of their lives, which in the specific situation is also a part of public life.

“Zapiski markera. Rasskaz” (Memoirs of a Billiard Marker, 1856) is a short account about the experiences of the billiard-marker Petrushka, a member of a lower social class who describes and comments on the fates, fortunes and misfortunes of aristocratic gamblers, in particular on the fate of a rich young man named Nekhliudov. The definitive turning point and climax of this narrative is Nekhliudov's suicide.⁷ It also co-incides with a change in perspective through the introduction of the young man's suicide note, which constitutes a text within a text.

This goal-oriented action appears to be the first implementation of this motif in Tolstoy's early prose. The

⁷Tolstoy treats suicide in his novelette Polikushka (Polikushka, 1863), describing the death of the main protagonist. Due to a series of tragic co-incidences, the main character commits suicide and then his child drowns.

narrative also introduces and foregrounds the motif of **gambling**⁸ as part of fiction narrative. This motif plays a secondary role in Detstvo, exemplified through the father's passion, as well as in other military tales, and in Smert' Ivana Il'icha. The mode of simultaneous narration is used by the narrator up to the turning point. In contrast to the majority of his narratives, Tolstoy does not prepare the reader for the motif of **sudden death**. Following this turning point, the narrator switches to retrospective narration, explaining the reasons for Nekhliudov's fatal decision in his 'farewell letter' — a suicide note containing a confession of guilt as well as the young man's self-accusation. His note complements the characterization and mediation of his actions provided by the marker Petrushka.

Nekhliudov's life is marked and doomed by his introduction to gambling. Losing all his money and property, he runs into debt, so that suicide seems to be his only resort. As no relevant information about his past is included in the narrative, this is apparently the beginning of the young man's end. Morally speaking, it may be described as the beginning of his fall, suicide being the last solution to his dilemma, an extreme form of self-punishment.

One of the sins leading to this outcome takes the form of a duel with one of his fellow-gamblers. This event is nega-

⁸The motif of gambling appears in Tolstoy's writing for the first time in his narrative "Istoriia vcherashnego dnia" (The History of Yesterday, 1851). This work was published after Tolstoy's death.

tively evaluated by the young man in the suicide note; which still leaves open the possibility that his opponent suffered a violent death. The presentation of suicide is overshadowed by the portrayal of the event from two different perspectives, focusing on a central phase of the young man's development. This event brings together the marker and Nekhliudov, and it surprises and shocks both the marker as well as the reader. As for its integration into the story, the event marks the tragic climax of this narrative, and foreshadows its ending. Petrushka's observations and comments are limited to the presentation of the external events, modes of behaviour and actions of the young Nekhliudov. He witnesses the fall of the young man, a representative of a different social class, and condemns this act as a sin.

The short story "Metel" (The Snowstorm, 1856) depicts the winter journey of the main protagonist, the narrator and his fellow-travellers, his servant and the coachman, through Southern Russia. The significant and dynamic motif of this narrative is reflected in its title: the snowstorm. This phenomenon of Nature, including its dynamics as well as the category of change, evokes certain mental images commonly associated with this type of motif;⁹ for example, it may imply a specific inimical relationship between man and nature. The

⁹Cf. the aspect of recurrent and frequently used motifs of travelling and adventure; the snowstorm pre-conditions the motifs of losing one's way and the possibility of freezing to death.

pre-condition for the confrontation between them always depends on man's decision whether to travel under these circumstances or avoid them. The ultimate manifestation of this relationship is the annihilation of man by the forces of Nature.

As the narrator and his fellow-travellers set out on this journey, they seem to minimize and suppress the potentiality of danger, hoping for a safe and comfortable journey, but mindful of the possible dangerous situations which may await them. They face two possible outcomes: survival or death; they will either arrive safely at their destination or lose their way and be forced to spend the night in the open, where they face the danger of freezing to death — a motif introduced at the very beginning of the short story and referred to repeatedly as the plot progresses.

The composition of this narrative displays a set of oppositions and contrasts. Apart from the fundamental modes of death, the narrator uses two different levels of time and its corresponding levels of conscious and unconscious states, as well as the spheres of the real and the unreal. The narrator juxtaposes the *potentiality* of natural death — a life-threatening situation — with the specific context of *real* death in the fictional past. On a temporal plane, the narrative switches from present to past, then merges elements of the fictional past into the fictional present (as happens in the dream in Chapter VIII). This merger becomes obvious in the use of metaphors bridging the seasons of winter and summer, of

travel on land — movement through snow — being compared to sailing — movement on water.

The motif of **freezing to death** is introduced at the very beginning of the narrative and repeated frequently by both the travellers and the narrator. In the last chapter of this narrative, once the danger of freezing has passed, one of the travellers refers mockingly to this motif. The narrator contrasts not only different aspects of the modality of death — e.g., potentiality vs. actuality — and different modes and settings of death, such as natural (freezing to death and drowning) and violent death, but he also combines death with such phenomena as sleep, juxtaposing the state of being awake with states in which the individual lacks consciousness and self-control (as is the case during sleep), and, in a more radical way, a state of non-being.¹⁰

The very beginning of the narrative displays the incongruence between man's (specifically the narrator's) thoughts and his actions: "... и мне пришел в голову совет смотрителя не ездить лучше, чтоб не проплутать всю ночь и не замерзнуть дорогой." [3:118]

This disparity between rational thinking and irrational acts also becomes obvious in the 'summer' episode, in which a peasant drowns in a pond. This peasant, who apparently came from another place, underestimates the danger of going for a swim. Ironically, another peasant trying to retrieve the first

¹⁰The narrator refers to a saying which combines the motifs of falling asleep and of the dream: "...замерзание всегда начинается сном,..." [3:138].

peasant's body is forced to abandon his plan as soon as he 'realizes' that he himself cannot swim. In the overall context, compared with the potentiality of death in the winter where all passengers arrive safely, the death of a peasant in a pond tragically appears almost paradoxical.

Within the fictional text, the narrator moves freely from a 'real' world to the world of the fantastic and grotesque. He achieves these events by merging elements of the fictional present with elements introduced in the 'summer' episode. He shifts from one world to the other using a dream as a 'transitional' stage. Another technique is the association of objects or characters of the fictional present with objects of the fictional past. This is the case in the transition from the winter to the summer episode.

Here we see the fusion of two stages and movement through these stages — cf. the metaphor: "И МЫ СНОВА ПУСТИЛИСЬ ПЛЫТЬ ПО БЕСПРЕДЕЛЬНОМУ МОРЮ СНЕГА." [3:141]. The explicit comparison drawn in the first paragraph of Chapter VIII between two natural modes of death (freezing and drowning) serves to point out a common denominator: a unifying element merging the fictional present with the events of the fictional past: "Уж лучше утонуть, чем замерзнуть,..." [3:138]. The motif of drowning, introduced as part of the summer episode, which he entered through his dream, is resumed by the narrator again, this time as a flashback. In his dream, describing his attempts to fall asleep on a hot summer day, the narrator presents the tragic incident and its circum-

stances in a coherent way, in a manner not usually typical of a dream.

Being fully aware of his boredom, the monotony of travel, the narrator plays with the idea of the potentiality of death — cf. his 'death-wish':

... желание , чтобы с нами случилось что-нибудь необыкновенное, несколько трагическое.... [...]. Мне казалось, что было бы недурно, если бы к утру в какую-нибудь далекую, неизвестную, деревню лошади бы уж сами привезли нас полузамерзлых, чтобы некоторые даже замерзли совершенно. [3:138]

Following these thoughts, the narrator remains in the winter episode as he introduces the grotesque: in one of his visions one of the secondary characters, a fellow-traveller, 'transforms' into a hare: "он не старичок, сколько заяц, и скачет прочь от нас." [3:138]

Again, a character of the winter-episode becomes one of the characters in the summer episode. This character, present in the world of the narrator's mind, joins his fellow-travellers in trying to rob the narrator and threatening to kill him. This is the first and only reference to violent death in this narrative.

The incoherence in presenting coherent events becomes apparent, as the narrator envisions a grotesque and macabre image: he sees his aunt — and the peasant who drowned in the pond — alive. This is one of the few situations in which Tolstoy employs the motif of the **living dead**:

– стыдно тем более, что тетушка с зонтиком и гомеопатической аптекой, под руку с утопленником, идут мне навстречу. Они смеются и не понимают знаков, которые я им делаю ...[3:139].

The narrator's hallucination culminates when one of his fellow-travellers, an old man (*starichok*), assumes the identity of the drowned peasant.

These grotesque and macabre images, reflecting the narrator's workings of consciousness, document one of the few instances in which Tolstoy's transgresses the boundary between the real and the unreal. The merging of the levels of the two seasons can be seen in the metaphorical expression which concludes Chapter IX: "И мы снова пустились плыть по беспредельному морю снега." [3:141]. As it turns out in the end, the travellers' mode of movement proves to be successful, in contrast to the swimming of the peasant in the pond.

The presentation of death in "Metel'" is characterized through the surprising and paradoxical turn of events manifest in the peasant's drowning. The possibility of 'natural' death with its motif of freezing is introduced in the exposition of the short story, in the winter episode which frames the summer episode with its materialization of death. The secondary characters' reactions to the peasant's death reveal their helplessness and passivity. It is the peasant's free will, his own decision, which leads to his death, although the narrator does not describe the motives behind it.

One of the significant and recurrent topics in world literature is violence, which dominates the first narrative of the Sevastopol trilogy Sevastopol' v dekabre mesiatse (Sevastopol in December, 1854). Human aggression is a manifestation of a condition of disorder, which is opposed to a state of peace. This subject involves a large number of related motifs. Its underlying structure includes the aggressor, the victim, and the act of violence. One may differentiate the motives for this act, and the various reactions of the surviving victims such as shock, panic, and horror as well as resistance and retribution.

Violence manifests itself on the individual as well as on the collective level, in the form of tyranny, torture, and murder. Human violence directed against human beings, animals, or objects can be combined in works of fiction with aspects such as psychological motivation and ethical questions. Common motives for human aggression are, for example, characters' striving for power, taking pleasure in inflicting pain and taking revenge. Literary texts depicting violence as a dominant theme

raise doubts about a harmonious world order, provoke questions concerning the possibility of civilized development, reveal a fascination with primitive instincts or taboo violations and show a strong concentration of negative human characteristics.¹¹

¹¹Daemmrich and Daemmrich (1987) 16.

In many works of literature scenes of violence attract the readers' attention; in most cases, the authors do not present violence for its own sake, but rather explain the reasons for it by placing this phenomenon in different contexts.

One of the specific manifestations of collective human aggression is war. Human aggression on this scale implies organized — in the past almost ritualized or planned — killings of anonymous masses, that is of large numbers of anonymous individuals. Tolstoy treats aggression and its manifestations in many of his literary works. He was personally involved with the Russian army of the early 1850s, a fact which explains, together with his interest in history, his recurrent treatment of military life, sometimes including or excluding battles or wars.

In literary history, there are periods in which 'war literature'¹² — and even specific genres such as the *ode* — present one of the significant phenomena of history, affecting the lives of individuals and the fates of nations. Presentations of military life need not focus on violent death, although graphic depictions of battles and wars, as a rule, include this mode of death or its potentiality.

As the word 'Sevastopol' indicates, the well-informed reader of the 1850s and the well-educated reader of the present are able to understand the historical events such as

¹²This genre featured prominently in official Soviet literature following the Second World War.

the Crimean War and their political significance. The use of this title displays the author's intent to strive for authenticity in referring to factual historic events.

In describing phenomena of war, Tolstoy treats elements such as concepts of heroism, cowardice, terror, the irrationality of this profession and many others, combining them with the motif of violent death, but this treatment varies from story to story. The first Sevastopol narrative exhibits descriptive, evaluative and argumentative tendencies, focusing on the results of war and presenting them from an observer's point of view. The narrator does not name individuals or portray their fates in detail. The second and the third stories introduce characters as they cope with the effects of war on a personal level. As for the composition of this narrative, the omniscient third-person narrator strings together different, mostly static, scenes of war as he visits several places in the war-torn port of Sevastopol. His perspective is that of the attentive observer, moving through the open and closed spaces of the besieged town.

In striving for completeness the active observer tries to describe and evaluate as many images of war as possible. The narrative begins with a description of Nature which as part of the exposition sets the atmosphere for the events to come. To achieve artistic unity, the narrator begins with the description of the dawn in the first paragraph of the story and closes with a depiction of dusk in the last paragraph.

The presence of the narrator, together with other cohes-

ive devices, contributes to the story's coherence, as do the recurrent motif of violent death and related motifs such as blood and dirt. After establishing a rather sombre atmosphere, the narrator quickly follows with the dominant motif. At the same time, he varies this motif, using corresponding symbols and typical death-related settings, — e.g., a physician on his way to a hospital or the symbol of the cross (a soldier crosses himself while praying).

As the narrator-observer continues his tour through the town, he witnesses a funeral procession at a cemetery. Then he visits a hospital, passes by a church and sees another funeral. As he stops at a tavern, he overhears a conversation between two soldiers before he finally reaches the battlefield, the famous Fourth Bastion, to report on further scenes of war. The principal effect of military confrontation, the destruction of objects and human lives, is present in all of these places. The narrator, however, does not describe the historical causes leading to the siege of the town.

As in many of his subsequent works, Tolstoy employs the techniques of **contrast** and **repetition**¹³ with **variation**. In addition to a realistic 'prosaic' tendency, lyrical overtones can be found in his description of Nature as well as in certain syntactic parallelisms marked by anaphoric constructions. The narrator starts with the general and overall reaction of horror as the immediate and general result of war, later describing

¹³Sankovitch, Natasha, "Creating and Recovering Experience: Repetition in Tolstoy," diss., Stanford University, 1992.

its effect on an anonymous soldier. The narrator's perspective is that of a war correspondent who not only registers his observations but also evaluates them. The concrete manifestations of war, its tragic results, dominate his abstract thoughts, his concepts of heroism and patriotism, which the narrator discusses in the conclusion of the narrative.

After touching on future settings of his tour, the narrator then switches immediately to the first horrible scene of war. In the first direct literal reference to violent death, he describes a mass funeral portraying one specific image, an immediate result of warfare:

На Северной денная деятельность понемногу начинает заменять спокойствие ночи: где прошла смена часовых, побрякивая ружьями; где доктор уже спешит к госпиталю, где солдатик вылез из землянки, моет оледенелой водой загорелое лицо, и, оборотясь на задравшийся восток, быстро крестясь, молится Богу; где высокая тяжелая маджара на верблюдах со скрипом протащилась на кладбище хоронить окровавленных покойников, которыми она чуть не доверху наложена... [4:3].

The last part of this passage underlines the anonymous nature of mass killing and mass funerals. The last sentence concludes with a culmination of the preceding sentences; note the role of syntactic parallelism and the anaphoric function of the interrogative *где*.

The second direct reference to violent death, apparently

a minor and insignificant sign of war, follows the depiction of the mass funeral: "Вы [...]... шагаете через полусгнивший труп какой-то гнедой лошади, которая тут в грязи лежит около лодки, ..." [4:4]. Using variation, the narrator contrasts the death of an animal with the deaths of human beings.

Describing the mass funeral, the narrator concentrates on visual impressions and uses the recurrent motif of blood for the first time. Apart from this mode of perception, the author combines this mode of perception with the olfactory mode (cf. the adjective *polusgnivshii*). The third direct reference to violent death follows a rather lengthy description of city life, contrasted with contemporaneous military life.

The next station on the narrator's tour is the hospital. Again he focuses on the physical results brought about by the raging battle. As in open spaces, the description of the effects of war in a closed space combines the dominant visual and olfactory modes of perception:

Вы входите в большую залу Собрания. Только что вы отворили дверь вид и запах 40 или 50 ампутационных и самых тяжело-раненых больных [...] вдруг поражает вас. [4: 6].

In this description the author explicitly refers to the effect of loss, e.g., the loss of parts of the body. After introducing this theme, he adds the effect of total and radical loss, the loss of life: "... и останавливаетесь перед другим больным, который лежит на полу, и, как кажется, в нестерпимых страданиях ожидает смерти." [4:6].

The narrator continues to present the results of the war in open spaces in the same way as in a closed space (e.g., the hospital). He selects moments of activities in progress and integrates them into different contexts. Thus it is not the moment of wounding (the cause of the result) or the moment of death itself which are foregrounded, but rather surrounding circumstances, such as the funeral procession, the dying of soldiers, the stench of corpses: "...тяжелый запах мертвого тела сильнее поражает вас,..." [4:6], which precede or follow the moment of death. All these depictions are devoid of any tendency to glorify or embellish warfare for propaganda purposes.

The worlds of life and death merge when the narrator addresses another wounded soldier. Here, death extends into life. The following comparison underlines the transition to another world combined with the motif of partial loss:

Немного далее вы видите старого солдата, который
 переменяет белье. Лицо и тело его какого-то
 коричневого цвета и худы как скелет. Руки у него
 совсем нет: она вылучена в плече. [8:6]

The partial loss of limbs and the total loss of life, as well as the extension of the realm of death into the realm of life, all combined with drastic and direct language, contribute to the artistic aim of authenticity of presentation, hence the striving for inclusion of all minor details. Thus the most horrible and shocking images are not considered taboo. Following a depiction of an amputation, the narrator explicitly

states his striving for a realistic mode of presentation:

“...а увидите войну в настоящем ее выражении – в крови, в страданиях, в смерти...” [4:9].

This remark is in turn followed by a philosophical digression about the insignificance of human life. In his remarks on the suffering and death of soldiers, the narrator re-defines the value of heroic death, in sharp contrast to the concept of ‘romantic’ heroic death.¹⁴

After leaving the hospital, the narrator switches his attention to another funeral, whose depiction stands in sharp contrast to that of the mass funeral of anonymous soldiers. In the former, the narrator summarized the overall effect of terror. This funeral, on the other hand, presents ceremonies for an individual, for an officer. It also serves to point out a further aspect of death in wartime, namely the inequality of the treatment of dead soldiers who succumb to the ‘democratic’ equality of death. The dead officer receives the privilege of an individual ceremony — a privilege based on military rank, and thus on inequality — whereas the mass funeral reduces the corpses of soldiers to less aesthetic objects, who accordingly are buried in mass graves. The officer’s funeral procession expresses dignity and formality, and the narrator attaches to it some aesthetic value, contrasting terror and ugliness with dignity and beauty. These aesthetic impressions serve to

¹⁴Tolstoy refers directly to the concept of romantic hero in his short stories “Nabeg” and “Rubka lesa”; in his subsequent works, Tolstoy introduces characters with traits similar to those typical of Romantic heroes, such as Olenin in the novella *Kazaki* (The Cossacks).

suppress, at least temporarily, the tragic and horrible effects of war.

As the narrator approaches the battlefield, the motif of violent death appears to be omnipresent. The focus on the war also moves away from its effects to the underlying causes of these effects. As he moves towards the Fourth Bastion, the signs of war increase, while the signs of the normality of civil life decrease. In characterizing the battlefield, the narrator equates it with a grave: "..., что 4-й бастион есть верная могила для каждого, кто пойдет на него,... " [4:11].

In describing the details of his tour, the narrator continues to use devices similar to those he uses in the exposition and the following chapters. Some of the epithets express a depressed mood: "скучные тучи; какая-то печальная изморозь" [4:11]. On his way to the battlefield, he begins to employ another device: giving concrete numbers of soldiers killed in action:

...и из всей прислуги осталось 8 человек; [...] как 5-ого попала бомба в матросскую землянку и положило одиннадцать человек,убило двух... [4:13]

as well as the visual motif of blood and dirt.

In the last chapters of the narrative, the narrator-observer proves to be somewhat inconsistent in evaluating war and violent death. Comparing war and fighting to a game of life and death, the narrator underscores the irrational aspects of these activities. The main line of his argument views war and violence from a rather negative point of view. This shift

of opinion becomes even more obvious at the moment when he starts justifying war and heroic death as well as the motif of yearning for death: "...вам хочется, чтобы еще и еще и поближе упало около вас ядро или бомба." [4:15]. In accordance with this shift, his final comments portray the heroic death of Russian soldiers as more valuable than the natural death of civilians. In sacrificing their lives for their country under the circumstances described by the narrator, the Russian soldiers are the true heroes, since they die for others.

The final sentence of the story, reprising the motifs of Nature (cf. the use of parallelism) the common denominator in this case being **sounds**, attempts to evoke an atmosphere of normality. Nature appears to be the only element not affected by the events taking place in the port. The overall tendency of the narrative shows a striving for a realistic and authentic presentation of an historic event. To achieve this effect, the narrator focuses on the physical effects of war with brutal frankness. His tour, starting from the harbour and ending at the Fourth Bastion, presents the effects of war in a reverse order, that is, the description of the effects precedes that of the cause, as can be seen in the ordering of the various stations: the funeral procession and cemetery, the hospital, and finally the battlefield, where the tragic series of events originates.

This order also deviates from a temporal, linear sequence of causation and result. The order of presentation corresponds to the device of gradation: the most important

event connected to the appropriate setting concludes the narrative. In presenting the results of the battle, the narrator in effect constructs an anti-climax. The conclusion of this work also provides a platform from which the author can deliver his ideological message: dying for others can be morally justifiable. What is interesting is the fact that he fails to give any information about the political background or the political motives and causes which led to this war. The enemy's ideology is also omitted from the presentation.

The main device employed in the construction of this narrative is *contrast*, manifested through the description of military and civilian life. On an abstract level the narrator juxtaposes the natural death of civilians with the violent death of the participants in the siege; the concrete physical death of soldiers is contrasted with digressions on human mortality; the narrator distinguishes the death of human beings from the death of animals; on a social scale, the death of an officer is contrasted with the death of anonymous soldiers. The general concepts of destruction and loss are manifested in the description of partial loss of body parts as well as the loss of human life.

On a global scale, war can be considered as a cause, as a dynamic motif of **change**. This phenomenon fatally intervenes in the life of its participants, as well as of passive observers, causing change and its principal consequence: destruction. War as cause is the common theme exemplified in detail through the description of tragic results, and thematically overrides

its specific effects (e.g., partial loss, suffering, and violent death).

Sevastopol' v mae (Sevastopol in May, 1855) is the second part of the Sevastopol trilogy of narratives dealing with the siege of this town. This work consists of sixteen chapters and is considerably longer than Sevastopol' v dekabre mesiatse. The narrator connects this narrative with the first Sevastopol story by referring to the beginning of the military confrontation, thus creating a thematic cohesion and artistic unity. In transforming this historic subject, the narrator focuses on a few days — separated by several months — as well as on events, states, and changes of states brought about by the military course of events.

In the exposition, the narrator provides the reader with a general overview and evaluation of the military state of affairs: apart from the facts of the siege, the narrator comments on the irrational, obscene and insane nature of war. He assumes the role of a war correspondent, a committed and partial observer bringing out the most significant facts through statistics, describing military activities on a general and anonymous scale.

This general overview — a summary of the past events — stands out from the following fictional narrative by virtue of its declamatory style. The narrator takes on the role of a public speaker addressing his 'listeners' and delivering his arguments. In a similar manner, expressing a solemn tone, the

narrator summarizes one day of fighting in Chapter XIV as well as in the last passage of the concluding chapter.

One of the important aspects of Tolstoy's poetics is the tendency to analyse and evaluate events and processes, their causes and effects, and then integrate these analyses into significant parts of his literary works. These argumentative passages serve the function of framing fictional events. The prosaic and the solemn (or poetic) passages are clearly marked. This separation of the narrator's comments from his 'fiction' can be found in many other works as well; in the first Sevastopol story, for example, the author's impressions and comments dominate.

A common denominator forming a leitmotif for his argumentation in this narrative is his use of numbers in portraying an event of mass proportions; however, his preference for symbolic round numbers (such as 1,000, 100, 80,000) deviates from a 'realistic', matter-of-fact presentation, and predominantly manifests itself in the 'poetic' passages. His repetition of round numbers in the first chapter indicates the skilful use of **repetition** as an artistic device: "Тысяча людских самолюбий успели оскорбиться, тысяча успели удовлетвориться, надуться, тысячи – успокоиться в объятиях смерти." [4:18].

The introduction and anaphoric repetition of numbers contributes in a broader context to the poeticization of prose both in the expository chapter and in other chapters of this work. As for 'exact' numbers, the narrator uses them sparsely

in providing information about wounded and killed soldiers: these numbers appear usually in prosaic passages, as statistical data, in an attempt to evoke the impression of a realistic presentation. The device of repetition indicates the monotony of warfare and mass destruction, including violent death. Mass death, the death of anonymous individual soldiers, as well as groups of soldiers killed in action, either intentionally or by co-incidence, as well as the death of one of the main characters and the survival of another — all these contribute to the various categories of **violent death**. In describing the hospital and the battlefield, the author distinguishes between wounded and killed soldiers, and in the final chapter, during an armistice, exposes the cruelty of war, describing, for instance, mutilated corpses in sharp contrast with the beauty of Nature.

After the general exposition, the narrator introduces one of the major characters: Captain (*shtabskapitan*) Mikhailov. Selecting a specific moment in time and a specific place, the narrator first approaches this character (as an anonymous and unnamed officer), then describes his outward appearance before finally giving him a name and rank. The introduction of this officer allows the narrator to introduce further minor characters and select a specific perspective from which to present the subsequent plot. This series of events can be characterized as a movement from relatively safe places to life-threatening situations.

In contrast to Sevastopol' v dekabre, which does not

treat in detail the fates of particular individuals, the second narrative centres around the fate of a group of soldiers. The central scene — a life-threatening situation caused by the explosion of a bomb — unites, by co-incidence, the destinies of two soldiers: Captain Mikhailov and Captain Praskukhin. They happen to know each other: Praskukhin owes Mikhailov twelve roubles. They meet three times during the three-day period. Their last meeting at night forms the climax of the narrative. Following this scene, the narrator focuses on the horrible results caused by fighting the following morning. The time span covering approximately three days begins on the evening on which Captain Mikhailov attends a concert and ends with the temporary armistice.

As in the first Sevastopol story, the narrator oscillates between general and specific presentation; these shifts become obvious in the poetic and declamatory passages written in rhythmic prose, in contrast to the 'prosaic' passages and dialogues. These two levels of presentation tend to be marked stylistically through the device of repetition. The rather general and abstract reflections about war are embedded into lyrical prose, whereas the concrete description of events and processes is rendered in 'prosaic' prose. The lyrical passages also display a tendency towards solemnity.

Like the other two parts of the trilogy, this narrative does not focus on death as a dominant theme, but rather integrates the topic into the plot of events and combines it with other themes and motifs, in more or less equal measure.

As with the other two narratives, it involves related topics such as the concept of risking one's own life for selfish purposes rather than for patriotic motives; furthermore, the motif of bravery, along with its theatrical manifestation and hypocrisy, is contrasted with the striving for truthfulness or truth. The dialectics of appearance and reality, hypocrisy and truth, feature prominently in the concluding remarks of this narrative. In the last chapter, the author singles out *truth* as the main protagonist of this Sevastopol story. The introductory chapter, on the other hand, emphasizes the narrator's ethical standpoint, his opposition to the irrationality of war and destruction.

One of the main aspects of characterization of the participating soldiers, as is clearly stated in the narrator's comments, is his use of **irony** and **sarcasm**.¹⁵ He distances himself from the official point of view, represented by various officers. In approaching borderline situations, the behaviour of soldiers also uncovers qualities other than heroism and bravery, such as **fear** — automatically considered a sign of cowardice by soldiers. Closely connected with the manifestation of bravery are the vices of hypocrisy and vanity.

In his portrayal of military life the narrator also emphasizes the existence of military hierarchies, along with the interdependency between social class and military rank, which are typical of civilian life as well. The existence of a

¹⁵The author uses italics to indicate his perspective or emphasize references to significant concepts, such as the after-life.

rigid power structure implies that soldiers who have achieved success disassociate themselves from those who have yet to prove themselves. On the other hand, those who try to avoid life-threatening situations and death show their bravery and heroism merely verbally.

This attitude manifests itself in the statements and behaviour of the officers Kalugin and Gal'tsin. The absurdity of bravery in war comes to the fore in Kalugin's recollection of an episode about Napoleon receiving a message:

Вспомнил про одного адъютанта, кажется Наполеона, который, передав приказание, марш-марш, с окровавленной головой подскакал к Наполеону. — Vous êtes blessé? — сказал ему Наполеон. — Je vous demande pardon, sire, je suis tué, — и адъютант упал с лошади и умер на месте. [4:39]

All these motifs are embedded in the overriding context of war. In this context violent death is only one of its obligatory components. The technique of direct presentation finds its equivalent in the following religious image: "...и ангел смерти не переставал царить над ними." [4:18]. The dominating setting of war and the plot of events seem to pre-determine and select violent death as the only mode of death.

In order to distinguish at least two different concepts and attitudes towards death, the narrator unites the fates of two different soldiers. He uses the motif of **co-incidence** to bring together a group of characters, in particular, Captains Mikhailov and Praskukhin. Again, their philosophies of life are

reflected in their attitudes towards death. According to Tolstoy's frequently used dualistic or tri-partite thematic principle, the concepts of acceptance again come to the fore.

As for the modes of narration, linear and simultaneous narrating is interrupted by the narrator's shifts of setting, that is, the technique of staying with major or minor characters for a shorter or longer period of time. The decisive deviation from the linear presentation of time co-incides with the statement of one of the secondary characters, Cadet Baron Pest. His remark anticipates the outcome of the life-threatening situation in which Praskukhin and Mikhailov find themselves.¹⁶ The narrator does not take away the opportunity of creating tension, as he characterizes this soldier as an unreliable source of information. In this context, the fact that the officer Praskukhin dies and that his comrade Mikhailov survives is not significant. However, their reactions towards death and dying, the fact that the former goes through a real 'near-death experience' while the latter awaits the after-life and survives, all contribute to important psychological and philosophical insights.

The central life-threatening scene — a borderline situation which turns out to be a death-scene for Praskukhin but leaves Mikhailov alive — complements the numerous, dispersed and scattered references to death throughout this work by concentrating the thematic essence of violent death

¹⁶Cf. Cadet Baron Pest's report, Chapter XII, p. 47.

with a specific focus on the *process* of dying. This pivotal scene brought about by co-incidence reveals specific attitudes and reactions towards death.

The scene itself comprises an 'internal' presentation of the thoughts and reactions of the two Captains, and allows for a presentation of an event from two different perspectives. The treatment of this specific borderline situation is unique in Tolstoy's presentation of death in his early narratives. For the first time a third-person narrator provides an explicit comparison of the 'internal' perceptions and evaluations of the dying and 'surviving' person. The stylistic devices used in this presentation of thoughts and perceptions are: **direct speech**, **interior monologue**, and **free indirect discourse**.

Up to this turning point, the narrator provides relatively little information about the *rotmistr* Captain Praskukhin. He characterizes him mostly as an outsider, a person who is avoided by other characters: "...и Праскухин, которого никто не знал, с которым никто не говорил, но который не отставал от них,..." [4:29]. At a party, Praskukhin voluntarily joins in singing a song,¹⁷ which impresses his comrades. In contrast with this character, the narrator characterizes *shtabs-kapitan* Captain Mikhailov in more detail. The narrator reveals information about Mikhailov's past life, and points to orderliness and selfishness as two characteristic traits of

¹⁷The motif of music functions as a leitmotif in this narrative; music is introduced in the concert in the second chapter; it is re-introduced through Praskukhin, and features prominently at the beginning of Chapter XV.

this person. In his day-dream, Mikhailov expresses his ambitions and his immoral attitude: to advance at the expense of other soldiers' deaths and profit from his friend's death in his private life:

Капитана я же должен получить по старому представлению. Потом очень легко я в этом же году могу получить майора по линии, потому что много перебито, да и еще, верно, много перебьют нашего брата в эту компанию. А потом опять будет дело, и мне, как известному человеку, поручат полк... [...] ...и он был уже генералом, удостоивающим посещения Наташи, вдову товарища, который по его мечтам, умрет к этому времени,...[4:22]

His tendency towards orderliness — Mikhailov takes precautionary measures, calculating the possibility of violent death — is reminiscent of Natal'ia Savishna's approach to death. Since he is a religious man, he repeatedly employs prayer in his approach to the war.

Before arriving at the fortifications, the captain prepares himself mentally for the possible outcome: death or advancement — an alternative later to be integrated into the context of gambling and the employment of numbers. Mikhailov also displays superstition, recognizing that he is going into battle for the thirteenth time. This fact increases his foreboding — not so much a singular and unique foreboding as a calculated pessimism: a repeated coping mechanism of assuming the worst outcome and hoping for the best. In assum-

ing the worst of the possibilities one can never be disenchant-
 ed. Then he argues in favour of duty as the driving force. As
 for the possible outcome, he contrasts death with survival
 combined with the possibility of advancement: "Впрочем,
 ежели не убьют, то верно, представят." [4:27].

The central life-threatening incident is presented twice:
 first from Praskukhin's and then from Mikhailov's point of
 view. Its outcome is 'anticipated' by Cadet Baron Pest. Before
 he refers to Praskukhin's death, he himself manages by chance
 to kill a French soldier. This is one of the few specific instan-
 ces of spontaneous and unplanned violent deaths in Tolstoy's
 narratives. Pest is trapped on the battlefield as he loses his
 orientation, then panics, running around:

Потом он спотыкнулся и упал на что-то – это был
 ротный командир (который был ранен впереди роты и,
 принимая юнкера за Француза, схватил его за ногу).
 Потом, когда он вырвал ногу и приподнялся, на него в
 темноте спиной наскочил какой-то человек и чуть
 опять не сбил с ног, другой человек кричал: "коли его!
 что смотришь?" Кто-то взял ружье и воткнул штык во
 что-то мягкое. "A moi, camarades! Ah sacré b..... Ah!
 Dieu!" – закричал кто-то страшным пронзительным
 голосом, и тут только Пест понял, что он заколол
 Француза. Холодный пот выступил у него по всему
 телу, он затрясся, как в лихорадке, и бросил ружье. [4:
 46]

Since this character is not presented as a reliable

soldier — this is evident in the disparity between his verbal utterance and his actual deeds — the reliable narrator corrects his information (Chapters XI and XII). Because of Pest's statement, the narrator deviates from his chronological presentation of events from a single perspective. Thus, he arranges two versions of the central scene, following Pest's allusion:

Основания этого рассказа, что ротный командир был убит, а что Пест убил француза, были справедливы; но, передавая подробности, юнкер выдумывал и хвастал. [4:45].

The function of this anticipation is to characterize Pest as an unreliable character, as well as to emphasize the narrator's reliability and omniscience.

Co-incident or fate brings together Praskukhin and Mikhailov just as they are about to leave the dangerous scene. They both notice a bomb flying towards them and landing only few metres from the place where they are standing. First (pp. 48-49) the perspective switches to Praskukhin describing the last two seconds of his life, followed by the description of the same span of time as it affects Mikhailov.

The narrator presents the soldiers' perceptions, visual impressions and thoughts using the device of **stretch**.¹⁸

¹⁸Gerald Prince defines *stretch* as "A canonical narrative TEMPO (Chatham); along with ELLIPSIS, PAUSE, SCENE and SUMMARY, one of the fundamental narrative SPEEDS. When DISCOURSE TIME is (taken to be) greater than STORY TIME, when a narrative segment is (felt to be) too lengthy for the NARRATED it represents, when a relatively long (part of the) narrative text corresponds to a relatively short narrated time (to a narrated action that is usually completed in a short time), stretch obtains ("Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge")", Gerald Prince (1987) 93.

During the first second the narrator focuses on the immediate consequences, such as the expectation of the explosion, his fear as he notices the bomb, and his attempt to look for cover.

The following second is first covered in a concentrated manner through the device of **summary**: "Прошла еще секунда, — секунда, в которую целый мир чувств, мыслей, надежд, воспоминаний промелькнул в его воображении." [4:48] — and then, elaborated, 'stretched' to present a multitude of information — part of it directed to the past, the other part directed to the present.

After Praskukhin realizes the fatality of his situation, he resorts to a coping mechanism typical of death-scenes: he hopes for survival, then he bargains — he is willing to accept amputation to stay alive — then he hopes that he was only wounded and that the bomb will not explode at all; finally, he leaves and suppresses the fatal moment of the present to switch to distant and recent images of his past life:

Тут он вспомнил про 12 р., которые был должен Михайлову, вспомнил еще про один долг в Петербурге, который давно надо было заплатить; цыганский мотив, который он пел вечером, пришел ему в голову; женщина, которую он любил, явилась ему в воображении, в чепце с лиловыми лентами; человек, которым он был оскорблен 5 лет тому назад, и которому не отплатил за оскорбление, вспомнился ему... [4:48].

Although it may seem improbable that a dying person might recall such a large number of significant images and impressions of his life within such a short period of time, the narrator nevertheless selects the most important motifs, things and persons that have given meaning to his life, and which Praskuhin is able to remember. He presents them through the device of reported speech, in contrast to the few direct sentences spoken by Praskukhin.

At the same time, this recollection is Praskukhin's last chance to review achievements and failures, a non-systematic re-assessment of his life. After this presentation of images from his past life, Praskukhin continues to passively perceive the ongoing events, and is gradually forced to assume the role of a helpless victim, fearing that he may be trampled on by a group of soldiers. Then he imagines that he is squashed and buried alive:

... и ему показалось что солдаты кладут на него камни; огни всё прыгали реже и реже, камни, которые на него накладывали, давили его больше и больше. [4:49].

The sequence of images oscillates from past to present, from the hope of survival to a final loss of the **ability to perceive**. This disability signifies Praskukhin's death: "... вытянулся и уже больше ничего не видел, не слышал, не думал и не чувствовал." [4:49]. The detailed description of the process of dying stands in sharp contrast to the laconic statements about the characters' deaths. Tolstoy employs this laconic statement of facts to emphasize discontinuation of perception

in subsequent works as well.

Mikhailov reacts in a similar manner when he notices the bomb. Unlike Praskukhin, however, Mikhailov directs his thoughts to God and starts praying: "Это душа отходит, – подумал он, что будет там? Господи! прими дух мой с миром." [4:50] The author's use of italics indicates the specific meaning of the deictic marker, namely the after-life. Mikhailov also questions his decision to join the army, that is, he directs his thoughts to the past. Experiencing a state of shock, he hallucinates. Assuming that he is dying, he rejoins his dialogue with God and confesses. After he realizes that he is still alive, though slightly wounded, his first reaction is one of disappointment:

Он был камнем легко ранен в голову. Самое первое впечатление его было как будто сожаление: он так было хорошо и спокойно приготовился к переходу туда, что на него неприятно подействовало возвращение к действительности,... [4:50].

Mikhailov, as soon as he remembers that Praskukhin has also faced this difficult situation, tries to find out about his colleague. His return to the fatal spot serves the function of proving his valour to his fellow soldiers. This mode of behaviour is neither a selfless act nor a sign of charity; rather it indicates his wish to promote his career.

As in Sevastopol' v dekabre mesiatse, the narrator makes use of a specific setting in which to deal with the immediate effects of war. In his first narrative he visits the hospital.

In the second and third narratives the narrator introduces a first-aid station. Whereas in the first Sevastopol story the suffering and death of anonymous soldiers play an important role, in the other two narratives the tragic fate of a couple of soldiers known to the main characters comes to the fore.¹⁹ In including this kind of setting the narrator presents physicians and their activities as obligatory components of military tales. In Sevastopol' v mae, one of the minor characters, Adjutant Prince Gal'tsin, finds himself at the first-aid station [4:37]. After pretending to be a courageous soldier and accusing wounded soldiers of cowardice, he himself displays fear and shock — he cannot stand the brutal images of war — and leaves the scene immediately.

In Chapter VIII the third-person narrator 'visits' the station to report on the survival of one of the soldiers who was not introduced before, as well as on the death of Lieutenant Semen Neferdov, a minor character known to Captain Mikhailov. The narrator takes note of the pronouncement of Neferdov's death by a physician, and stresses the professional and de-humanizing manner of treating the wounded and dead.

The final scene of the narrative, covering Chapters XIV and XI, portrays the battle-field and the atrocities of war. In

¹⁹As for characters' deaths in Tolstoy's works, one can distinguish three main types, based on their function within narratives: a) the death of main characters, dealt with in detail; these characters can be identified by their names, b) the death of secondary characters, introduced and named by the narrator; their deaths are usually not elaborated; c) the deaths of anonymous characters which are referred to by the narrator in death tolls.

these final chapters the narrator again uses **numbers** as a leitmotif, and describes the horror of the transformation of human beings to lifeless objects. In a conversation between the officer Kalugin and a colonel the latter regrets the loss of his soldiers as follows:

— Потери только, потери ужасные, сказал полковник тоном официальной печали: — *У меня в полку 400 человек выбыло. — Удивительно, как я жив вышел оттуда.*" [4:54]

As he takes stock, the narrator also includes the death of two previously introduced and identified characters: Neferdov and Praskukhin. He points out the meaning of their death — and of that of the other soldiers — for their colleagues and relatives:

Недоставало только Праскухина, Нефердова и еще кой-кого, о которых через месяц едва ли помнил и думал кто-нибудь теперь, когда тела их еще не успели быть обмыты, убраны и зарыты в землю, и о которых через месяц точно так же забудут жены, дети, ежели они были, или не забыли про них прежде. [4, 55]

The soldiers' deaths do not matter to them at all: their comrades and their relatives appear to be indifferent as they try to suppress these deaths.

The drastic description of dead soldiers is supported through the presentation of typical modes of perception: through graphic visual images and the stench of corpses. These horrible images of war are juxtaposed with the beauty of Nature as it becomes apparent during the armistice:

На нашем бастионе и на французской траншее
 выставлены белые флаги, и между ними в цветущей
 долине, кучками лежат без сапог, в серых и синих
 одеждах, изуродованные трупы, которые сносят
 рабочие и накладывают на повозки. Ужасно тяжелый
 запах мертвого тела наполняет воздух. [4:56]

The resumption of devices employed in the introduction and in Chapter XIV — e.g., rhythmic prose, anaphoric repetition — contributes to the dominating image of war as a vicious circle.

The presentation of death in the third and longest part of the Sevastopol trilogy of narratives — Sevastopol' v avguste 1855 goda (Sevastopol in August of 1855, 1856) — focuses on the anticipation and materialization of death with the two main characters: the brothers Mikhail and Volodia Kozel'tsov. The narrative culminates in the depiction of their violent deaths in Chapters XXV and XXVI. The work itself consists of twenty-seven chapters of different length. Both of the violent deaths are integrated into the plot of military events: human aggression combined with the element of co-incidence leads to the tragic outcome of their lives. They knowingly approach a life-threatening situation.

These two tragic events are preceded by a thorough and detailed direct characterization of the principal and some of the secondary characters through the mediation of the narrator. As part of this characterization, the narrator repeatedly refers to the participants' attitudes and reactions to the

possibility of violent death. The main mode of narration is **simultaneous narration** — the events presented and their mediation co-occur in time — combined with significant predictive tendencies: through anticipations, the reliable and 'omniscient' narrator refers to the fatal outcome of the two main characters' lives. In his reliability of predictions, the narrator assumes a 'prophetic' function. As is often the case in Tolstoy's narratives, it is not the fact that the main characters are killed which is important, but rather the manner in which they prepare themselves for death and the way in which they face the process of dying.

The main poetic tendency of this work is evident in the explicitness of presentation of the events, and in the description of the gloomy atmosphere. The clarity of presentation goes hand in hand with the author's artistic aim: the striving for truthfulness and realistic accuracy (*pravdopodobie*); note the integration of historical facts such as places, events and people, into a fictional work. All these features play an important role in the three Sevastopol stories. This explicitness also comes to the fore whenever the narrator makes moral and political judgements. The narrator's speech, his comments and evaluations as well as the presentation of characters' thoughts and perceptions clearly dominate quantitatively over the characters' dialogues.

As with the other Sevastopol stories, the narrator lays bare the true motives of Russian participation in the defence of this town, contrasting them with 'official' and contro-

versial motifs such as patriotism and heroism. The vice of cowardice is again a strong negative driving force, a measure of judgement. Courage is the significant motive for heroic military deeds: neither brother wants to be considered a coward, and thus they display valour as they face wounding and death.

Since the theme of war is common to all three accounts, and the settings are identical, the narrator uses similar motifs and devices in all three narratives. As settings of death, the first-aid station and the battlefield appear as obligatory constituents of the story. As was the case in Sevastopol' v dekabre mesiatse, the narrator moves from the place where the brothers Kozel'tsov pay a visit to a dying soldier to a place where the consequences of waging war become apparent, then back to the place where they originate: i.e., the battlefield. In Sevastopol' v mae several secondary characters also visit the hospital.

Sevastopol' v avguste 1855 goda is primarily a narrative about the last three days of Lieutenant Mikhail Semenykh Kozel'tsov and his younger seventeen-year-old brother, Ensign Vladimir. They happen to meet at a coach-station in the vicinity of Sevastopol and continue to travel to their destination together. Whereas the elder brother is on his way to his unit — he was wounded in May — the younger brother, having finished basic training for officers, is voluntarily joining the Russian army to participate in the battle. They both travel to Sevastopol, where they serve in different units. After they

separate, the narrator provides more information about the younger brother, gradually revealing the disparity between his 'romantic' idealistic expectation and the harsh realities of war.

The younger brother's 'awakening' starts right at the coach-station, where he learns about military activities going on in Sevastopol. After arriving at the port, Vladimir's mood changes within one day as a result of his perception of the atrocities of war. Before arriving at this place of death — he hesitantly accepts his brother's invitation to join him — he begins to notice the horrible effects of war. The younger brother's true motives for participation are revealed in a conversation with his brother:

Да впрочем, ведь ежели здесь счастливо пойдет, так можно еще скорее выиграть, чем в гвардии: там в 10 лет в полковники, а здесь Тотлебен так в 2 года из полковников в генералы. Ну а убьют, — так что же делать! [4:71]²⁰

Advancement in one's career is the most significant motive for participation — not just for Vladimir, but for the majority of soldiers. The advancement to a higher rank is tied in to the context of gambling: this manifests itself in the verb *vyigrat'* (to win). The ultimate loss in this game takes the form of violent death. The motif of gambling proves fatal for

²⁰The author alludes to the dualism of life and death through referring to a possible rapid advancement in the course of the battle; the duality is expressed through the significant German name "Totleben".

both brothers in the events which follow. Mikhail loses all his money before he participates in his last fight; Volodia loses a draw, and as a result of this loss he exposes himself to a life-threatening situation which he does not survive.

The drastic impressions of war occupy Vladimir's thinking incessantly. His pre-occupation with death manifests itself in visions of his own and his brother's deaths (Chapter VIII): he envisions both of them dying together in a heroic death. This vision is presented by the device of **interior monologue**. Their deaths are portrayed as heroic deeds (p. 75). Volodia and his brother believe in heroism, which is another motive for their actions. This mode of action is in sharp contrast to the manner in which his brother was wounded and hundreds of soldiers have been killed. In referring to this event, the elder brother points out the difference between ideological concepts of war and reality: "— у нас 2000 человек из полка выбыло, все на работах; и я ранен тоже на работе. Война совсем не так делается, как ты думаешь, Володя!" [4:75].

As Vladimir approaches his unit, he becomes aware of the irreversibility and fatality of his decision to join the army and the increasing likelihood of experiencing death:

Этот сырой мрак, все звуки эти, особенно ворчливый плеск волн, казалось, все говорило ему чтоб он не шел дальше, что не ждет его здесь ничего доброго, что нога его уж никогда больше не ступит на русскую землю по эту сторону бухты,.... " [4:82].

This intuitive knowledge is confirmed and modified by the all-knowing narrator's anticipation about the finality of their separation: "Больше не было сказано в это последнее прощание между двумя братьями." [4:84]. In decreasing the possibility of a positive turning point, the narrator intensifies the probability of the tragic.²¹ Using the device of repetition, the narrator refers to Volodia's morbid thoughts. His participation in the defence can be compared to a 'voluntary' execution.

In considering suitable options for the manner in which he will have to face death, Vladimir experiences fear, then he despises himself, and envisions his own death again (Chapter XIV, pp. 89-90). In his sleep a series of incoherent images of war and death of the recent present, combined with past images of peace, re-appear. As a last resort, he turns to religion. First he 'confesses' and then accepts God's will. He confesses that he lacks valour, and accepts death as the manifestation of fate. Following the presentation of his intimate thoughts, the narrator adds another prayer. On a general level, he prays for all soldiers, re-introducing the order of St George (*Georgievskii krest*). The leitmotif of the cross, especially its ambiguity, has the function of bringing together the spheres of religion and the military in the chapters to follow.

²¹In preparing for the tragic outcome, the narrator introduces or continues with the presentation of a tragic atmosphere; he then focuses on Volodia's depressive mood and his fear; finally he anticipates the tragic end by pointing to events preceding this resolution as inevitable.

Along with the leitmotif of the cross, again and again the narrator employs the motif of gambling. The elder brother Kozel'tsov loses all his money at playing cards (Chapters XVI and XVII). In Chapter XX his brother loses in a draw, with the result that he must participate in a dangerous mission: to execute an order for which none of his colleagues is willing to volunteer. As he approaches the battlefield, he manages to overcome fear before he is confronted with a shocking image of death:

Четыре человека матросов около бруствера за ноги и за руки держали окровавленный труп какого-то человека без сапог и шинели и раскачивали его, желая перекинуть его через бруствер. (На второй день бомбардирования не успевали убирать тела на бастионах и выкидывали их в ров, чтобы они не мешали на батареях). Володя с минуту остолбенел, увидав, как труп ударился на вершину бруствера и потом медленно скатился оттуда в канаву." [4:105]

One of the soldiers who joins the younger Kozel'tsov is the private Mel'nikov, another of the buffoons in Tolstoy's works. He appears to be the only soldier who displays 'gallows humour' in the face of death (Chapters XXII and XXIII). One of his fellow-soldiers characterizes him as follows:

— А такой у нас, ваше благородие, глупый солдатик есть. Он ничего как есть не боится и теперь все на дворе ходит. Вы его позвольте посмотреть: он и из себя-то на *ведмедя* похож. [4:107].

Mel'nikov also receives the order of *Georgievskii krest* (St George's Cross) made out of a bullet by one of his comrades (p. 110). This act — a clear manifestation of mockery — contrasts sharply with the general idea of advancement and with the scene in which the elder Kozel'tsov faces and 'receives' the priest's cross shortly before he dies (p. 114). In Chapter XXV the narrator describes the enemy's surprise attack, which finds the elder Kozel'tsov's unit trapped. In facing the inevitable outcome, he displays bravery and succumbs to the illusion (and the official interpretation) that the Russian army has withstood and defeated the French troops.

After his fatal wounding, Mikhail Kozel'tsov tries to suppress the pain and awaits death without fear. All his thoughts and perceptions are presented through the narrator (in reported speech) except for two of his questions. In contrast to the focus on personal aspects displayed by the officers Praskukhin and Mikhailov in *Sevastopol' v mae*, Mikhail Kozel'tsov's thoughts centre around military matters. It is significant that the narrator does not specifically describe the moment of his death. The presentation and the focus on the moment of death witnessed by other characters do not fit into Tolstoy's poetics of death. Before he shifts his attention to the younger brother, he describes the elder brother's wish to die a heroic death: "Дай Бог ему такого же счастья." [4:115].

At the beginning of Chapter XXVI, the narrator contradicts this wish, thus anticipating Volodia's tragic end. In

describing the final moments of his life, the narrator joins the 'external' perspective of Volodia's colleague Vlang, whose presence is explained by the mode of death: Volodia is killed suddenly on the spot. Facing a group of attacking French soldiers, their unit reacts with bravery, all except for Baron Vlang, who intuitively decides to flee and survives. Vlang is also the first one to witness Vladimir's death:

Что-то в шинели ничком лежало на том месте, где стоял Володя, и все это пространство было уже занято французами, стрелявшими в наших. [4:116].

This laconic statement underlines the drastic change, the annihilation of Volodia's body and the transformation from life to death.

The main difference in the presentation of death of the four main characters in Sevastopol' v mae and in Sevastopol' v avguste 1855 goda lies in the fact that the latter story lacks the 'internal' perspective for the presentation of the two characters facing a borderline situation, as seen in the former. The narrator also omits the description of the moment of death in the third story, concentrating instead on its causes, focusing on the *process* of dying in the case of the elder brother and the *result* in the case of the younger.

The thematic treatment of the theme of death in the short story "Tri smerti" (Three Deaths, 1859) centres around modes of natural death and the specific mode of the 'violent' death of a tree. The title itself refers to the deaths of two

individuals and a tree — three significant incidents which segment and structure the narrative — and alludes to works of religious literature (the genre of **parable** in particular) and folklore, which exhibit triadic structures. As in many other works, the existential situation of facing death is exploited by the author to reveal the emotional reactions and 'philosophical' attitudes of those 'trapped' in this borderline situation.²² In literary texts borderline situations often occur as interconnected clusters.

Facing borderline situations causes human beings to undergo a crisis. Awaiting death, human beings may react with isolation, self-pity, pity, indifference, selfishness, anger, hysteria or equanimity. In "Tri smerti", the narrator describes three fundamentally different 'coping mechanisms' with regard to imminent death. The main theme — the mortality of human beings and the transformation of inanimate Nature — frames the secondary motifs, such as travelling, flight, dreams, the passage of time, and transformation. Apart from these motifs, the narrator also portrays typical symbolic actions performed by typical characters, along with symbols, symbolic objects and buildings related to open and closed spaces, such as making the sign of the cross, the icon, the grave, the cross and the church. All these secondary elements are integrated into the general context of the theme.

²²Human beings cannot determine, change, or transgress borderline situations such as death, birth, guilt, chance, suffering, conflict, fighting, and descent; the German Existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) considers them as impenetrable boundaries which limit and determine human existence.

The title with its brevity and simplicity anticipates not only a tri-partite structure but also the thematic dominance of one theme: death. It also co-incides with the first direct reference to the dominant theme. There are only a few titles among Tolstoy's major works which anticipate the topic. Its evocation of a specific cultural context and a reference to intertextuality causes the well-educated reader to expect the treatment of possible moral, religious or didactic questions.

Despite the brevity and simplicity of the title, the story itself deals with a rather complex subject. In short, "Tri snerti" depicts three different concepts and attitudes towards death, mortality and resurrection, as exemplified by the behaviour of two human beings and a tree. The narrative first focuses on the rather emotionally determined over-reaction of Lady Shirkinskaia, secondly, on the stoicism expressed by the old and selfless coachman Fedor, and finally on the specific personified and passive attitude of an ash-tree. In the first case, death can be understood as a tragic event, in the case of the coachman as a natural event, and in the case of the tree as a 'natural' transition.

The two human beings die a natural death while the tree is felled by one of the minor characters — the coachman Serega, one of Fedor's acquaintances. Apart from the main stylistic device of parallelism, contrast again dominates the composition; e.g., the fact that the Lady and Fedor belong to two different social classes. The plot of this narrative is connected through the secondary motif of travelling as well as

the triad of the three dominant death-scenes. These scenes are loosely connected through co-incidences and the overlapping of settings. Lady Shirkinskaia and her entourage happen to arrive at the station, where Serega takes over as their coachman and where Fedor happens to die a few months later. Thus Lady Shirkinskaia's life and death are connected with Fedor's demise, which in turn is connected with the death of a tree.

"Tri smerti" also displays a dualistic structure on a temporal level: its plot of events starts in the autumn and ends in the spring. There is, however, no specific season for death. Seasons as well as the depiction of Nature serve to frame the main events, to create a depressive atmosphere for the events which are told in chronological order. Lady Shirkinskaia's sub-plot line is fragmented. The narrator begins the plot *in medias res*, that is, he omits any references to the past of the two human beings. Therefore any information about the characters' past lives, their 'pre-history', is left out.

As for the levels of presentation, one can distinguish between realist and symbolic or allegorical levels. Accordingly, direct references to death can be found on both levels. Another stylistic feature is the contrast between prosaic and lyrical language. Tolstoy frequently incorporates lyrical passages into his prose works; this feature concretizes itself through repetitions on both syntactic and lexical levels. Again, one can notice the co-existence of the two tendencies in this work. In the first chapter of the narrative, the outward

appearance of the chambermaid Matresha is characterized as follows:

...быстрые черные глаза то следили через окно за убегающими полями, то робко взглядывали на госпожу, то беспокойно окидывали углы кареты. [5:53].

At the end of this chapter the narrator describes Lady Shirkinskaia's prayer along with her state of health in conjunction with his portrayal of Nature. This scene evokes the effects of monotony and lack of change, the permanency of things:

Она долго и горячо молилась, но в груди так же было больно и тесно, в небе, в полях и по дороге было так же серо и пасмурно, и та же осенняя мгла, ни чаще, ни реже, а всё так же сыпалась на грязь дороги, на крыши, на карету, и на тулупы ямщиков,... [5: 57].

The third passage of lyrical prose is rendered in the incomplete quotation of one of King David's psalms.

The allegorical level of the narrative, closely connected with the realm of Nature, is presented through devices such as personification of Nature; furthermore it involves the symbolic actions of cutting the ash-tree and erecting the cross. In the second chapter the felling of the ash-tree is foreshadowed by a dream. Nastas'ia, the cook, foresees the felling of this tree, associating it with Fedor's death. The death of the tree is presented solely from the narrator's point of view. By contrast, in the death of Lady Shirkinskaia, we are also shown

her reaction, her emotions and thoughts. This is not the case, however, in the depiction of Fedor's death.

It is significant that the number of characters surrounding the three main characters decreases towards the end of the narrative. At the conclusion, there is only one secondary character left: the coachman Serega, who 'causes' the death of the ash-tree. Fedor's death is witnessed only by few minor characters, whereas Lady Shirkinskaia's demise is attended by many of her relatives, friends, her physician, a priest and a reader (*d'iachok*). The number of people also signifies the degree of communication in which the main characters are involved. Naturally, the tree cannot 'communicate' but since it is personified, it can express its feelings.

Fedor dies an isolated death. He is not surrounded by relatives and friends. He restricts his communication almost to a non-verbal mode (cf. his gestures). His dying does not interest those people who stay with him in the same room at the station. Fedor's stoicism betokens the fact that he has accepted death; that is, from a thanatological point of view he has arrived at the last stage, at acceptance. Lady Shirkinskaia, on the other hand, goes through all five stages of dying and does not want to give in to death until the last moment of her life.

The narrator begins this narrative with the description of the weather — it is autumn and damp — and the characterization of the main female character and her chambermaid.

In concentrating on their outward appearances, he contrasts the healthy condition of the young chambermaid with the illness-stricken Lady. Then he elaborates on the motif of illness, pointing out its symptoms, such as her chronic cough and her pained facial expression. In describing her pale skin, the narrator alludes to her condition and anticipates her possible death: "и было что-то сухое, мертвенное в белизне кожи этого просторного ряда." [5:53] Her face expresses: "...усталость, раздражение и привычное страдание..." [5:53]. This is the second explicit reference to death in this work; it is also one of several signs anticipating the tragic fate of Lady Shirkinskaia.

As the plot progresses, the reader learns of further symptoms and her terminal illness. The fact of her chronic disease, its omnipresence, is underlined through the olfactory mode of perception: "В карете было душно и пахло одеколоном и пылью." [5:54] It seems as if travelling with healthy people such as the chambermaid, her husband Count Shirkinskii, and her physician, undermines her condition even more.

The first symbolic reference to death is introduced in the same scene. As Lady Shirkinskaia and her entourage pass by a church, the chambermaid makes the sign of the cross. This symbolic action brings religion and Christianity into play, together with its view of death and the immortality of the soul. The introduction of the motif of the cross is by no means co-incidental, and the same motif transformed plays an

important role in the conclusion of this work.

The presentation of death in "Tri Smerti" includes a series of various death 'sentences', pronounced by the characters throughout Lady Shirkinskaia's and Fedor's parts of the story. The narrator utters the final death sentence as he describes the felling of the ash-tree. These death sentences manifest avoidance and hypocrisy in Lady Shirkinskaia's case but brutal frankness and acceptance in Fedor's case. They also show the tendency to extend mortality into the life of these two characters.

Lady Shirkinskaia's estimation of her condition differs from the views expressed by her husband and physician. The two men, fully aware of the patient's health, of her hopeless state, write her off, and already consider her a dead person (cf. the device of transferring death into the realm of life). Lady Shirkinskaia's hope of survival contrasts sharply with the physician's diagnosis. In the dialogue between him and the husband, there is an evident avoidance of communicating the death sentence to the Lady:

Она делает планы о жизни за границей, как бы здоровая. А сказать ей о ее положении, ведь это значило бы убить ее. – Да она уже убита, вам надо знать это, Василий Дмитрич. Человек не может жить, когда у него нет легких, и легкие опять вырасти не могут. Грустно, тяжело, но что ж делать? Наше и ваше дело только в том, чтобы конец ее был сколь возможно спокоен. Тут духовник нужен. [5:55].

Lady Shirkinskaia succumbs to the illusion of a possible re-convalescence or miraculous recovery, whereas, apparently, the husband and the physician decide to leave home and undertake a trip to Moscow or abroad in order to do her a last favour.

In a conversation with her husband, who tries to persuade Lady Shirkinskaia to discontinue their trip and return home, she pronounces another death sentence, pointing directly at her dilemma; she tries to escape death on a spatial plane:

— Что ж что дома?... Умереть дома? – вспльчиво отвечала больная. Но слово *умереть*, видимо, испугало ее, она умоляюще и вопросительно посмотрела на мужа. [5:57]

The tragedy of the Lady's situation is the fact that she dies a premature death. As for the coping mechanisms, she experiences isolation and envy, as evident in her comments on her travelling companions. She is also in despair and expresses anger. As the only ill traveller, she is almost automatically singled out in this group; this trip, which can be seen as the last attempt to flee death (as it turns out later, this act functions as a good-will gesture). Knowing that the undertaking is pointless, the Lady, torn between hope and despair, tries to make her husband feel guilty by reproaching him for earlier abrogating the trip to Berlin. Lady Shirkinskaia's hope is not based on her religion, although she frequently prays to calm herself down.

Following this scene at the station, the narrator

resumes Lady Shirkinskaia's sub-plot line at her home, focusing on the death-scene, as he describes the last moments of her life. Surrounded by her husband, physician, relatives, and the representatives of religion, Lady Shirkinskaia again shifts from one coping mechanism to another. This scene also shows the different modes of behaviour expressed by the people attending the death of the main character. Lady Shirkinskaia's mother reacts with shock and depression, while her cousin tries to prepare her for death; stressing the position of acceptance, she pronounces another death sentence — "—Нет, уже ей не жить, — проговорила старушка..." [5:61] — ironically assuming the role of the priest. The priest himself tries to build up hope until the last moment of Lady Shirkinskaia's life, and succeeds in calming her down. He also attempts to talk the dying patient into believing that a miracle shortly before her death could eventually cure her. Thus, siding with the patient, he contributes to denial and hypocrisy, traits characteristic of the main character.

The optimistic atmosphere evoked by the spring season in an open space contrasts sharply with the depressed mood inside Lady Shirkinskaia's house in a closed space. As the plot line of the death-scene unfolds, it becomes increasingly dominated by the religious accoutrements of the funeral ceremony. Objects such as the icon, the stole (*epitrakhil'*), as well as the priest and the reader (*d'iachok*), intervene and determine the process of dying on the temporal level. The religious ritual culminating in the reader's singing of psalms

overshadows the private atmosphere of this process. The singing of psalms adds another philosophical dimension to the problem of death. The narrator declines to describe the Last Rites in favour of depicting the Lady's emotional reactions. After the priest shows her the icon symbolizing hope, she, knowing that her end is near, begins to doubt even the power of God: "Он милостив и всемогущ?" [5:62].

It is not surprising that the incurable illness has worsened the relationship between the Lady and her husband. She repeatedly accuses him of not having done his best to cure her and thus makes him feel guilty. As she approaches the last moments of her life, it becomes obvious that her husband does not console her, his inactivity betokens his sense of helplessness. The same 'inactivity' displayed by the physician as well as the 'indifference' to a possible change in her state can be seen at the station.

Approaching the moment of death, the transition from a human being into an object, the narrator describes this situation in a concise matter-of-fact style, avoiding any tendency towards dramatization. He points out the biological aspect of change: "В тот вечер больная уже не была тело, а тело в гробу стояло в зале большого дома." [5:63] (cf. here the device of reversing the cause-effect relation, the anticipation of the result). This anticipatory stance, already introduced in the exposition of the story (cf. the physician's comments), is shared by the narrator as well. This perspective increases Lady Shirkinskaia's despair, since she intuitively knows (and

draws conclusions from her husband's and physician's behaviour) about her true condition, about her imminent death.

The history of her dying and the reaction to her immediate death manifest a constant interplay, an emotional instability between hope and despair, which prevents the main character from taking a more rational and intellectual approach. She also displays fear when she notices the physician's non-verbal act of communication, indicating the moment of death: "Он мигнул мужу. Больная заметила этот жест и испуганно оглянулась." [5:63]. Most of the characters side with her main attitude, namely denial, (cf. the role of the priest, and indirectly the husband and the physician, who display a hypocritical attitude). It is evidently only her mother who is able to grieve and who tries to prepare her properly for death.

The philosophical level of the presentation of death comes to the fore in the reader's singing of King David's Psalm:

Сокроешь лицо Твое – смущаются, – гласит псалтырь,
– возьмешь от них дух – умирают и в прах свой
возвращаются. Пошлешь дух Твой – создаются и
обновляют лицо земли. Да будет Господу слава во
веки. [5:63].

The divine role of creator and destroyer, the dualistic and cyclical aspect of life and death, as well as the aspect of transitoriness, provide the basic pattern of mortality and immortality in this passage.

Unlike the detailed and complex presentation of Lady

Shirkinskaia's death, the death of the other main 'characters' — the peasant Fedor and the ash-tree — are dealt with in less detail (cf. the composition of the chapters, showing a tendency to decrease toward the conclusion). This trend is evident in the decreased number of characters witnessing the moments of death. That is why the narrator provides less information about Fedor and concentrates only on the last night of his life, which constitutes only one scene in contrast with the two lengthy scenes devoted to the main female character.

The narrator uses the device of *in medias res* to begin Fedor's death scene. In characterizing Fedor's attitude, his philosophy of life, the narrator introduces minor and trivial details: when a young coachman asks Fedor, an old man, for his boots, Fedor selflessly agrees. Knowing that he will die very soon, he also behaves with modesty and equanimity, two qualities which might have been characteristic of his past life as well. His is not the self-centred behaviour typical of the aristocracy.

There are several 'death' sentences, which serve to attest these qualities. They are pronounced by minor characters as well as the old coachman. Talking about his boots, Nastas'ia, the cook, points out drastically the brutal reality of death: "Где ему сапоги надобны? В новых сапогах хоронить не станут." [5:58] Fedor accepts this reality, as he thinks about the period which will follow his death: he asks Serega to erect a cross on his grave. In talking to Nastas'ia for the last time, Fedor excuses himself for taking up space at the

station, and refers with courage and frankness to his condition: "– Везде больно. Смерть моя пришла – вот что." [5:59]

The circumstances under which Fedor awaits the last moment of his life differ totally from those described in Lady Shirkinskaia's case. The poverty at the station, manifesting the material poverty associated with the male character, contrasts with the spiritual poverty displayed by the noble woman. The old man is obliged to die in loneliness, surrounded by strangers; in this regard he is almost as isolated as the Lady. Unlike her, however, he must have arrived at the stage of acceptance long before, and masters his dying with self-control and dignity. He also endures suffering without being a burden to other people.

The moments preceding the characters' deaths evidence their helplessness. In Fedor's case, the coachman Serega uses Fedor's predicament to get hold of his boots, while the cook Nastas'ia's primary concern is the space which Fedor takes up during the last night of his life. Fedor's speechlessness corresponds with the narrator's concise description of his demise: "Один больной слабо кряхтел, кашлял и ворочался на печи. К утру он затих совершенно." [5:59] Then the narrator shifts to the cook, who discovers Fedor's death in the morning. He implements the device of **co-incident** as he uses the motif of the **dream** to anticipate future events. This technique connects the second and fourth chapters.

Chapter IV is connected with the previous chapters by

the comparison between Lady Shirkinskaia's and Fedor's graves, as mediated by the minor characters Serega and Nastas'ia. The main theme connects all four chapters. On the level of motifs, the motif of the cross introduced in Chapter I is resumed again in Chapter IV. The motif of wood-felling, introduced in Nastas'ia's dream in Chapter III anticipates the actual cutting of the ash-tree in Chapter IV. Lady Shirkinskaia's plot line and Fedor's plot line *cross* at the station. Fedor's plot line is connected with the death of the tree, through the coachman Serega.

In Chapter IV the coachman Serega, in keeping his promise to erect a cross on Fedor's grave, fells the ash-tree. The symbolic, allegorical level — implied in the religious symbolic acts preceding and following the moment of Lady Shirkinskaia's death — continues in Chapter IV. Ironically, the tree does not die a 'natural' death. The narrator achieves this effect by transferring human qualities to an inanimate and organic object.²³ The personification of the tree allows for the classification of **violent death**. As Serega is cutting this tree, it reacts accordingly: "Одна из макуш затрепетала, сочные листья ее зашептали что-то..." [5:64]. As the tree is about to face the moment of death, 'it' reacts in the following manner: "Дерево вздрогнуло всем телом, погнулось и быстро выпрямилось, испуганно колебаясь на своем корне..." [5:64].²⁴ Reacting like a human being, the tree displays fear, yet

²³In pre-historic times trees were considered holy and animate.

²⁴As for the etymology of the lexeme 'ash-tree,' cf. Indo-European *osko; the Russian

it also inevitably 'accepts' this mode of death. As for agency, animals and plants as phenomena of living Nature both die a violent death.

In its acceptance of death without offering any resistance, the death of the ash-tree resembles Fedor's acceptance of his own death. The tree also dies selflessly, it provides space for other objects, and contributes through the process of change to the establishment of harmony: "Деревья еще радостнее красовались на новом просторе своими неподвижными ветвями." [5:65] This is another example of an ideal death, such as that of Natal'ia Savishna in Detstvo, combining economical, ethical, and aesthetic requirements.

Semeinoe schast'e (Family Happiness, 1859) is an early work of Tolstoy's dealing with the impossibility and unattainability of one of man's ideals: happiness. The plot centres around the fate of a young woman, and stretches over a period of three years. The events are told from her perspective. At the age of seventeen, shortly after the death of her mother, she comes to know a man twice her age, who happens to be a friend of her late father. The young woman falls in love with this man, marries him, and gives birth to two children.

During this short period of time, Masha (Mar'ia Aleksandrovna) experiences the hard facts of life, including crises of

form *iasen'* does not show the direct religious reference to death as its English and German corresponding equivalents of the component "ash".

marriage, repeated boredom, and depression. Her initial hopes for happiness do not materialize, and at the end of this learning process she is forced to cope with and accept disenchantment. The novella shows the development of the process of gaining experience at the expense of achieving happiness.

The secondary theme of death is introduced in the very first sentence of this narrative through Masha: "Мы носили траур по матери, которая умерла осенью, и жили всю зиму в деревне, одни с Катей и Соней." [5:67] Despite the fact that Masha, herself the first-person narrator, refers to some details which contribute to the overall tragic atmosphere such as the season of winter, the experience of mourning, and the main characters' living in a solitude leading to apathy and passivity, the author misses the opportunity to thematize mourning by focusing on the relationship between her and her parents. However, he does not attempt to characterize her parents, nor does he describe their death or the main character's own reactions to this event.

Although mourning affects the atmosphere and the environment of the main character's residence: "В доме еще как будто чувствовалась смерть; печаль и ужас смерти стояли в воздухе." [5:67]), the female narrator points out at the same time the lack of any possible distraction from this atmosphere. The atmosphere, however, changes as soon as Sergei Mikhailych, their neighbour and her late father's friend, visits the family. His presence contributes to a major change:

he is the one who introduces the theme of music [5, 70] and thus unofficially ends the period of mourning. He also makes the heroine aware of her loneliness. He is the first and only visitor who enters the house after the death of the parents.

After the heroine falls in love with the man, and their wedding is arranged, she gradually becomes frustrated with her marriage. During the time of fasting, she remembers the funeral ceremonies of her parents and thus their death [5:91]. The references to the death of minor characters are concentrated in short statements. This is also the case in the mention of the death of a peasant's child, which contributes a brief reference to another aspect of the presentation of death. Again, the narrator selects the motif of a funeral ceremony, one of minor details of the story. The mourning of a minor character functions as a variant to the mourning of the major character. The narrator deals with the death of the husband's mother in a similar way.

Tolstoy's novella Kazaki (The Cossacks, 1863) deals with thematic aspects, (e.g., military life, violence) similar to those in some of his early (shorter) and late Caucasian narratives — such as "Nabeg", "Rubka lesa", "Kavkazskii plennik" (The Prisoner of Caucasus, 1872), and Khadzhi-Murat. Apart from the focus on military life, the author deals extensively with the motif of unrequited love, along with typical philosophical motifs, such as the search for the meaning of life, striving for happiness, and the clash of civilization and Nature,

as well as the more concrete motifs such as hunting and the impossibility of achieving happiness through love. The latter motif arises from social and personal differences between Olenin, the main character, and Mar'ianka, the Cossack girl, the concepts of sexuality and free love, and the contrast between the main character's Romanticist expectations as he leaves Moscow and his frustration at the conclusion of the novella as he departs from the Caucasus.

All these thematic aspects are interwoven with the fate of Olenin and his experiences during his stay in a Cossack village (*stanitsa*). His leaving, arriving, staying and leaving again all mark important temporal and spatial junctures in his life. Approaching and crossing the spatial borders, as well as the border between life and death, are evident throughout the narrative and are mainly concentrated in two violent death-scenes and in the conversation about life between the main character and the old Cossack Eroshka.

Tolstoy again refers to the Romantic concepts of the Caucasus propagated by writers such as Pushkin (1799-1837), Lermontov and Aleksandr Bestuzhev-Marlinskii (1797-1837). Tolstoy's presentation of the exotic south differs from his predecessors' use of this geographic area as an unusual setting inasmuch as he distances himself from the concepts of heroism and the type of the Romantic dreamer. In his short-stories "Nabeg" and "Rubka lesa", Tolstoy caricatures the fashionable theatricality of some of the soldiers as well as their preconceived images and (in some cases) their fatalistic behaviour:

inexperience coupled with bravery is often punished, while some of these Romantic types even lose their lives.

As often in his early works, in Kazaki Tolstoy again employs familiar settings. Although the main character is integrated into military life, nevertheless war on a mass scale and the military confrontation between two armies does not come to the foreground. The military confrontation is restricted to the defending of positions at the outposts of Tsarist Russia. As the title of the novel indicates, the author's main concern is the Cossacks' life, including their and the Russians' private lives.

The Cossacks as allies of Tsarist Russia appear frequently in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian literature.²⁵ In the introduction of this ethnic group into Russian literature by writers such as Gogol' (1809-1852), Pushkin and Lermontov, one encounters certain images and stereotypes regarding their philosophy of life. The reader associates Cossacks with love for freedom, a certain political independence from Russia, bravery and cruelty in fighting as well as an excessive and primitive way of life manifested through drinking, fighting and unbridled sexuality. In his introductory chapters, the narrator acquaints the reader with one specific group of Cossacks. He introduces them in general terms before proceeding to the characterization of some of the main Cossack characters in detail. Since the author employs omni-

²⁵Judith Deutsch Kornblatt, The Cossack Hero In Russian Literature. A Study In Cultural Mythology (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).

scient and reliable narrators, their preliminary judgements and characterization are inevitably correct.

The overriding context of military life pre-determines the dominant violent mode of death in this work. The two central violent death-scenes of the narrative are closely connected with one of the major characters, the young Cossack Lukashka (Luka Gavrilov), who functions both as a murderer and — in the conclusion of the work — as a victim. The narrator and Lukashka present the violent death of an *abrek*, a Chechen, an enemy of the Cossacks; the incident is reported first by the narrator and then by Lukashka. In the final death-scene, the narrator — through Olenin's eyes — witnesses and reports on the Chechens' counter-attack. The author integrates the motif of killing into the philosophy of the savage people. For them killing of other human beings as well as animals appears to be natural. Hunting is the common denominator applicable both to killing of animals for economic reasons and the killing of human beings (on political or personal grounds).

The immature Lukashka is the prototype of the killer-warrior. He is introduced as a killer in this work, a character who does not have any scruples about killing, or stealing horses. When Lukashka's friend Nazarka is not able to kill a pheasant, Lukashka shows no hesitation in slaughtering the bird [6:27]. This event, as well as the slaughtering of other animals, foreshadows and parallels the killing of human enemies.

The motif of death is introduced in the exposition of the

novel with thoughts about natural death, while at the conclusion of the narrative the violent death-scene contributes to a cyclical structure. The definiteness of Olenin's decision to leave Moscow is compared to the irreversibility of death. Thus he alludes to the possibility of his death in the south which could transform the farewell with his friends into a final farewell:

... все как будто вдруг сговорились сильнее полюбить его, простить как перед исповедью или смертью.

Может быть, мне не вернуться с Кавказа, думал он. [6:7]

One of Olenin's dreams centres around his wish for self-realization and glory. He prepares himself both for success and for the extreme tragic outcome, i.e., violent death. In acting like a Cossack, Olenin imagines himself to be a killer who is successfully integrated into Cossack life. The Cossack life serves as a model which Olenin tries to imitate:

...но слава, заманивая, и смерть, угрожая, составляют интерес этого будущего. То с необычайною храбростью и удивляющего всех силой он убивает и покоряет бесчисленное множество горцев... [6:11].

A gradual approach to the south shows indicators of violence and increasing signs of death as the narrator learns about violent death : "На одной станции смотритель рассказал недавно случившееся страшное убийство на дороге." [6:13]

In introducing Lukashka, the narrator shows a minor

character — the old woman, (*baba*) Ulitka — referring to one of his noble deeds: "Лукашка прозван *Урваном* за молодечество, за то, что казачонка вытащил из воды, *урвал*." [6:21]. The first reference to this character points out not only one of his positive traits, it also connects and contrasts the motif of avoidance of death — i.e., saving life — with the forthcoming motif of the realization of violent death.

The second reference to Lukashka's qualities appears to be somewhat ambiguous. His superior in the army points out the fact that the young Cossack has killed a human being. In talking to the old Cossack Eroshka, the superior compares the young Cossack with Eroshka: "И то ловок стал твой,— [...] Все как ты ходит, дома не посидит; наместни убил одного." [6:26]

Another episode characterizing Lukashka's ability to kill and slaughter is the scene in which his friend Nazarka is unable to kill a pheasant. Throughout this work, the juxtaposition of hunting animals and killing people becomes obvious in the merger of these two related semantic fields, thus contributing to a common denominator. Verbs designating hunting and killing are used by the Cossacks interchangeably. Talking to Eroshka, Lukashka's superior refers to the enemies' comparing them to animals, to fish or deer: "Тут абреков ловить, а не свиной надо." [6:25]. Uncle Eroshka also draws the same comparison:" — Ну, ребята, [...] вот и я с вами пойду. Вы на чеченцев, а я на свиной *сидеть* буду." [6:25] The verb *sidet'* is used in the meaning of 'watching out for animals'.

That is why the nightly Cossacks' activities of watching out for enemy soldiers and hunting for boars are combined. During this watch Lukashka notices a boar, but misses him as he tries to shoot him. As the morning approaches, Lukashka hears a suspicious sound, and catches sight of a floating trunk (*kariaga, karcha*). As it turns out, the trunk is serving as a camouflage behind which a Chechen warrior is hiding himself as he swims across the river Terek into Russian territory. Lukashka fires a shot and kills the man [6:33-34].

The narrator's description of this event as it gradually unfolds itself in time begins with the presentation of acoustic and visual perceptions. Lukashka first hears sounds before he catches sight of the Chechen's hand and head. Before he fires the shot, he pronounces the words *Ottsu i Synu*, thus alluding to the sign of the cross. He asks for God's help not to miss, cf. also his comment as he tells Eroshka about his deed: "Ну Слава Тебе, Господи, думаю, убил!" [6:36] whereas Nazarka and the other Cossacks cross themselves to show respect for the dead. Lukashka's attitude towards the killed Chechen demonstrates a lack of conscience. He considers the act within the context of hunting; in his introductory sentence of his report to Eroshka he compares the Chechen warrior to a beast: "Ты вот ничего не видал, дядя, а я убил зверя..." [6:36]. Killing an enemy appears natural to him. He regrets, moreover, that he was not able to kill more enemies:

... а его мучило нетерпенье; он так и думал, что вот уйдут те абреки, которые шли с убитым. Как на

кабана, который ушел вечером, досадно было ему на абреков, которые уйдут теперь. Он поглядывал то вокруг себя, то на тот берег, ожидая вот-вот увидеть еще человека, и, придалив подсошки, готов был стрелять. О том, чтобы его убили, ему и в голову не приходило. [6:34]

His suppression of the thought of his own death explains the fact of his careless attack in the final death scene: he is the first to attack a group of Chechens. Because of his youth and inexperience, Lukashka's attitudes and actions seem to be understandable. This becomes more obvious when Eroshka evaluates his killing:

— Чего не видать! – с сердцем сказал старик, и что-то серьезное и строгое выразилось в лице старика. – Джигита убил, – сказал он как будто с сожалением. [6:36]

As with the dead animals, Lukashka and the other Cossacks are interested in the dead man's property. The latter becomes an object of trade: the Cossacks will keep the corpse until the dead man's relatives buy him back [6:37].

In the third Sevastopol story, Sevastopol' v avguste 1855 goda, Tolstoy portrays the angel of death ruling over the lives of the soldiers. In this work, he introduces another angel as the Cossacks discuss the possibility of profiting from trade with the corpse. The narrator's comment can be seen as a poetic and concluding answer, introducing a moment of silence, to the tragic event: "Никто ничего не ответил, и снова тихий

ангел пролетел над казаками." [6:37] During this moment the narrator sets out to describe the corpse in detail, pointing out the good-natured smile on the dead man's face. Then the silent angel leaves this tragic place [6:38].

The second relevant passage dealing with death from a philosophical point of view comprises a dialogue between Eroshka and Olenin. The old Cossack talks about hunting and women, and confesses his past crimes to Olenin. When he starts talking about religion, he voices the opinion that sin does not exist and that God's creation is meant to provide human beings with joy. He strictly opposes the official Muslim religion as expressed by the Mullahs and Kadis:

Я так думаю, что всё одна фальшь, – прибавил он, помолчав.

– Что фальшь? – спросил Оленин.

– Да что уставщики говорят. У нас отец мой, в Червленной, войсковой старшина – кунак мне был.

Молодец был, как и я, такой же. Убили его в Чечнях.

Так он говорил, что это всё уставщики из своей головы выдумывают. Сдохнешь, говорит, трава вырастет на могилке, вот и всё. – Старик засмеялся. [6:56]

This is a clear rejection of the concept of life after death. As they talk about Lukashka's deed, Eroshka disapproves of the young Cossack's attitude towards violent death. Olenin, who tries to force him to confront Eroshka with his past, asks Eroshka whether he used to kill people. Eroshka avoids answering this question since he would have to admit his guilt:

Это Лукашка джигит. Он чеченца убил; то-то и радуется. И чему радуется? Дурак, дурак!
 – А ты убивал людей? – спросил Оленин. [...]
 – Чорт! – закричал он на него. – Чтó спрашиваешь?
 Говорить не надо... [6:59].

In characterizing Eroshka, the narrator adds that this Cossack had killed many Chechens in his time.

The third relevant death scene deals with Lukashka's own death. One day a group of Chechens starts shooting at the Cossack outpost. The Cossacks manage to get help and outnumber the Chechens. This situation bears similarities to the final death scene in Tolstoy's novella Khadzhi-Murat. Lukashka leads the Cossacks as they attack their enemy. When the Chechens realize the hopelessness of their situation they start preparing themselves for their violent death. They start to sing and bind their feet. The confrontation between the two hostile groups takes only a short time. Lukashka's heroism — he tries to capture one of the Chechen warriors alive — proves to be fatal for the young Cossack:

Чеченец был тот самый красный, брат убитого абрека, который приезжал за телом. Лукашка крутил ему руки. Вдруг чеченец вырвался и выстрелил из пистолета. Лукашка упал. На животе у него показалась кровь. [6:145]

While Lukashka is indeed fatally wounded, the narrator does not present the actual moment of death. He continues to describe the violent death of the Chechen as he is executed by

one of the Cossacks:

Хорунжий подошел к нему и боком, как будто обходя его, быстрым движением выстрелил из пистолета в ухо. Чеченец рванулся, но не успел и упал. [6:145]

This graphic depiction of violent death can be compared only to the direct explicit presentation of death in Tolstoy's late novella Khadzhi-Murat.

The presentation of death in Tolstoy's early narratives is marked by the employment of a variety of artistic devices. Tolstoy uses these techniques to express the multitude of aspects connected with this complex theme. He presents death in the majority of his narratives on a realistic level. In "Tri smerti" he combines this level with allegorical passages without transgressing the boundary from the real to the unreal world. The imagery and the symbols in his early works support and emphasize the tendency of **directness** and **explicitness** in presentation. Christian imagery and symbols, integrated into the tradition of Christian rituals, dominate.

The narrative techniques of **anticipation**, **retrospection** and **introspection** contribute to the requirement of clarity. The integration of characters into specific borderline situations in private and military life, into life-threatening situations, prepares the reader for tragic incidents. The tendency towards frankness as well as the anti-dramatic distribution of information — e.g., through the reversal of cause and effect — eliminate the presentation of death as a sensational event.

In depicting death, Tolstoy varies between introspection and concise reporting of the deaths of individual and anonymous characters. He either presents the moment of death, as well as the transition from existence to non-existence, in a concise manner or omits the description of this point of time. His narrators present the process of dying either from a multiple (Lukashka's killing of an enemy) or a single (Lukashka's death) perspective. In describing Nekhliudov's suicide, the narrator goes on to explain the young man's motives for this act.

In portraying natural death, Tolstoy usually places it into the sphere of family life. He has characters die either a premature or a timely death. They die either surrounded by their family members or in solitude and isolation. Furthermore their deaths are (a) expected (Nikolen'ka's Grandmother), (b) accidental (the drowning of the peasant; Polikushka's child) or (c) violent (the killing of a French soldier by the Cadet Baron Pest). Most of his characters participating in military life die (or avoid) a violent death. Using the technique of contrast, Tolstoy presents different characters' reactions, attitudes and philosophies of life. Facing the inevitability of death, the characters either focus on the future and the after-life or turn to their past lives. Certain modes and variants of violent death are not included, such as killing of spouses, brothers, fathers and children. The depiction of death in Tolstoy's early works manifests his artistic sophistication in presenting this and related topics.

Chapter Two: Death in the Major Novels Voina i mir (War and Peace, 1868-1869) and Anna Karenina (1873-1877).

The genre of the **novel** (or long narrative) enables the author to present an extended plot line, including several subplots and a variety of topics. Novels themselves are usually segmented into further units of content. Voina i mir (War and Peace) includes a variety of themes treated systematically in digressions or incorporated into the lengthy overall plot. These encompass characters' activities such as hunting, celebrating, entertaining, travelling, scheming, meditating, searching, loving, hating, giving birth, killing, and dying of natural causes. Tolstoy depicts the death of several major and minor characters and has several characters facing death.

Authors of long narratives provide the reader with a large quantity of information. In both of Tolstoy's major novels, a topic such as death tends to be rather fragmented, that is, it is distributed throughout the text. That is why the deaths of principal characters are prominent only in the specific parts of the novel in which they are presented and not in the novel as a whole. Moreover, the deaths of several main characters reduce the effect of death as such. The question of dominance — of one particular theme, or of different semantic fields — can be answered more easily in short narratives than in works such as Voina i mir and Anna Karenina. Although Tolstoy has principal characters in both of his novels, and some of these characters die a natural or violent death, the

main problem of determining the question of dominance or equilibrium is the ratio between the dying and the surviving main characters. In both novels, one can see rather a balance.

The subject of death plays an important role in Voina i mir throughout the entire plot. There are many deaths both by natural and violent causes, attempts to kill in battles and to commit suicide: cf. the death of Count Bezukhov, the premature death of Liza Bolkonskaia and her husband Andrei; the death of father, the old Prince Bolkonskii; the death of H el ene Kuragina, Pierre Bezukhov's wife; the deaths of Petia Rostov and Platon Karataev; the death of the old Prince Rostov; General Kutuzov's death and the numerous mass killings in battles.¹ Some of the deaths of these characters are dealt with in detail; the deaths of other characters, on the other hand, are only briefly reported, (e.g., of H el ene Kuragina and Petia Rostov).

The narrator introduces the theme of death at the very beginning of the novel's exposition. Its first climax co-incides with the death of the old Count Bezukhov. The depiction of his death serves primarily to characterize one of the principal characters of the novel: Pierre Bezukhov, the Count's illegitimate son. Count Bezukhov's death turns out to be one of the turning points in Pierre's life, since it changes his status within society. The other significant death-scene depicts the

¹The analysis below will focus on the outstanding death-scenes.

first life-threatening experience faced by the young Petia Rostov in a battle.

Using the technique of **fragmentation**, the narrator introduces the motif of violent death at the very beginning of the novel: during a soirée, Anna Pavlovna Sherer's guests characterize Napoleon as a murderer, furthermore another guest refers to violent death in detail as he describes the execution of Count Vicomte de Enghière. The narrator employs the technique of *in medias res* to introduce the characters and to mediate their conversation. Integrating the potentiality of military confrontation, the narrator introduces in the exposition the technique of **anticipation of death**. One of the crucial predictions about a major character's violent death is Liza Bolkonskaia's statement about the possible death of her husband Andrei.

The first significant death-scene of the novel is the presentation of the 'non-verbal' dying of the old Count Bezukhov. His death is introduced, 'announced', through repeated anticipatory remarks of some of the characters in the exposition of the novel. The narrator himself anticipates this fact to focus on the possible reactions by the characters participating in this scene. He combines the introduction of Pierre Bezukhov with this important event:

ЭТОТ ТОЛСТЫЙ МОЛОДОЙ ЧЕЛОВЕК БЫЛ НЕЗАКОННЫЙ СЫН
знаменитого Екатеринского вельможи, графа Безухова,
умиравшего теперь в Москве. [9:11]

The next reference to the imminent death of the old Count is made by the narrator himself as he touches on the major news of the day from Moscow [9:44]. He refers to the Count's condition, describing and masking it as an illness. As the conversation continues, the narrator uses an omniscient intrusion to distance himself from the character's discourse, graphically marked by parentheses:

... так что никто не знает, ежели он умрет (он так плох, что этого ждут каждую минуту и Lorrain приехал из Петербурга) кому достанется это огромное состояние, Пьеру или князю Василию. [9:46]

This intrusion complements Anna Mikhailovna Sherer's remarks about the relationship between Pierre Bezukhov and his father. What is important in the depiction of the following death-scene, or anti-death-scene, is the fact that non-verbal or failed communication between the son and his father — symbolizing the non-existent nature of their relationship — dominates and contributes to a rather strange atmosphere.

The death-scene itself can be compared to an official legal procedure: its participants gather at the old Count's house to await his death. The actual relationship between them and the Count is concerned with primarily legal aspects: a personal intimate relationship between the father and his illegitimate son was probably never established. The death-scene itself thus reveals a mere legal relationship between Pierre and his father, and a crisis besides. That is why

economic and financial aspects resulting from the old count's demise overshadow any emotional responses.

The last meeting between father and son lacks any personal and emotional participation on either side. The narrator restricts himself to the presentation of the dying process; he leaves out the actual moment of death. Furthermore, the narrator limits himself to the presentation of Pierre's observations and a few of his father's physical reactions to his imminent death. The father and son share a sense of passivity and powerlessness. Their intellectual passivity is symbolized through the narrator's repeated comparison of them to Egyptian statues. This death-scene features prominently among Tolstoy's death-scenes, as it is not accompanied by a presentation of internal psychological processes and philosophical reflections.

There are very few death-scenes in Tolstoy's writings which are integrated into rituals and ceremonial behaviour to such a degree as this one. Moreover, the old Count Bezukhov's death is part of an intrigue, which foregrounds his death as a matter of finances or wealth at the expense of all other private considerations. Both characters are reduced in stature, with the result that they appear more as liabilities than as human beings. Their passivity also corresponds to their lack of free will. That is why Pierre is led around and told what to do by one of the minor characters, Anna Mikhailovna Dolokhova.

The death of this aristocrat follows the religious ritual and the corresponding ceremonies of his social class. The impersonality of the whole procedure manifests itself through remarks by certain minor characters' — physicians, priests and relatives of the Count who officially are waiting for his death, and, are especially interested in the publication of his last will. The old Count's dying begins with the physicians' bulletin and with the preparation of religious ceremonies:

Доктора объявили, что надежды к выздоровлению нет; больному дана была глухая исповедь и причастие, делали приготовления для соборования, и в доме была суетня и тревога ожидания, обыкновенная в такие минуты. [9:84]

One of the priests in talking to a lady about the inevitability of death expresses the impersonality of the situation through a stereotypical phrase:

— Предел человеческий, — говорил старичок, духовное лицо, даме, подсевшей к нему и наивно слушавшей его, — предел положен, его же не преjdeши. [9:84].

The narrator continues to record the sequence of the minor characters' trivial remarks and when Pierre arrives at his father's house, the final religious ceremonies begin in the room of the dying Count.

During the ceremony, both father and son are passive receivers and participants waiting impatiently to get over with this scene as soon as possible. The final confrontation between Pierre and his father finds its climax in the estab-

lishing of eye contact [9:99]. The de-humanized nature of their last meeting is indicated by their speechlessness, and emphasized through their comparison to lifeless statues. As Pierre notices his father's powerlessness and his smile, he reacts emotionally: "..., Пьер почувствовал содрогание в груди, шипание в носу, и слезы затуманили его зрение." [9:100]. Then he leaves the room without witnessing the moment of his father's death.

As is the case in his early works, war and its manifestation of violent death contribute significantly to this theme and its manifold aspects in this work. At the battle of Austerlitz the narrator contrasts mass killings with the wounding of individuals. The integration into the plot of fatal experiences such as violent death and wounding provide the narrator with the opportunity to focus on the portrayal of characters — Andrei Bolkonskii in particular.

After being wounded, Prince Andrei is first unconscious. When he regains consciousness, the narrator presents the workings of his mind: his perception and thinking. The narrator uses the borderline situation of closeness to death as a motif to reveal Andrei's spiritual transformation. This is a common motif in Tolstoy works; however, not every character takes the opportunity to recognize the meaning of specific situations, their epistemological function. The gaining of specific insights through facing death or other borderline situations differs from one character to another.

The process of Andrei's spiritual transformation is indicated symbolically through a shift in perspective. The horizontal perspective of the observer and soldier is superseded by the vertical perspective of the lying and passive wounded soldier, who can only see the sky. Andrei sees nothing but the sky, as he regains consciousness:

Он раскрыл глаза. Над ним было опять все то же высокое небо с еще выше поднявшимися облаками, сквозь которые виднелась синеватая бесконечность.
[9:353]

As he turns away from this world, Andrei becomes aware of the nothingness of life and death in general: the narrator again employs the motif of **co-occurrence** to contrast a purely fictitious person meeting a historical person in a pseudo-fictitious scene:

Да и всё казалось так бесполезно и ничтожно в сравнении с тем строгим и величественным строем мысли, который вызывали в нем ослабление сил от истекшей крови, страдание и близкое ожидание смерти. Глядя в глаза Наполеона, князь Андрей думал о ничтожности величия, о ничтожности жизни, и о еще бóльшем ничтожестве смерти, смысл которой никто не мог понять и объяснить из живущих. [9:356]

In this presentation of Andrei's thoughts the narrator points out the element of the universality of the absurd and the mystery of death.²

This scene is framed by numerous references to dead and wounded anonymous soldiers. The meeting serves to contrast two different perspectives. It unveils Napoleon's superficiality in relating to other people and with regard to their death, to Prince Andrei's situation in particular. Napoleon's remarks appear to be out of place, even cynical. Looking at the dead Russian soldier he remarks: "De beaux hommes" [9:353] and as he notices Andrei Bolkonskii: "Voilà une belle mort." [9:353] At the same time, these remarks reveal an aesthetic perversion and aberration which characterize the French emperor in a negative way. It is also one of the numerous examples in Tolstoy's works of one character's false assumption of another character's death.

Facing the possibility of his imminent death, Count Andrei continues to think about things unknowable to him. Accepting death, he again becomes aware of the mysterious. The uncertainty about his son's life affects the father's emotional state. In assuming the worst, he condemns war: "...
убит в сражении, в котором повели убивать русских

²Tolstoy has several of his characters experience the mystery of death shortly before their moment of death; these characters, however, never communicate their insights about this phenomenon; thus, death hides the unknowable from the living; cf. also a similar aspect regarding the presentation of the common soldier Avdeev's death in the novella Khadzhi-Murat.

лучших людей и русскую славу." [10:34]; anticipating his son's fate, he also prepares other people for this tragic event.

At the battle of Borodino, Andrei Bolkonskii is fatally wounded. This time he cannot escape death. The narrator focuses on the last two days of his life, his dying and his subsequent funeral. The process of dying and the fact of mortality are fragmented and reversed; the narrator treats the dying patient as a dead man while he is still alive, as becomes evident through other characters' attitudes and reactions to Andrei's approaching death. In facing death, Andrei also moves away from life in several ways. As far as his individual epistemology is concerned, he profits from this departure by gaining a specific kind of knowledge, a revelation not accessible to other people:

Он видимо с трудом понимал всё живое; но вместе с тем чувствовалось, что он не понимал живого не потому, что он был лишен силы пониманья, но потому что он понимал что-то другое, такое, чего не понимали и не могли понять живые и что поглощало его всего." [12:57]

The approach towards death is also divided and marked by stages: the narrator creates a space between life and death. At one point Andrei moves far away from life, transgresses a border, and is about to reach death — symbolically presented through the opening and closing of a door in one of his dreams:

Князь Андрей не только знал, что он умрет, но он чувствовал, что он умирает, что он уже умер наполо-

вину. Он испытывал сознание отчужденности от всего земного и радостной и странной легкости бытия.

[12:60]

As Andrei awaits death, he remembers the moments in which he experienced fear of death, a feeling which he overcomes by being aware of his imminent death. He continues to philosophize, meditating about the revelation of existential truth and about the dialectic nature of life represented by love and death:

Любовь мешает смерти. Любовь есть жизнь. [...] Все есть, все существует потому, что я люблю. Любовь есть Бог, и умереть – значит мне, частице любви, вернуться к общему и вечному источнику. [12:63]

This, however, implies a cyclical concept of non-existence, life and death. The transformation of life to death is compared to a return.

In describing Andrei's imaginary confrontation with his death, the narrator uses the image of a fight against an unwelcome intruder. The outcome of this fight indicates Andrei's powerlessness: he is not able to keep death personified outside his room:

...и всё это заменяется одним вопросом о затворенной двери. Он встает и идет к двери, чтобы задвинуть задвижку и запереть ее. От того, что он успеет или не успеет зависит все. [12:63-64]

Andrei's central and last vision of life and death becomes apparent in his dream. In this dream, he 'perceives' death, that

is, death personified.³ The neuter pronoun *ono* refers to an abstract definition of death as well as the juxtaposition of death and everything *vse*: "Что-то не человеческое – смерть – ломится в дверь, и надо удержать ее." [12:64] At the moment Andrei catches sight of death, he awakens. This corresponds to a reversal of the common romantic concept of death as sleep.

The narrator introduces the image of **leaving** and the semantic shift of the extension of mortality into life, that is, the transfer of meaning of mortality to a living person in the passages concluding the presentation of Andrei Bolkonskii's death. Andrei's relatives and Natasha Rostova used to go to the dying patient: "... ходили уже не за ним (его уже не было, он ушел от них), а за самым близким воспоминанием о нем – за его телом." [12:64]

Tolstoy also uses in his novel one of the common motifs of nineteenth-century literature: the **duel**.⁴ This topic features prominently in many works of Russian Romanticists and to a lesser degree Realist writers. Tolstoy broaches this subject in one of his early works, the novella *Dva gusara* (Two Hussars, 1856),⁵ presenting an anti-duel scene. In *Voina i mir*

³The author uses italics, and refers to death by the neuter personal pronoun *ono*.

⁴Christine Scholle, *Das Duell in der russischen Literatur. Wandlung und Verfall eines Ritus*. (Munich: O. Sagner), 1977.

⁵In this narrative, the narrator deals with the motif of a possible duel: it consists of its constituents such as conflict, challenge, armed confrontation, which in two cases does not materialize; while the older Turbin, one of the main characters, is killed in a duel, his son avoids this fate.

one of the participants is injured and survives this ritualized confrontation.

The series of events typical of the motif of **potentiality** of death can also be observed in the duel between Pierre Bezukhov and the officer Dolokhov [10:20-26]. The confrontation between them is triggered by a rumour about the adultery of Pierre's wife — a standard motif. Using the motif of the **cuckold**, the narrator contrasts the dominant qualities of both men. He also emphasizes Pierre's negative characterization of his opponent, as well as Pierre's attitudes towards killing before and after the incident.

Duelling, a ritualized variety of violent death which follows specific rules, implies the possibility of reconciliation and survival as well. In his duel with Dolokhov Pierre wounds his opponent; an evaluation of this incident and its outcome confirms his opinion about the uselessness of his act as well as of the duel itself. Leaving his opponent behind, Pierre assumes that he has killed his wife's lover; this is one of the current variants of assumed, potential death. As he thinks about the incident, he takes the opportunity to reassess his marriage and philosophize about life and death:

А жив и живи: завтра умрешь, как мог я умереть час тому назад. И сто́ит ли того мучиться, когда жить остается одну секунду в сравнении с вечностью. [10: 26]

This, again, is one of the cases, a specific situation, in which the individual tries to minimize the significance of life as he faces the inevitability of death.

In presenting the possibility of Prince Andrei's death and the actual death of Liza Bolkonskaia, Tolstoy employs the device of the **paradox**. The old Count Bolkonskii's fatalism — he accepts his son's death without proof of his demise and, moreover, talks about this tragic event publicly and orders a monument for him in Moscow — proves to be wrong. He anticipates one out of two possible outcomes. The fatal blow, however, strikes his daughter-in-law, Andrei Bolkonskii's wife.

As she awaits the birth of her first child, her husband returns. As is the case in many of Tolstoy's works, Andrei's wife faces a situation which implies basically a choice between two outcomes: life (i.e., survival) or death. In depicting the fate of this character, the narrator again introduces elements of a higher reality: the categories of the unknowable and unfathomable. As she approaches labour, the narrator comments:

Таинство, торжественнейшее в мире, продолжало совершаться. Прошел вечер, наступила ночь. И чувство ожидания и смягчения сердечного перед непостижимым не падало, а возвышалось. [10:37]

Moreover, the narrator alludes to the ambiguity of *tainstvo* (sacrament). Following the tragic event the narrator employs this noun in a religious context in describing the funeral.

The element of the metaphysical is manifest in another borderline situation, where the individual's helplessness in facing his fate, the impossibility of determining future, dominates over his free will. In leaving open the outcome of the following event, the narrator creates tension by contrasting these two forces: "И чувство ожидания и смягчения сердечного перед непостижимым не падало, а возвышалось." [10:37]

Thus the narrator prepares the reader for a tragic turn of events. In depicting this situation the narrator assumes the position of the observer, focusing on the other characters' reactions as well as the language of signs. Since the narrator does not directly depict the moments of birth any more than the moments of his death, he uses his position outside the room — Andrei Bolkonskii stays outside as well — to create a climax followed by the tragic resolution. Both the narrator and Andrei himself are obliged to take note of the physician's and midwife's reactions in order to learn what happened:

Дверь отворилась. Доктор, с засученными рукавами рубашки, без сюртука, бледный и с трясущейся челюстью, вышел из комнаты. Князь Андрей обротился к нему, но доктор растерянно взглянул на него и, ни слова не сказав, прошел мимо. Женщина выбежала и, увидев князя Андрея, замаялась на дороге. Он вошел в комнату жены. Она мертвая лежала в том же положении, ... [10:40].

As with the last encounter between Pierre Bezukhov and his father as the latter faced death, the narrator integrates non-verbal communication expressed by the characters' telling facial expressions.

Her last message for her husband is read into her face by the narrator: "Я вас всех любила и никому дурного не делала, и что вы со мной сделали? – говорило ее прелестное, жалкое, мертвое лицо." [10:40] This reproach causes Andrei to feel guilt, especially when his wife is buried. The death and the funeral continue to overshadow Andrei's future life, which becomes obvious at his son's baptism — Andrei fears for his son's life.

In depicting Pierre Bezukhov's experiences during his captivity, the narrator links his fate to Platon Karataev's life and death. Apart from the description of Platon's violent death — he is killed and robbed by two French soldiers — the narrator describes this event twice; it is preceded by the motif of violent death in Platon Karataev's own story about the violent death of a merchant.

The first description of this event is followed by a philosophical digression by Pierre's former teacher who through an extended comparison describes the metaphysical substance of human life using a physical image, as well as by Pierre's reminiscences in which he envisions Platon Karataev's death. The first description as well as Pierre's reminiscences provided by the narrator avoid the direct and explicit depiction

of Platon's death. The last communication between Pierre and Platon is restricted to non-verbal, visual communication:

Каратаев смотрел на Пьера своими добрыми, круглыми глазами, подернутыми теперь слезою, и, видимо, подзывая его к себе, хотел сказать что-то. Но Пьеру слишком страшно стало за себя. Он сделал так, как будто не видал его взгляда, и поспешно отошел.

[12:157]

Pierre apparently anticipates Platon's tragic end and avoids any contact with his former friend. As soon as he hears a shot, Pierre tries to continue his tactics of avoidance. He associates every detail he perceives with the past, excluding the images of the tragic present. Pierre hears the shot, notices the two French soldiers and their loot and does not ascribe any significance to the subsequent barking of a dog.

Platon Karataev's philosophy of life and his death are integrated into a concise philosophical digression through a corresponding metaphor: "Вот он, Каратаев, разлился и исчез." [12:158]. Comparing Platon Karataev to a drop of water, Pierre's former teacher refers to one of the outstanding qualities of this character: his roundness. The teacher introduces this motif in his extended comparison:

И он показал Пьеру глобус. Глобус этот был живой, колеблющийся шар, не имеющий размеров. Вся поверхность шара состояла из капель, плотно сжатых между собой. И капли эти все двигались, перемещались и то сливались, из нескольких в одну,

то из одной разделялись на многие. Каждая капля стремилась разлиться, захватить наибольшее пространство, но другие стремясь к тому же, сжимали ее, иногда уничтожали, иногда сливались с нею. [10: 158]

In this extended comparison the physical and metaphysical are combined and juxtaposed; creation and destruction of life are presented on a metaphorical level; one of the important conclusions of this comparison is that fate dominates free will.

This philosophical view of life and death is valid for Pierre Bezukhov himself, as the narrator reverts to the images of water and of roundness:

... Пьер закрыл глаза, и картина летней природы смешалась с воспоминанием о купанье, о жидком колеблющемся шаре, и он опустился куда-то в воду, так что вода сошла над его головой. [10, 159]

Here, again, one of the characters recognizes and becomes aware of a different philosophy of life.

Platon Karataev does not fear this moment: longing for death, he is disappointed that God does not let him die: “– Что здоровье? На болезнь плакаться – Бог смерти не даст, – сказал Каратаев, тотчас возвратился к начатому рассказу.” [10:154] It is in the context of this account that Karataev tells the story about the murder of a merchant.

The presentation of death in Voyna i mir abounds in the large number of potential and realized natural and violent

deaths of individuals. It includes characters' intentions to kill other people, Pierre's plan to kill Napoleon, Natasha Rostova's attempted suicide, numerous executions of prisoners of war and references to mass death. The author's aim to present the totality of life at a certain period in history reflects itself in the presentation of death.

The presentation of death in Anna Karenina (1873-77) is an integral part of the presentation of its content, of the narration of the major plots of events. Although death is an important component of this narrative, it is not its most significant thematic issue and compositional element. Death is overshadowed by the dominant ethical issues which constitute the life of human beings. The author focuses on one of the main areas of human activity: **private life**. In describing the lives of two families, he juxtaposes the portrayal of family life in crisis with that of family life in harmony. The differing characters' attitudes about family life separate those who survive and those who die or survive with feelings of guilt at the novel's ending. One of the principal characters, Konstantin Levin, and his wife attempt to materialize the ideal of harmonious family life, whereas Anna Karenina and Vronskii, as well as Nikolai Levin, fail to establish meaningful and functioning family relationships.

The premature death of Nikolai Levin — integrated into one of the central death-scenes — serves to reveal the emotional reactions of his brother and sister-in-law. As a

dying patient he is also characterized by his own emotional reactions. Levin's tragic ending does not surprise the reader of the novel, since the narrator has prepared the reader step by step for this outcome. The narrator describes in detail the last month of Nikolai Levin's life, thus underlining the developmental aspect of his illness and death: the main tendency of his condition is a gradual change for the worse.

After introducing this secondary character and emphasizing his illness, the narrator's next step co-incides with an important turning point in Nikolai's condition: his illness proves to be fatal;⁶ the reliable narrator and fate (or co-incidence) as significant powers seem to determine the characters' lives; the omniscient narrator has already 'condemned' this character through his exposition. The inclusion of the motif of chronic and terminal illness accounts for and explains the tragic course of events. In anticipating Nikolai's illness and demise, the narrator also excludes the possibility of dramatization.

The introduction of this secondary character signals the probable materialization of the tragic. It is his brother's and the narrator's perspective which play an important role in the novel's exposition. As soon as Nikolai appears, his brother notices the symptoms of his illness, along with a change for the worse:

⁶Realist prose excludes the chance of a miraculous recovery; that is why Realist writers exclude improbable events such as miracles to motivate turning points in the plot.

... и Левин увидел [...] огромную, худую, сутуловатую фигуру брата, с его большими испуганными глазами. Он был еще хуже, чем три года назад, когда

Константин Левин видел его в последний раз. [18:92]

Before he sees his brother, Konstantin hears the first indication of a chronic disease: Nikolai's cough. Another symptom of his condition, repeated in this introductory characterization is Nikolai's: "судорожное движение головой и шеей... [18:92]. During their conversation, the narrator names this illness and expresses pity for Nikolai: "Он (Константин) взглядывался в его болезненное, чахоточное лицо...." [18, 94]. Nikolai, who suffers from consumption, admits the worsening of his condition during their conversation.

The narrator presents the next meeting between the two brothers again through Konstantin's eyes as he witnesses a further worsening of his brother's condition. Again, before Konstantin catches sight of his brother, he hears him cough; his brother's outward appearance indicates another step towards the stage of terminal illness. The one-sided description ends with these sentences:

Как ни страшен был брат Николай своей худобой и болезненностью прежде, теперь он еще похудел, еще изнемог. Это был скелет покрытый кожей. [18:365]

Konstantin Levin's arrival is preceded by a conversation between Nikolai and his mistress Agaf'ia Mikhailovna. She happens to mention the 'ideal' and 'timely' death of one of the

servants, which Nikolai also learns of. Meeting his brother and noticing his condition forces Konstantin to think about mortality, his own death in particular. Konstantin Levin quickly realizes the tragic consequences brought about by this phenomenon. He also connects these facts with the existential problems of life manifested in the question "How to live well?"; this question appears to him insignificant in the light of the unsolvable question of death.

As is the case in other narratives — e.g. in Smert' Ivana Il'icha — the proximity to death reveals the fundamental opposition of characters' attitudes: denial or taboo vs. acceptance and their corresponding modes: truthfulness and honesty vs. hypocrisy. All these attitudes and reactions manifest themselves through the behaviour of the two brothers. While they both intuitively know about their dilemma, they are not capable of expressing their feelings through words. The false and hypocritical language of their dialogues contrasts with the honesty of their thoughts and emotions.

The depiction of the relationship between the two brothers reveals that Nikolai suppresses the fact of his imminent death as he talks himself into believing that his condition has improved: "Было бы здоровье, а здоровье, слава Богу, поправилось." [18:367] This verbal mask contrasts with his truer facial expression, as he reacts to the death of the old servant: "Известие о смерти Парфена Денисовича неприятно

подействовало на него. На лице его выразился испуг..." [18:367].

The overwhelming impression of his brother's condition becomes obvious in a dialogue between Konstantin Levin and his acquaintance Shcherbatskii, whom he meets at a railway station before leaving for Paris. Konstantin tells his acquaintance about his brother's impending death. It appears as if the confrontation with his brother's death caused Konstantin to perceive death as omnipresent: "Левин говорил то, что он истинно думал в это последнее время. Он во всем видел только смерть или приближение к ней." [18:371].

The final stage of Nikolai Levin's life is introduced through his mistress's letter. She notifies Konstantin that his brother is about to die [19, 479]. Konstantin immediately decides to visit his brother in a small provincial town, but before leaving their estate, quarrels with his wife. The presentation of the last days of Nikolai Levin's life challenges and depresses both Konstantin and his wife Kitty. First, deeply moved by Nikolai's condition, they try to alleviate his suffering and feel pity for the dying patient. Experiencing unbearable suffering themselves, they honestly wish for Nikolai Levin's death. Chapter XX, describing Nikolai Levin's dying and the moment of his death, is the only chapter in the novel which has a title — "Smert". In contrasting the dying patient's internal perspective with the observer's perspective, the narrator achieves the effect of black humour. After the priest 'proclaims' Nikolai dead, the dying patient contradicts:

– Кончился,– сказал священник и хотел отойти; но вдруг слипшиеся усы мертвеца шевельнулись, и ясно в тишине слышались из глубины груди определенно резкие звуки: – Не совсем... Скоро. [19:74]

Tolstoy repeatedly points out human beings' inability to precisely determine the moment of a character's death. People who declare other characters dead are priests or physicians. Nikolai Levin's death also contributes to the characterization of Konstantin Levin and his wife. Whereas Kitty deals with this difficult situation from a rather practical point of view, Konstantin appears helpless with his intellectual approach. The dying patient himself displays hope, that is, he applies **hope** as a coping mechanism. It is interesting to note that Nikolai, a former atheist, starts to pray and accepts the Last Rites.

Nikolai Levin spends the last days of his life in a shabby hotel room in a provincial town. Tolstoy presents not only the facts of death and dying of his characters in detail, he describes in detail the setting and the atmosphere in which these events happen. As in Tolstoy's early works, when characters die in an open space, here Nikolai Levin faces an environment in which dirt, dust and disorder play a significant role. The atmosphere and the milieu contribute to the negative and tragic outcome of this episode.

Before leaving for the provincial town, Konstantin Levin discusses the negative effects of the railway on Russian agri-

culture.⁷ This can also be said with regard to Nikolai Levin's death: the motif of dirt and dust combined with the bad omen of railways foreshadow Nikolai Levin's fate:

.... и грязь, пыль и неряшество везде, и вместе какая-то новая современно железнодорожная самодовольная озабоченность этой гостиницы - ..." [19:58]

According to these introductory remarks on the general idea of the exposition and the characterization of Nikolai Levin in particular, the narrator prepares the reader to expect death and dying in poverty and indignity. The narrator maintains this strategy; he continues the presentation of Nikolai's final days with repeated devices and motifs: after Konstantin analyses his brother's body — its parts such as hand, head, hair and forehead, which manifest the symptoms of Nikolai's condition — Konstantin Levin comes to the following conclusion: "Левину стоило взглянуть [...] чтобы понять ту странную истину, что это мертвое тело было живой брат." [19:60] This conclusion serves to merge the stages of life and death: the physiological aspect of death is transferred, extended to and united with the realm of biological life. In this diagnosis, the state of Nikolai's dead body defines the entity of the living brother. This statement comes close to the rhetoric device of **oxymoron**. It is the image of the 'dead body of a living broth-

⁷The railway symbolizes progress in Russia and in this work it is associated with negative and tragic forces of fate, cf. the accumulation of tragic events at the railway station as well as the significance of trains and travelling in this novel. David Bethea deals with these and related aspects in his study The Shape of the Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1989), pp. 77-78.

er', that is, of a dead object which shows some traits of being life rather than *vice versa*; this assessment goes hand in hand with one of the former characterizations of Nikolai Levin as a skeleton covered with skin.⁸

As for the typical coping mechanisms of dying patients and those who share the last moments of their lives, the narrator describes Konstantin's expectation with regard to people suffering from consumption, namely **self-betrayal**: "Он ожидал найти то же состояние самообманыванья, которое, он слышал, так часто бывает у чахоточных..." [19, 59]. Closely connected with this attitude are the reactions of **hope** and **bargaining**. Nikolai Levin, Kitty and Konstantin display all these mechanisms during the last days of waiting.

During these days the characters' behaviour also manifests emotions, states and attitudes such as hypocrisy, depression, helplessness, hopelessness, pity, self-pity, aggression, anger and, among those who survive, indifference and relief (cf. their death-wish). One of the fundamental changes brought about by Kitty is the fact that she introduces order or (orderliness) both on an external level (cf. her cleanliness and selflessness) and on an abstract level, the integration of death and dying into a spiritual religious order.

She succeeds temporarily in convincing Nikolai to accept religion as part of his final days. Nikolai himself does not become a believer; he values this spiritual help as long as it

⁸The motif of the living dead, on the other hand, differs from this concept; the living dead pass from the nether world into the real world.

provides and promises hope for survival: "Для нее я проделал эту комедию" [19:69]. This confession manifests an aspect of theatricality and an attitude of dishonesty. He continues to play with those who try to help him in announcing his imminent death: *otpravliaius'*, thus displaying a type of gallows humour: "Скоро буду лежать тихо,— проговорил он,— мертвый, сказал он насмешливо, сердито." [19:70].

One of the interesting epistemological aspects of this death-scene is the contrast between knowledge about the mystery of death, the experience of the dying patient and the lack of this knowledge on the part of onlookers. The longer the dying proceeds, the more Konstantin Levin, his wife and all the other characters suffer. Preparatory grief experienced before the moment of death, as well as prolonged psychological 'torment', lead to their death-wish. The moment of Nikolai's death is the culminating point of this death-scene; the narrator does not describe the funeral ceremony. The episode does not end on a tragic note, but with a positive message: Konstantin Levin becomes aware of the forces of life.

The element of the tragic in this novel is evident in the motto which follows its title: "Мне отмщение, и аз воздам" explicitly expresses the motif of vengeance. In the religious context vengeance often pre-determines violent death. Anna Karenina's life appears doomed from the beginning of the novel to the very end. The author 'condemns' this character as well as Nikolai Levin to death from the very moment he introduces them, or, in the case of Anna Karenina, foreshadows her fate

with a bad omen through the tragic incident at the railway station in the novel's exposition. It is in fact the heroine herself who interprets this tragic event as a bad omen. The author integrates this event into a specific setting: the **railway**, which does not signify progress so much as a cultural decline in Konstantin Levin's view. In this novel it figures prominently as a setting of death. That is why trains, railways, railway stations and travelling by train are characterized rather negatively. The symbol of the railway standing for technical progress also signifies moral decline.

The first significant tragic event affecting the lives of the main characters occurs at a railway station. The narrator avoids describing this incident directly, that is, from his point of view. The tragic event — a train arriving at the station killing a watchman — is mediated through secondary characters, i.e., anonymous passengers. The event itself serves the function of characterizing Anna Karenina, her brother Stiva Oblonskii, and the officer Vronskii. **Co-incident** brings these characters together for the first time.

The death of the watchman, a sudden and 'unprepared' death, shocks the main characters as well as the other passengers. Before finding out about the details of the accident, the secondary characters make assumptions regarding the circumstances leading to the watchman's death. The narrator reports some of their comments including the possibility of suicide; this assumption clearly anticipates the

tragic ending of Anna Karenina: "Что..? Что..? Где?
Бросился..! Задавило..!" [18:69].

In order to characterize the main characters, the author uses the device of **contrast**. Only the male characters go to see the watchman's body. Whereas Stiva Oblonskii and his sister are deeply shocked and suffer — Anna Karenina feels pity — Vronskii remains controlled and acts practically. He proves to be generous, giving the watchman's widow some money, which impresses Anna Karenina. The significance of this event comes to the fore through her foreboding (*durnoe predznamenovanie*) which proves to be fatal for her at the conclusion of the novel. She reads and recognizes the first of the many 'fatal' signs distributed throughout the work.

Anna Karenina is one of Tolstoy's works in which the symbolic and semiotic system of allusions and signs plays a significant role (cf. the motif of the railway signifying life, the train as a destructive force, the symbolism of the candle); the fact that things or parts of the body have connotative meaning becomes evident in the repeated description of Anna Karenina's eyes and her husband's ears.

During the ballroom scene in the first part of the novel Kitty Shcherbitskaia observes Anna Karenina, especially her outward appearance. After describing several positive traits of her beauty, she also notices the effect of a *femme fatale*: "... что было что-то ужасное и жестокое в ее прелести" [18:89]. She has reason enough to be angry at her, since she notices that her beloved officer Vronskii rejects her and reacts in an

unusual way to Anna's presence. Kitty re-iterates her observation, implicitly comparing Anna Karenina to a devil: "Да, что-то чуждое, бесовское и прелестное есть в ней." [18:89]

The narrator's moral stance manifests itself again in the adultery-scene [18:11]. He condemns the first sexual encounter between Anna and Vronskii, focusing on their feelings of guilt and shame in a specific manner: the act of adultery is presented as killing, and Vronskii is compared to a murderer. This act of adultery also contains elements of crime, degradation, guilt, and in the long run, of punishment as well. The physical act and its moral evaluation by the 'criminals' themselves — their assessment and the narrator's moral stance co-incide — connect love and sexuality directly with violent death. The narrator describes Anna's and Vronskii's thoughts and feelings as follows:

Она, глядя на него, физически чувствовала свое унижение и ничего больше не могла говорить. Он же чувствовал то, что должен чувствовать убийца, когда видит тело, лишенное им жизни. Это тело, лишенное им жизни, была их любовь, первый период их любви.[...] Но несмотря на весь ужас убийцы пред телом убитого, надо резать на куски, прятать это тело, надо пользоваться тем, что убийца приобрел убийством. [18:158].

In describing this act as killing, the narrator further adds the perverted thoughts of the murderer, in particular the idea of

the dissecting of the dead body. This act of dissecting follows immediately on a figurative level. The narrator uses an extended and explicit comparison:

И с озлоблением, как будто со страстью, бросается убийца на это тело, и тащит, и режет его; так он покрывал поцелуями ее лицо и плечи. Она держала ее руку и не шевелилась. [18:158]

The act of adultery — this sin — is committed by Anna Karenina as well. She and her lover 'kill' in this scene: adultery in this context is equated to killing.⁹

The relationship between Anna Karenina and Vronskii is further developed in the incident at the races; the race itself with its tragic outcome (the mare Frou-Frou is killed by coincidence) can be considered another turning point, a further proof of the estrangement between Anna and her husband. The death of his beloved horse — "Неловкое движение, сделанное Вронским, сломало ей спину." [18:210] — deeply moves Vronskii.

From the observer's perspective, as well as from Anna's, the dangerous situation brought about by the incident — Vronskii's fall from the horse — reveals Anna's emotions. She fears for her lover's life. From her and the observer's perspective, Vronskii faces the possibility of death. Observing Anna, Karenin notices her feelings for Vronskii. In their

⁹The watchman's body is dissected as well.

conversation following this incident, Anna confesses her love for Vronskii.

The element of the tragic continues to determine the plot of the novel as it manifests itself through another motif: the **potentiality of death**. Anna's morbid thoughts — often part of her nightmares — come to the fore during her pregnancy (cf. the possibility of death at birth — either stillbirth or the death of the mother). Her nightmares — especially the repeated images of the small and ugly man — accompany Anna Karenina and foreshadow her tragic death.

The narrator resumes the motif of nightmares a few days before Anna gives birth to a girl. Vronskii happens to dream about similar images which occur in Anna's nightmare:

Что такое? Что? Что такое страшное я видел во сне?
 Да, да. Мужик-обкладчик, кажется, маленький,
 грязный, со взъерошенной бородкой, что-то делал
 нагнувшись и вдруг заговорил по-французски какие-
 то странные слова. [18:375]

On the same day Vronskii visits Anna and learns in more detail about his and Anna's prediction. In their conversation, Anna reveals her fatalism in predicting her own death. This fact could contribute to the solution of all their problems. Vronskii enquires about and doubts the motivation behind her certainty. Anna explains her certainty to him by referring to her dream. Vronskii is struck and shocked by the fact that Anna has envisioned the same character predicting her fate in French: "Il faut le battre le fer, le broyer, le pétrir..." [18:381].

As for the circumstances of her death, she dreams that her servant Kornei alludes to the birth of her child (as well as to her potential death): "Родами, родами умрете, родами, матушка...." [18:381].

Both Anna and Konstantin Levin have in common a pre-occupation with death; they are overwhelmed with morbid thoughts. Anna Karenina seems to long for her own death (the motif of **death-wish**) [18:363]. As is often the case with death-scenes in plays, the author reveals the character's true motives and qualities when they face their own death or when they witness other characters' deaths. The death-scene forces some characters to behave in ways they usually avoid: to give in, to apologize, to compromise, or to change their philosophy of life (cf. the common device of transformation in many of Tolstoy's later works).

The borderline situation affecting Anna forces her husband to return to Petersburg and reconcile with Vronskii. Karenin's attitude towards his wife oscillates between his wish to see her dead and his readiness to forgive her. The seriousness of Anna's condition lies in the fact that her physician does not exclude the possibility of death: "Доктор и доктора говорили, что это была родильная горячка, в которой из ста было 99, что кончится смертью." [18:435] Although the plot is directed towards a dramatic climax, the narrator uses the device of **summary** to focus on the three days in which Anna faces death and finally survives. The narrator misses the chance to dramatize this situation and

concentrates instead on the presentation of the conversation between Vronskii and Karenin.

After leaving Karenin's house, Vronskii is occupied with suicidal thoughts at home. He feels shame and is depressed following his reconciliation with Karenin. Moreover, he comes to realize the meaninglessness of life in the light of these experiences:

Те же были воспоминания счастья, навсегда потерянного, то же представление бессмысленности предстоящего в жизни, то же сознание своего унижения. [18:439]

As a last resort, he contemplates killing himself. His attempt to commit suicide fails. When he realizes that he is still alive, he worries about the fact that his act might become public. Thus all traces of this immoral act — an act of self-degradation — are covered up; by contrast, Anna wants her suicide to become public.

Anna's attitude towards death and her inclination towards the tragic become evident in the first crucial scene of the novel: the tragic scene at the station involving her first meeting with Vronskii. She continues to follow a rather pessimistic and fatalistic attitude, despite the few moments of happiness, before she gives birth to her child. As her relationship with Vronskii worsens, she begins to consider the most radical solution: suicide.

Anna Karenina's act of desperation is not a spontaneous decision. There are several stages, offers of reconciliation

and missed opportunities for solving the problems of her relationships. These steps of crisis indicate their growing mutual estrangement and finally culminate in a dead end. This situation is manifested through a discontinuation of communication between Anna and Vronskii. Despite the fact that by talking to each other they might possibly have found a solution, instead they write notes to each other.

The significant turning point in Anna's life co-incides with her assessment of her relationship with Vronskii: she feels that he does not requite her love. Looking back on her life, she 'regrets' the fact that she did not die when she gave birth. Anna's decision to commit suicide is a gradual process:

В душе ее была какая-то неясная мысль, которая интересовала ее, но она не могла ее сознать. [...] И она вдруг вспомнила, то что было в ее душе. Да это была та мысль, которая одна разрешала все. Да, умереть.
[19:324]

The main objective of this act is to resolve her relationship with Karenin and to force Vronskii to love her again. After Vronskii avoids seeing her in his house again (Chapter XXV), Anna reads into this situation an ultimate rejection:

И смерть, как единственное средство восстановить в его сердце любовь к ней, наказать его и одержать победу в этой борьбе [...], ясно и живо представилась ей. [19:728]

During the last days and moments of her life Anna's mind reflects on images of the distant as well as the more recent

past. In her loneliness she, thinking about her dilemma, watches a flickering candle 'die' out (cf. the world of shadows) whereupon her room is filled with darkness.

Apart from this symbolic foreshadowing, Anna suffers from another nightmare which contains typical images and characters:

Утром страшный кошмар, несколько раз повторявшийся ей в сновидениях еще до связи с Вронским, представился ей опять и разбудил ее. Старичок-мужичок с взлохмаченною бородой что-то делал, нагнувшись над железом, приговаривая бессмысленные французские слова,... [19:332].

After leaving Vronskii, Anna Karenina decides to leave Moscow by train. She tries to cope once and for all with her recent past. Her thoughts reveal a pessimistic view of the world, in which hatred and torment dominate. Arriving at the railway station, she perceives both the environment and the passengers as ugly and hypocritical.

In presenting the last moments of her life, the narrator combines images of the present with those of the past. The imminent moment of death brings about a revelation:

Привычный жест крестного знамения вызвал в душе ее целый ряд девичьих и детских воспоминаний, и вдруг мрак, покрывавший для нее все, разорвался, и жизнь предстала ей на мгновение со всеми ее светлыми прошедшими радостями. [19:348]

The manner in which she commits suicide shows that her act was pre-meditated. Before she throws herself under the train, she remembers the day the watchman was killed. The narrator also integrates religious symbolism: Anna crosses herself and falls on her knees, asking God for forgiveness. Then she envisions the messenger of death — the small and ugly man, who talks in French and 'forges the iron' — a recurrent motif in this work.

The introduction of the tragic element exemplified through the motif of violent death as a tragic co-incidence in the first book of this novel as well as Anna's suicide in the final chapter of the seventh book form a cycle, a type of closed ending. The exposition of the tragic and its climax are distinctly marked by frequently employed leitmotifs and images. Moreover, the setting (railways and travelling) is characterized rather negatively both by the narrator and by another important character, Konstantin Levin.

Anna Karenina's suicide does not conclude the presentation of death in this novel. The narrator opposes (cf. the technique of **antithesis**) Anna to Konstantin Levin, who proves that someone inclined to death and suicide in order to eliminate evil can choose life:

И счастливый семьянин, здоровый человек, Левин был несколько раз так близок к самоубийству, что спрятал шнурок, чтобы не повеситься на нем, и боялся ходить с ружьем, чтобы не застрелиться. [19:371].

In contrast to Voyna i mir, in Anna Karenina the presentation of death is concentrated in the suicide of the main protagonist. Her suicide can be seen as the immoral climax of her life. Like Tolstoy's earlier major novel, Anna Karenina also abounds in potential and realized deaths. Tolstoy uses devices in the presentation of death similar to those used in presenting this theme in his early narratives. The main tendency of direct reference to this theme continues in his major novels.

In presenting death in the longer narratives, Tolstoy distributes this theme throughout the text: despite the fact that several major characters die, the structure of the plot is not centred on the theme of death. He again integrates death into the private and military lives of the main and secondary characters. The high number of incidents resulting in or avoiding death contributes to this general tendency. The balancing of different themes results in their equal representation. The high level of sophistication which Tolstoy achieves in his early narratives can be observed in his major prose works as well.

Chapter Three: Late Works

Tolstoy's late works include the theme of death in narratives such as "Kholstomer" (The Strider, 1885), Smert' Ivana Il'icha (1886) "Khoziain i rabotnik" (Master and Man, 1895), Voskresenie (Resurrection, 1889), Kreitserova sonata (The Kreutzer Sonata, 1890), Khadzhi-Murat (1904), in the novellas Bozheskoe i chelovecheskoe (The Divine and the Human, 1906),¹ "Zapiski sumasshedshego," (The Diary of a Madman, 1912), in the short story "Alesha Gorshok," (Alesha, the Pot, 1911), D'iavol (The Devil, 1911). Tolstoy also depicts death in the plays Vlast' t'my (The Power of Darkness, 1886), and Zhivoi trup (The Living Corpse, 1911).

Smert' Ivana Il'icha ("The Death of Ivan Il'ich", 1886) is considered one of the most outstanding and famous "thanatological" works in world literature.² Because of its

¹The theme of death in this narrative is studied in the article by Elizabeth A. Trahan, "The Divine and the Human: Or Three More Deaths: A Late Chapter in Leo Tolstoy's Dialogue with Death," Tolstoy's Studies Journal 3 (1990): 33-48.

²For the literary criticism in English, cf. the study by Gary R. Jahn, The Death of Ivan Ilich. An Interpretation (New York: Twayne, 1993). The third chapter of this study deals with critical reception. It broaches social, psychological, philosophical issues as well as the structure and style of this novella. As for Soviet literary criticism, this work is treated from different perspectives in articles and more extensive studies — among them: L.P. Grossman, "Smert' Ivana Il'icha. Istorii pisaniia i pechataniia," L.N. Tolstoi, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii (Moskva: Izd.khud.lit. 1928-1962): [26:679-91]; M.M. Rukavitsyn, "Iskusstvo portreta v povesti L.N. Tolstogo «Smert' Ivana Il'icha»," Izvestiia AN SSSR. Serii literatury i iazyka, 23, 1(1964): 44-48; Mark Shcheglov, "Povest' Tolstogo «Smert' Ivana Il'icha»," Literaturno-kriticheskie stat'i (Moskva: Sovetskii pisatel', 1971) 9-56; M. Eremin, "Podrobnosti i smysl tselogo. Iz nabliudeniia nad tekstem povesti «Smert' Ivana Il'icha»," S. I. Mashinskii ed., V mire Tolstogo. Sbornik statei (Moskva: Sovetskii pisatel', 1978) 221-47; E.F.Volodin, "Povest' o smysle vremeni («Smert' Ivana Il'icha»)," Nikolai K. Gei, ed. Kontekst 1984. Literaturno-teoreticheskie issledovaniia (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka", 1986) 143-63. As for a survey of pertinent literary criticism in German, cf. Wolfgang Kasack's

universal and timeless appeal, this novella, written after the Russian writer's philosophical conversion, has aroused interest not only among literary critics, but has also been a subject of research in disciplines such as philosophy, medicine, psychology and thanatology. In literary research, because of the high quantity of international scholarly contributions, it figures prominently compared to other works by Tolstoy.

In focusing on the death and dying of a particular individual, this story combines ethical and philosophical questions. It reveals some of the major and minor characters' virtues — and more importantly vices — as they are confronted with a borderline situation: the main character, confronted with his dying and his imminent death, comes to the realization that he has wasted his life; the other characters witness his dying and participate in the funeral ceremony. The narrator begins this narrative with this ceremony. Although this work centres around the life and death of the major character, the traits of the other characters are exposed in their predominantly malfunctioning or non-existent relationships with Ivan Il'ich.

The novella not only covers the tragic ending of the main protagonist's life, preceded by his 'conversion', but also provides the reader with selected biographical information, which spans the periods of Ivan Il'ich's childhood, his

article "Tolstoj: Der Tod des Iwan Iljitsch," Bodo Zelinsky, ed. Die russische Novelle, (Düsseldorf: Bagel, 1982) 94-102.

education, and his career in the judiciary. Although the title anticipates and emphasizes the significance of death, it nevertheless pays considerable attention to the details of his life. The narrative includes significant turning points in both his private and his professional life. At one stage of his life, the main character reduces his private life considerably, finding or pretending to find meaning in life solely in his professional career.

The content of this work is structured around specific pairs of thematic oppositions: concepts and processes such as the fundamental opposition of life and death, processes and states of change vs. permanency, concepts of spiritual life and spiritual death, annihilation of the body and resurrection or re-birth of the spirit, the attitudes of theatricality and hypocrisy vs. honesty and truth,³ the concepts of the stereotypical vs. the individual; furthermore, suffering is contrasted with enjoyment or pleasure as is avoidance of death with its confrontation. Enjoyment of life manifests itself in the motif of gambling, as well as aesthetic enjoyment in attending a play. Ivan Il'ich's behaviour displays the tendency of striving for integration into society, only to disassociate himself from his relatives after achieving success in his career; this also explains his loneliness as his incurable illness progresses. Natural death overshadows the

³Chris J.G. Turner studies the dualistic structure of these concepts in his article "The Language of Fiction: Word-clusters in Tolstoy's The Death of Ivan Ilyich," Modern Language Review 65 (1970): 116-25.

references to violent death, which the reader encounters on a figurative level, in the last chapters in particular.

Private vs. professional life is one of the numerous semantic fields (binary oppositions) which contribute to the complex construction of this work. Another important opposition is that of closed vs. open space.⁴ The dominant configuration of characters in the central scenes is closely connected with closed space. Narratorial references to open space are restricted, that is, they are implied, rather than described in detail. The behaviour of characters in closed space contributes to one of the major dramatic modes: the **scene**. This tendency towards dramatization can be explained through the author's selection of closed settings.

The narrative starts with a 'courthouse scene' and ends with a 'death-bed scene'. The dramatic mode manifests itself also in the dialogues as well in the prominent role of non-verbal communication, rendered through the omniscient narrator. The language of signs in this work is part of a larger semiotic system, which includes the symbolism of colours; the opposition of black and darkness to colours and light dominates; note also the typical rituals of mourning. The author implements and emphasizes specific death-related details (the coffin and other objects), along with symbolic actions placed in the contexts of religious and private life

⁴Natural death in this narrative is set in closed space; the central scenes of this work are restricted to this setting; a large number of violent deaths in Tolstoy's prose, however are integrated into open space.

(crossing one's self, experiencing preparatory grief and mourning). The characters' actions display theatricality and pretension to a high degree — a feature pre-conditioned through the selection of settings, and predisposed through the character's inherent traits, especially through the avoidance and denial of death. This attitude is part of the overall tendency to avoid unpleasant matters.

The hierarchy of semantic oppositions in this narrative is dominated by the life vs. death dichotomy. Another important opposition is that of inanimate objects, (cf. the emphasis on appearance and clothing vs. the presentation of the animate world of emotions and thoughts). Ivan Il'ich's world can be divided into his professional and private life. He excludes humanitarian considerations from his professional life in the same way that he excludes problems and inconveniences from his marital life. His private life can be further sub-divided into the world of marital obligation and the world of enjoyment and leisure, expressed in regular gambling sessions.

On an abstract level, one can note the opposition of **change vs. permanency**. As for the main character's outstanding traits, falsity, hypocrisy, and dishonesty predominate up to his involuntary 'conversion' (his revelation about having squandered his life) and are contrasted with the truth and sincerity to which Ivan Il'ich turns shortly before his death. Closely connected with this pair are the qualities of playfulness and seriousness. Falsity and hypocrisy find their

corresponding level in stereotyped expressions, in playing roles.⁵

This tendency also affects the portrayal of the characters as well as the shallow and superficial philosophies of life. Playfulness as an external phenomenon is related to the search for delight, orderliness and pleasure; easy, convenient and conflictless life is in turn opposed to suffering and pain. Apart from these concepts, love and hate feature prominently in the relationship between the protagonist and his wife. One of the major changes in Ivan Il'ich's life affects his position as a powerful judge exercising authority. The more his illness progresses, the more he realizes his status as a powerless and helpless human being and object of medical care.

The major turning point in this story co-incides with a change from a state of health to a state of illness, from power to powerlessness. The inevitability of the main protagonist's death hints at another important opposition: the world of trivial details vs. the world of serious existential questions. The protagonist as well as the majority of the characters exclude the latter from their lives. A possible solution to the existential dilemma of human mortality lies in a specific concept of selfless love, manifested in the behaviour of his son and his servant Gerasim. Their ability to express

⁵The aspects of theatricality and the construction of space are dealt with by Andrew Donskov in his article "A Note on Tolstoj, Sarah Bernhardt and The Death of Ivan Il'ič," Studia Phraseologica Et Alia. Festschrift für Josip Matešić zum 65. Geburtstag. Wolfgang Eismann, and Jürgen Petermann, eds. (Munich: O. Sagner, 1992) 67-79.

compassion and to mourn contrasts with the hatred and indifference expressed by other characters, including Ivan Il'ich himself. His contrived set of professional modes of communication with those subject to his judgement and even with members of his own family reduces Ivan Il'ich, as it were, to a well-functioning robot, excluding any trace of humanitarianism in dealing with people. The high number of semantic fields in this narrative contribute to a high degree of interconnectedness of their elements and to the complexity of their arrangement.

The presentation of physical death in this narrative can best be characterized by the movement from one pole (denial and avoidance) to the other (acceptance). The chronology of events, however, goes against the direction of this movement.⁶ Smert' Ivana Il'icha starts in *in ultimas res*, that is, the narrative begins with the actual 'outcome' anticipating the ending and thus contributing to its anti-climactic composition. Following this specific beginning, the narrator begins the main character's autobiography almost *ab ovo*, that is from the very beginning of his life.

The title of the narrative introduces the reader to the dominant theme and proves reliable — the reader is not misled with regard to the main character and the outcome of the story. The second reference to the motif of death is an interspersed 'text within a text' — an 'independent', discrete

⁶Tolstoy employs this device of reversal in other narratives, e.g., in Khadzhi-Murat.

portion of a text — an obituary notice notifying the members of the court (Ivan Il'ich's colleagues) about his death. The clarity of the title manifests itself in the explicit reference in the newspaper announcement informing its readers (as well as the readers of this narrative) about the main event of this work.

The first chapter of the narrative consists of two scenes: one of them in the courthouse, the other in Ivan Il'ich's apartment. The very first reactions of Ivan Il'ich's colleagues to the death of another human being manifest their dishonesty, hypocrisy and indifference. These traits, which the narrator unmasks throughout the story, are contrasted to the brutal honesty, at times paired with irony, on the part of the omniscient narrator. He skilfully juxtaposes the selfish and hypocritical talk and acting of the secondary characters to his own honest *Weltanschauung*. All the narratorial comments prove the reliability of their author as well as the moral weakness of the majority of characters.

In the first chapter, the dead protagonist is presented as a passive object to be observed, fulfilling the function of a kind of *memento mori*. The main contrast which can be deduced from the survivors' behaviour is that of the death of another person vs. their own deaths, which appear remote in space and time, or even non-existent. The confrontation with a corpse and the corresponding association with one's own death is only a short-lived one and is almost completely suppressed by the 'practical' consequences resulting from the death in question. The logical construction of a story pre-supposes a

transformation, a metamorphosis from an initial stage to another stage, from vitality to mortality, effected through an event preceded by a process. Note the radical change in this story — a reversal of the plot's chronology from a post-mortem to a pre-mortem perspective — associated with the demise of Ivan Il'ich.

The obituary announcement contains death-related lexemes typical of mourning ceremonies. The announcement is placed in the professional sphere, where it functions as a decoding device, a technique to unmask the real relationship between Ivan Il'ich and his colleagues, whose reactions to his death do not include any compassion or emotion; on the contrary, they anticipate the tragic event and hope for personal advantages in their careers resulting from it. Some of them find ready excuses not to attend the funeral, thus avoiding any confrontation with death, although they try very hard to reduce the significance of this fact by giving priorities to other less depressing activities of life, e.g., gambling.

This area of human activity affects almost all of Ivan Il'ich's colleagues, especially Petr Ivanovich and Shvarts. They appear to be the only ones present at the funeral. Shvarts manages to leave this scene as soon as possible, inviting Petr Ivanovich to join him in a game of cards. The exposition of the theme of death also consists of the conventional environment typical of funerals: the body of the deceased, characters such as the priest, the bereaved, their friends and acquaintances all engaged in predictable and traditional modes of behaviour:

mourning, praying, bowing and talking about financial matters. The corresponding world of symbolic objects is present as well (the black clothing, the lid of the coffin).

The narrator accompanies Petr Ivanovich as he enters and walks through Ivan Il'ich's apartment. Petr Ivanovich assumes the role of an observer as he is confronted with the corpse, although he cannot avoid a conversation with Ivan Il'ich's widow. This conversation again reveals the superficiality of professional relationships — shown especially in Petr Ivanovich's role-playing — proving the selfishness and dishonesty of the characters participating in this scene.

The state of transition from being to non-being is graphically exemplified by the description of the body. The corpse of an individual still resembles a human being (in this case the former Ivan Il'ich) and is at the same time a lifeless object. Semantically, this technique can be described as a merger of two different semantic fields. In describing the body, the narrator largely uses generalizing, stereotypical statements in presenting Petr Ivanovich's impressions:

Мертвец лежал, как всегда лежат мертвецы, особенно тяжело, по-мертвецки, ... с навсегда согнувшеюся головой на подушке, и выставлял, как всегда выставляют мертвецы.[...] но как у всех мертвецов, лицо его было красивое, главное... [26:64].

The element of the stereotypical as a constituent in funeral scenes can be found also in the servant Gerasim's comment on Ivan Il'ich's impending death: "Божья воля. Все

там будем, – сказал Герасим" [26, 68]. In describing Ivan Il'ich's outward appearance, the narrator tries to evoke, as it were, certain impressions through non-verbal communication, reading into the dead man's face moral judgements, an assessment of life, and an ineffective reminder to the living, the *memento mori* motif:

На лице его было выражение того, что то, что нужно было сделать, сделано; и сделано правильно. Кроме того, в этом выражении был еще упрек или напоминание живым. [26:64].

The conversation between Petr Ivanych and Ivan Il'ich's wife is dominated by decorum. She behaves as one may expect a widow to behave: weeping and lamenting. As she describes her husband's suffering and death, Petr Ivanovich is strongly reminded of his own mortality and repeatedly experiences the fear of death. Although the idea of the potentiality of his own death (26:67) — of his own mortality — comes to his mind, Petr Ivanovich immediately starts suppressing this thought. Then, the subject of the conversation between them centres around financial matters connected with the demise of Ivan Il'ich.

The stereotypical image of the funeral ceremony is summarized as follows: "Началась панихида, – свечи, стоны, ладан, слезы, всхлипывания" [26:68], thus offering visual, acoustic and olfactory impressions. The overall impression of this 'introductory' chapter is that of the prevalence of numerous trivial and superficial details which overshadow and suppress the cardinal philosophical questions associated with

mortality. The disparity between appearance and reality manifested through the characters' comments and their physical actions stands in sharp contrast to the truthful and reliable perspective of the omniscient narrator.

The implementation of the motifs of death, and their embedding into different semantic fields is brought about through the stylistic principles of **clarity** and **simplicity**. This chapter already manifests a tendency to 'detailization' of the trivial. The chronological ordering of the events is occasionally interrupted by the few recollections on the part of Petr Ivanovich and the widow. The placement of the mostly verbal actions in closed spaces contributes to a rather static, lifeless and depressive atmosphere. The arrangement of the motifs of death and dying shows a high concentration and cohesion in the first chapter. The density of motifs increases from Chapter IV and continues to the death-bed scene in the last chapter. The second and third chapters of the narrative concentrate on the depiction of Ivan Il'ich's childhood, his education, the beginning and advancement of his career, as well as on the description of further important turning points in the protagonist's private life, emphasizing important changes brought about by his marriage and his moves to different places in Russia.

Focusing in detail on the main character's internal life, the narrator devotes considerable space to external objects which attest Ivan Il'ich's status within society. His main aim is not only to succeed in his professional life but also to

integrate smoothly into society. He tries to achieve his objectives by avoiding conflicts. As a young man, Ivan Il'ich had received a gift, a medal, whose Latin inscription — '*respice finem = previd' konets.'* [26:64] — designates another *memento-mori* motif. Ivan Il'ich excludes and suppresses this significant philosophical message from his past.

Another concise motif of death, this one from Ivan Il'ich's marital life, is the reference to the deaths of his three children: "...умерло двое детей..." [26:75], and "...еще один ребенок умер,..." [26:76]. No further explanation of these tragic events is provided, either by the narrator or by the characters; thus the narrator omits Ivan Il'ich's possible and probable confrontation with the tragic. In Chapter III, which centres around his professional and marital crises — these are resolved in favour of the main character — the first symptom of his incurable disease occurs. While he is decorating his apartment, Ivan Il'ich falls from a ladder and hurts himself. As he refers to this accident later, he mentions to his wife: "— Я не даром гимнаст. Другой бы убился, а я чуть ударился вот тут; когда тронешь — больно, но уже проходит; просто синяк." [26:80] His allusion to the possibility of violent death is not as important as the reference to pain, which will be increasingly used as a motif in the subsequent chapters.

In Chapter IV, the narrator focuses on the semantic fields of health vs. illness. At the beginning of the chapter the narrator varies and specifies the symptoms of the illness. The

effects of the change on Ivan Il'ich's condition are explicitly pointed out:

Но случилось, что неловкость эта стала увеличиваться и переходить не в боль еще, но в сознание тяжести постоянной в боку и в дурное расположение духа. [26:82]

The deviation from health results also in a deviation from Ivan Il'ich's way of life — from his former lightness and carefree enjoyment of living. At the same time, his relationship with his wife starts to deteriorate again, whereupon the narrator notes her wish for her husband's death: "Она стала желать, чтоб он умер, но не могла этого желать, потому что тогда не было бы жалованья" [26:83] — a thought which she quickly abandons.

On his wife's advice Ivan Il'ich consults a physician. This is only his first attempt to learn more about his condition, especially about the real nature of his illness. The physicians, however, avoid telling the patient the truth, referring instead to the details involved and exhibiting attitudes of avoidance, denial, and hypocrisy. Their evasive diagnoses and answers contribute to the patient's insecurity and uncertainty, and to an increasingly depressing mood. The disparity between the patient's quest for knowledge (finding out about the real nature and the seriousness of his disease) and the physicians' evasiveness becomes evident in the reference to cardinal questions such as: "Для Ивана Ильича был важен только один вопрос: опасно ли его положение, или нет?" [26:84].

When listening to the physicians' 'judgements' — his usual position of exercising power over people is reversed — the prosecutor Ivan Il'ich experiences a sense of powerlessness and dependency along with a feeling of indifference towards his predicament. As soon as he accepts the inevitability of his impending death, Ivan Il'ich starts to judge himself.

As this state of uncertainty combined with chronic pain continues, Ivan Il'ich places his hope in medicine. In describing the patient's worsening condition, the narrator employs words taken from the 'thanatological' and 'jurisdictional' lexicon as he introduces the motif of violent death: "И он злился на несчастье или на людей, делавших ему неприятности и *убивающих*⁷ его, и чувствовал, как эта злоба *убивает* его", [26:88] as well as one of its variants, the motif of **poisoning**:

... и Иван Ильич остается один с сознанием того, что его жизнь отравлена для него и отравляет жизнь других, и что отравляющая эта не ослабляет, и все больше и больше проникает всё существо его. [26:88].

Thus death interferes decisively in his life, and this time both the 'victim' and the 'victimizer', on a metaphorical level, is Ivan Il'ich himself. He becomes aware of a dramatic change in his physical condition:

Нельзя было себя обманывать: что-то страшное, новое и такое значительное, чего значительнее никогда в

⁷Tolstoy again uses italics to emphasize the agents of actions.

жизни не было с Иваном Ильичем, совершалось в нем.

[26:87]

This is only the first of several explicit negative references to a significant change, to his approaching death.

In Chapter IV, the semantic fields of health vs. illness and their corresponding elements (physical sensations, symptoms, and physicians' diagnoses) continue to dominate in emphasis over the cardinal questions of life and death. The dramatic change from a powerful to a more or less powerless person, along with the gradual acceptance of the permanency of illness, foreshadows the tragic outcome of this story.

In Chapter V Ivan Il'ich begins his open confrontation with death. His brother-in-law comments to Ivan Il'ich's wife on his deteriorating condition; he is the first person to refer openly and graphically to the patient's inevitable fate, i.e., to pronounce a death-sentence, which Ivan Il'ich happens to overhear: "— Как преувеличиваю? Тебе не видно — он мертвый человек, посмотри на глаза. Нет света. Да что у него?" [26:89]. In referring to Ivan Il'ich's eyes, his brother-in-law points out the lack of 'light'. This quality is part of the colour imagery of light vs. dark as the dominant symbolic opposition of this narrative.

In this chapter, the patient, in contrasting and evaluating the symptoms and the fatal consequences of his illness, comes to the following epistemological and existential conclusions:

Не в слепой кишке, не в почке дело, а в жизни и...

смерти. Да жизнь была и вот уходит, уходит, и я не

могу удержать ее. [...] Разве не очевидно всем, что я умираю, и вопрос только в числе недель, дней— ..." [26, 91].

The hopelessness of his state forces Ivan Il'ich to meditate about his own death, the mortality of his relatives and human mortality in general, as well as the 'universality' and inescapability of the fear of death. In expressing the inexpressible, the basically unknowable, he uses metaphors of darkness and 'approaching the abyss'. In depicting the role of the details such as the symptoms of the illness, the narrator shows Ivan Il'ich arriving at the fundamental questions of life and death.

Chapter VI introduces the coping mechanisms of denial and acceptance. Ivan Il'ich tries to approach his problem from a logical and philosophical perspective, questioning the fundamental truth of human mortality in general. In excluding the possibility and likelihood of his own death, he accepts the general fact of mortality. The patient becomes gradually aware of his former tendency to suppress and deny the tragic aspects of life:

Но – странное дело – всё то, что прежде заслоняло, скрывало, уничтоживало сознание смерти, теперь уже не могло производить этого действия. [26:93]

This change of mind leads to a new assessment of life, especially the unmasking of theatricality, decorum, orderliness, hypocrisy, and lies. These particularly behavioural traits constitute a specific system of values of a

shallow and hollow world associated with his former understanding of reality; they still continued to be valid for his relatives, colleagues, and physicians even after his death.⁸

In trying to avoid ever-present illness, Ivan Il'ich is reminded of his predicament by his recurrent pain. At work he experiences this pain again, comparing it to a sucking creature:

Но вдруг в середине боль в боку [...], начинала *свое* сосущее дело. Иван Ильич прислушивался, отгонял мысль о ней, но она продолжала свое, и *она* приходила и становилась прямо перед ним и смотрела на него, и он столбенел, огонь тух в глазах, и он начинал опять спрашивать себя: неужели только *она* правда? [26: 94].⁹

The apparent association of pain and illness as well as the identical feminine grammatical gender of the Russian words *bol'* (pain), *bolezn'* (illness) and *smert'* (death), enable the author-narrator to create a certain semantic ambivalence. The inimical personification of these phenomena is obvious. Thus, the narrator transforms abstract inanimate concepts into animate creatures. In contrasting his denial with the imminent reality, Ivan Il'ich comes to realize the absurdity of his situation.

⁸In the pertinent scholarship, literary critics disagree on the question whether Tolstoy explained Ivan Il'ich's 'conversion' plausibly or not; as for the latter standpoint, David Shepherd discusses this aspect in his article "Conversion, Reversion and Subversion in Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Il'ich"," The Slavonic and East European Review 71 (1993): 401-16.

⁹Tolstoy here employs the device of pain personified; the personal pronouns in italics avoid the direct naming of pain; a similar device is used in Andrei Bolkonskii's confrontation with death in Voyna i mir.

Chapter VII, which shows the length of the main character's illness — three months — focuses on the dialectics of truth, truthfulness and sincerity vs. lies, theatricality and hypocrisy. As Ivan Il'ich begins siding with the former, he gains a supporter of his cause in the character of the servant Gerasim; in Chapter VIII his son also appears to be on his side. Gerasim's vitality and youthfulness stand in sharp contrast to Ivan Il'ich's deteriorating health. As time passes, he starts to resent the lies and their bearers which surround him every day. This realization becomes obvious in the depiction of the physician's visit in Chapter VIII, especially through the latter's judgements, which demonstrate this disparity even more distinctly. This chapter closes, as it opens, with a segmentation of time: Ivan Il'ich is to live only a few more days [26:99].

In Chapter VIII, Ivan Il'ich is again tired of the same prognoses made by the two physicians. He realizes the inevitability of his impending death, which along with the futile medical assistance, appears ridiculous and inappropriate from his perspective. The physicians' theatricality finds its opposite number in the first 'farewell-scene' with the members of his family and his daughter's fiancé. The semantic field **hypocrisy** is concretized through an explicit reference to a play, to artistic activity, forming a connection between the theatre and immorality. This becomes obvious in the phrase 'aesthetic enjoyment' (*esteticheskoe naslazhdenie*).

In Chapter IX the main character refers to God for the first time and emphasizes the irrationality of suffering: "Он плакал о беспомощности своей, о своем ужасном одиночестве, о жестокости людей, о жестокости Бога, об отсутствии Бога" [26, 105]. The 'interior' dialogue between Ivan Il'ich and his 'voice of the soul' reveals the basic meaning of his life up to the time of his illness: he assesses his life in retrospect, confesses and underlines the aspect of convenience as the guiding principle of his life. Evaluating his childhood positively, Ivan Il'ich defines his marriage as the significant turning point of his life, as marking a change for the worse. In approaching the final moments of his life, Ivan Il'ich questions his philosophy of life, introducing the concept of guilt. Conscience, apparently, had not played any role in his past life. Again, his doubts lead him to the conclusion that life itself, as well as questions of guilt, is absurd, inexplicable and invalid in his situation. He also disapproves of any concepts which could make life meaningful.

In Chapter X Ivan Il'ich invokes scientific, geometrical and physical images to express the inevitability of his approaching death and the rapid vanishing of life:

Одна точка светлая там, назади, в начале жизни, а потом всё быстрее и быстрее. Обратно пропорционально квадратам расстояния от смерти, подумал Иван Ильич. И этот образ камня летающего вниз с увеличивающейся быстротой, запал ему в душу. [26:109]

Here movement through time is transferred to movement through space.

In Chapter XI the main character finally decides to do away with falsehood and hypocrisy as he talks to his wife and his physician. The faster the hour of his death approaches, the more Ivan Il'ich realizes his life has been a failure. Again, he re-iterates the basic truth which he discovered while facing the inevitable: "Всё то, чем ты жил и живешь, – есть ложь, обман, скрывающий от тебя жизнь и смерть." [26:111]

In the twelfth and final chapter Ivan Il'ich fights imminent death in a 'black sack', expecting his 'execution': "Он бился, как бьется в руках палача приговоренный к смерти, зная, что он не может спастись" [26:112]. In describing the final moments of his life, the narrator exploits this situation to dramatize and focus on the various characters' emotions, complementing them with the non-verbal behaviour of Ivan Il'ich's son: he kisses his father's hand. In depicting the duration of time, the narrator also uses the device of **summary** to compress events of the final three days while 'stretching' the final few seconds of the main character's life.

The presentation of death in this narrative can be divided into a post-mortem (Chapter I) and a pre-mortem phase. Such a division contradicts the chronological succession of events. Despite the somewhat restrictive title, the all-knowing narrator covers the life as well as death of the main character, focusing on details (especially on the world of inanimate objects) and external aspects such as clothing,

outward physical experience, and non-verbal communication. This world stands in sharp contrast to a great number of abstract attitudes, concepts, judgements, philosophies of life, virtues and vices, and stereotypical modes of behaviour. The dialectic structure of the whole narrative contains a set of explicit and implicit oppositions, which in turn form a hierarchy.

The top of this hierarchy is dominated by the life vs. death and appearance vs. reality dichotomies. As for the fundamental modes of death, the author includes both violent death on a metaphorical level and natural, premature death on a concrete level: Ivan Il'ich and three of his children die prematurely. He also distinguishes between ethical-philosophical aspects and psychological-emotional coping mechanisms. As events progress, the author reveals two basic attitudes to life which can be derived from the protagonist's attitude to death: (a) the selection of the pleasant aspects of life materialized through the pleasure principle, which denies death and is opposed to (b) the acceptance of all phenomena of life, including death. These basic concepts are connected with a series of corresponding concepts and modes of behaviour. Ivan Il'ich after the conversion, his son, and his servant Gerasim, represent the concept of acceptance, whereas all the other characters side with denial. As for the basic turning point of the story, the onset of the illness and the realization of its fatal nature in particular, divide the life of Ivan Il'ich into the worlds of 'ignorance' and the world of 'existential

knowledge'. The awareness of his imminent death forces the main character into a painful but profitable learning process.

The transition from a man of authority and power in his professional life to a powerless creature during his illness in his private life demonstrates the instability and unpredictability of human life as contrasted with the certainty of death. By restricting himself to a specific semantic field through the title, the author-narrator directs the reader to a specific set of typical characters and their predictable activities.

The presentation of death in this novella includes the depiction of the characters' attitudes towards death, which are in turn connected to their views and concepts of life. Tolstoy balances the themes of health, illness and the process of dying; he presents the moment of death, the transformation from life to death, in a concise manner. The main character overcomes the fear of death and death itself as long as he is alive. His death is real as long he is alive, but shortly before his demise, death loses its significance.

Tolstoy's late narrative "Khoziain i rabotnik" (Master and Man) depicts a tragic and unfinished night-time winter journey. The motif of **travelling**¹⁰ is one of the common motifs in Russian literature — cf. Tolstoy's own short stories "Metel", "Zapiski sumasshedshego",¹¹ the travelogues of Old

¹⁰Daemmrich and Daemmrich, 155-58.

¹¹The first short story is treated in Chapter I of this work, the second in this chapter.

Russian literature such as the fifteenth-century account of Afanasii Nikitin's travels: Khozhdenie Afanasiia Nikitina za tri moria (Journey Beyond the Three Seas, 1475), the works of the eighteenth-century writers Karamzin (1766 -1826) and Radishchev (1749 -1802), as well as Pushkin's poems "Zimnii vecher" (Winter Evening, 1825) and "Besy" (The Demons, 1830); in these poems the author alludes to a snowstorm and to travelling in a snowstorm respectively; one of the minor characters of this narrative, Petrushka, quotes from the first poem.

In literary works writers may describe either short trips or long and eventful journeys. In describing movement through space, narrators often combine characters' perception of 'external' facts (the narrated world: inanimate objects, animate creatures and phenomena) with 'internal' responses and impressions, along with emotional reactions and intellectual or spiritual reflections associated with them. The perception of objects and events in the fictitious reality of the present is associated with incidents or experiences of their past life or endowed with some meaning for their future life. They also function as anticipations, such as bad omens or fatal predictions.

Works of literature presenting the theme or motifs of travelling can be divided into two main groups: (a) safe movement through space: the traveller does not experience any danger or adventure; (b) movement fraught with unforeseeable

incidents, such as accidents, robberies or murders, where the narrator explores phenomena of predictability vs. unpredictability. Unpredictable incidents are caused either by human beings, or, depending on historical circumstances (such as the mode of transportation used or the condition of roads), by hostile (inimical) forces of Nature (e.g., freezing, flooding, drowning, or attacks by animals). Writers utilize the element of indefiniteness, combining the element of the unpredictable with the motif of adventure. Often the motif of travelling furnishes not only the opportunity for 'external' discoveries, but also co-incides with gaining experience and knowledge.

Integrating death into literary works depicting journeys means the introduction of life-threatening situations on journeys, in which narrators portray either characters' survival or their 'natural' or violent death. In "Khoziain i rabotnik" relentless and inimical Nature challenges and destroys the life of one of the main characters, the merchant Vasilii Andreevich Brekhunov, already characterized through the negative connotation of his telling name. Nature also affects the health of his servant Nikita. Man's confrontation with Nature in this work is however brought about by Brekhunov's selfish decision to travel and his reluctance to accept an offer of hospitality and stay overnight at a peasant's house in the village of Grishkino.

The ten chapters of the narrative describe the stages and the turning point of a business trip. It starts with Brekhunov's fatal decision to undertake a journey to a neighbouring village

to buy a grove and the subsequent departure. After leaving the village of *Kresty* (Crosses) and travelling for a short period of time, Brekhunov and his servant Nikita lose their way in the snowstorm for the first time. By co-incidence¹² they arrive at the village of Grishkino. They pass by this village only to return to it after they lose their way one more time. Here they are offered hospitality and the chance to stay overnight, which Brekhunov declines.

The master and man set out, continuing their night-time travel. They repeatedly lose their way, and their attempts to find the right way fail again and again. By and by they are forced to make a halt in the open. Leaving the passive Nikita, the master searches for the right way only to encounter another dangerous situation: he finds himself in a snowdrift.¹³ Returning to the place where Nikita awaits his fate, he too is forced into passivity. He covers Nikita with his body, thus sacrificing his life and saving Nikita's. The next morning some peasants find Brekhunov and his horse dead, but proceed to dig up Nikita, who is alive. The narrator concludes this work by describing Nikita's own death some twenty years after this tragic incident.

¹²The factor of co-incidence repeatedly interferes in the plot; cf. the travelling in circles — leaving and returning to the same spot.

¹³The snowdrift shows a similarity to the images of graves and to the potentiality of being buried alive; apart from this geological formation, the narrator uses other images associated with danger such as desert, wilderness (*pustynia*) and precipice, abyss (*propast'*); cf also the partial similarity of the Russian lexemes *groby* (graves) and *sugroby* (snowdrifts).

Apart from the concrete level of movement through space¹⁴ and the characters' physical activities, the narrator incorporates the level of internal activities, describing their emotional reactions, the workings of their consciousness — such as visions, recollections, dreams, as well as philosophical reflections evident in the assessments of both characters' lives: Brekhunov's change in character is compared with the constant philosophy of Nikita's life.

The motif of death is introduced and anticipated indirectly through the motif of freezing and frozen clothes, then freezing as applied to human beings. As the plot progresses, the narrator refers directly to the potential death of the main characters, then focuses on the master's denial and Nikita's acceptance (as part of his fatalistic attitude). Using these two basic modalities, the narrator employs the potentiality for Nikita's survival and the materialization of Brekhunov's death.

After introducing the main characters through contrasting their social status — an inequality based on material wealth as well as their diametrically opposed philosophies — and establishing the setting as well as the atmosphere, the narrator notes Brekhunov's decision to leave his home village. In the first chapter of the narrative, the author deals with a limited set of non-functioning

¹⁴The linear progression of time as a constituent of the plot is opposed to the cyclical concept of time which manifests itself in the state of the dream; here visions of present and past merge; cf. the master's and Nikita's dreams.

relationships existing between the main characters and their wives; in this context, the narrator introduces the motif of marital crisis along with another motif: Nikita's friendly attitude towards animals. Having lost their way in the snowstorm for the first time, the travellers pass through the village of Grishkino; here the narrator employs co-incidence as a recurrent structural element. They happen to notice frozen clothes hanging on a line:

У крайнего двора на веревке отчаянно трепалось от ветра развешенное замерзшее белье: рубахи, одна красная, друга белая, портки, онучи и юбка. Белая рубаха особенно рвалась, махая своими руками. [29: 14]

The personification of clothes, the adverb *otchaianno* and the verbs *rvat'sia* and *makhat'*, as well as the unusual 'de-familiarized' movements of the sleeves, evoke the impression of *ostranenie* (i.e., an estrangement or alienation effect). The adverb and verbs in question may imply a confrontation, a fight against death, against an invisible but powerful enemy. The narrator takes up this image of frozen clothes as master and man pass by them several times¹⁵ — they serve the function of a de-familiarized *memento mori*. Nikita reacts to this sight with a combination of sarcasm and black humour: "— Вишь, баба ленивая, а либо умираетъ, — белье к празднику не

¹⁵The travellers pass the hanging clothes four times: see pp. 15, 17, and 24; cf. the role of co-incidence.

собрала..." [29:14]. This is the first direct reference to death or dying by one of the main characters.

At one point while searching for the right way, Nikita asks his master whether he is still alive: "— Андреич жив? — крикнул он. — Здесь! — откликнулся Василий Андреич. — Ну, что?" [29:27]. This reference can be seen as an indirect anticipation of the outcome. When both of them realize they are completely lost, they decide to stay in the open. In a short dialogue between the travellers Brekhunov hints at the obvious danger, the most probable mode of death, namely freezing: "— А не замерзнем мы? — сказал Василий Андреевич. — Что ж? И замерзнешь — не откажешься, — сказал Никита." [29:29]

The narrator then shifts to the presentation of Brekhunov's thoughts: he re-assesses his life through the use of enumeration, especially as applied to items of wealth [29:31]: the master points out his assets and neglects his failures. The danger of freezing to death comes to his mind when he comments on Nikita's clothes, at this point showing pity and a sense of responsibility: "Не замерз бы мужик; плоха одежонка на нем. Еще ответишь за него" [29:33]. Reflecting on this mode of death — that is, someone else's death — Brekhunov contrasts the two possible outcomes: survival and death:

Так-то дядюшка раз всю ночь в снегу просидел, — вспомнил он, — и ничего. Ну а Севастьяна-то откопали, — тут же представился ему другой случай,

– так тот помер, заоченел весь, как туша
мороженная. [29:33]

In the last chapter the narrator uses the same comparison as he describes Brekhunov's corpse, comparing dead animals and dead human beings.

The narrator shows Brekhunov approach the potentiality of death by decreasing the probability of his survival; Brekhunov assumes the worst possible outcome, cf. his remark on drinking and freezing to death: "— Говорят, пьяные-то замерзают, подумал он, – А я выпил." [29:35] This turns out to be a truthful prediction in the end. However, he denies death vehemently:

«... Что лежать-то, смерти дожидаться! Сесть верхом – да и марш», – вдруг пришло ему в голову. «Верхом лошадь не станет. – Ему, – подумал он на Никиту, – все равно умирать. Какая его жизнь! Ему и жизни не жалко, а мне, слава Богу, есть чем пожить... » [29, 35].

Chapter VII of the narrative deals with Nikita's attitude towards his presumed imminent death. As indicated in the passage just quoted, his attitude is marked by indifference; like his master, he also re-assesses his life, pointing out his sins and vices [29:36-37]. His thoughts also turn to his 'main master' (*glavnyi khoziain*) — i.e., God, and as the frost intensifies initiates a dialogue with Him. Blurring the boundary between consciousness and the perception of reality, this chapter concludes with Nikita's acceptance of death:

"Умирал он или засыпал – он не знал, но чувствовал себя одинаково готовым на то и на другое" [29:37].

Using the device of **contrast**, the narrator shows Brekhunov starting his own dialogue with God in Chapter VIII. Before addressing Saint Nicholas — the patron of travellers and merchants — and praying to God, he tries for one last time to deny his impending fate — the possibility that he might freeze to death. He leaves Nikita to look for the right way to his destination but loses his orientation and returns by coincidence to the same spot. During his flight, his fear of death increases as he realizes that he must have walked around in a circle, but decreases upon finding his servant at the same spot.

The decisive turning point — the master's act of sacrifice — corresponds to a change in his philosophy, starting with his expression of pity towards Nikita, and concluding with his final re-assessment of his life. Witness his last dialogue with Nikita:

– Чего ты? – спросил он. – Чего говоришь?

– Поми-ми-мираю я, вот что, с трудом, прерывистым голосом выговорил Никита. – Зажитое малому отдай али бабе, всё равно.

-- А что ж, аль зазяб? – спросил Василий Андреевич.

– Чую, смерть моя... прости, Христа ради.... сказал Никита плачущим голосом, ... [29:41].

This dialogue along with Nikita's willingness to give away his possessions and to ask for forgiveness, deeply affects

Brekhunov;¹⁶ his attitude towards Nikita, which began as that of a superior master, shifts gradually towards sympathy and a sense of responsibility, culminating in brotherly love [29:42-43]. Brekhunov finally overcomes his fear and awaits his fate with equanimity. The passage from life to death is a transition from mental dynamics to physical impotency. The process of dying manifests itself in the gradual dysfunction of his limbs. The workings of his consciousness contain impressions of the present combined with his recollection of the past which merge into nothingness:

... ПОТОМ ВСЁ ЭТО СМЕШАЛОСЬ, ОДНО ВОШЛО В ДРУГОЕ, И, КАК ЦВЕТА РАДУГИ, СОЕДИНЯЮЩИЕСЯ В ОДИН БЕЛЫЙ ЦВЕТ, ВСЕ РАЗНЫЕ ВПЕЧАТЛЕНИЯ СОШЛИСЬ В ОДНО НИЧТО, И ОН ЗАСНУЛ. [29, 43]

His death is described as a gradual and slow process, which starts with the inability to perform bodily functions: "но руки не поднимаются" [29:43] and culminates in the discontinuation of the ability to perceive: "И больше уже ничего не видел и не слышал и не чувствовал в этом мире Василий Андреевич" [29:44]. This is a common indicator, a concise statement about the transition from life to death that can be found in other Tolstoyan works as well.

The approach towards his own death is segmented through different stages of consciousness: at first Brekhunov is awake, then he envisions his growing inability to function

¹⁶Philippe Aries, in his work The Hour of Our Death (New York: Vintage Books, 1981) introduced the term of 'tame' death for this ritual.

properly: he almost turns into stone. He welcomes death, knowing that Nikita continues to live. The awareness of certain and imminent death precedes its actual moment in time. Thus, the narrator extends death into life. Death comes as a liberator. The epistemological climax of this narrative co-incides with his realization, with the fact of gaining knowledge. Brekhunov becomes aware of this additional insight from the perspective of a different 'person', from a post-mortem stage: his split consciousness differentiates between the living and the death-transgressing Brekhunov:

Что ж, ведь он не знал, в чем дело, – думает про
Василья Брехунова. – Не знал, так теперь знаю.
Теперь уж без ошибки. *Теперь знаю.* [29:44]

The transition from Brekhunov's life to death is divided into several phases: in the first stage, he is aware of the workings of his consciousness and its cohesive functioning before recollections, visions and impressions of the present reality merge; this stage is then superseded by sleep and a dream. On a biological level, Brekhunov notices in a dream his physical decline; at the same time he unconsciously continues to 'realize' his situation [29:44]: although he knows his death is imminent, he gains the ultimate insight about his life and contemplates re-birth: through his sacrifice he saves Nikita's life and prolongs his own life as well.

As elsewhere in his works, Tolstoy uses the device of **contrast** combined with **paradox** as a device for characterization. As in Sevastopol' v mae, the person who

accepts his potential death and dies long before these phenomena confront him survives, whereas the person who denies and fights death succumbs to it. At first, Nikita also perceives reality as a state of the after-life as he continues his dialogue with God. He awakens from his dream to realize that three of his fingers are frozen.

Nikita's experience with this tragic situation starts with the premonition of his imminent death. The stage of sleep is also accompanied by a dream in which he perceives a violent death, namely being buried by the cart. Upon regaining consciousness, he realizes that he has not been buried by the cart; it was Brekhunov's body which he interpreted as a cart. Here the author re-employs the technique of association and transformation, the replacement of objects. In a sub-conscious state he becomes aware of horse's agony and assumes that his master has died [29:45]. The narrator concludes this incident with Nikita's rude awakening to reality and the description of the horse's death.

In this episode Tolstoy restricts himself to describing the aspect of transformation which affects Mukhortyi, the horse. The image of the horse is brutal — an animal turned into a statue of ice:

Мухортый по брюхо в снегу с сбившимися со спины шлеей и веретьем стоял весь белый, прижав мертвую голову к заостренному кадыку; ноздри обмерзли сосульками, глаза заиндевели и тоже обмерзли точно

слезами. Он исхудал в одну ночь так, что осталось на нем только кости да кожа. [29:45]

The narrator concludes this work with a rhetorical question in which he distinguishes between the presumed and the actual death of the servant, between the reality of this world and the potentiality of the after-life:

Лучше или хуже ему там, где он, после этой настоящей смерти, проснулся? разочаровался ли он, или нашел там то самое, что ожидал? – мы все скоро узнаем. [29:46]

In presenting death in this narrative Tolstoy builds up a network of oppositions associated with the fundamental modalities of death, the 'death' of inanimate objects vs. that of human beings and animals, the state of being awake vs. the absence of consciousness, as well as presumed and actual death. He uses the device of contrast to characterize the main characters; their attitudes towards life and death manifest themselves in acceptance and denial. He contrasts their perception of death as it extends into their lives, the dominating processes being **transformation** and **transition**.

The halt in the open not only symbolizes the final point of their trip, but also indicates the beginning of an intellectual process which in the end leads to the master's philosophical 'conversion'. As is often the case with Tolstoy, certain characters tend to contemplate their lives or re-evaluate their attitudes towards life only in life-threatening situations such as confrontation with death and dying. Thus one's own death or

witnessing the death of other characters functions as an epistemological catalyst, as a revelation of a character's fundamental views on life.

The central shift in the narrative comprises the transition from life to death. Tolstoy again declines clear-cut distinctions between life and death. The reader repeatedly encounters other significant shifts — e.g., between sleeping and awakening, perceiving the reality of a given present moment in time and perceiving a distant reality in a dream. Furthermore, temporary loss of consciousness is opposed to permanent loss of consciousness and perception, which equals death. In doing away with distinct boundaries of life and death, Tolstoy emphasizes the paradoxical modes of behaviour of the two main characters, i.e., the master's post-mortal extension of life and Nikita's pre-mortal extension of death.

“Khoziain i rabotnik” again combines the existential borderline situation death and the characters' philosophies of life. This story also centres around a common literary theme: the relationship of man and Nature. The ‘agent’, Nature, brings about the death of one of the main characters and his horse. “Khoziain i rabotnik” concludes with the natural death of the other main character, the servant-worker Nikita. Facing the inevitability of death, Brekhunov changes his attitude to life through witnessing his servant's equanimity as he accepts his (presumably) imminent death.

This narrative is constructed around the main thematic categories involving the relationship of man and Nature, and of

man and mortality. In presenting these categories, the author-narrator uses the devices of **repetition** and **parallelism** and, to a lesser degree, contrast. The underlying thematic structure is that of the **quest** — a motif exemplified by the movement of the main characters through space and time. On their journey, they are repeatedly challenged by their fate, manifested through the inimical forces of Nature. The 'adventurous' encounters between human beings and forces of Nature can be compared to a risky game in which the master and his servant gradually approach their tragic fate, all the while declining opportunities to avoid it.

In presenting the trivial story of a business trip, the narrator introduces and repeatedly uses significant motifs on at least two different levels. The motif of **freezing** is applied both to inanimate objects such as clothes and to human beings and the horse. On their journey this threesome loses their way repeatedly until they arrive at a 'point of no return.' They are obliged to spend the night in the open. Another pair of related activities is: **falling asleep** and **awakening**. The motif of awakening can also be considered as part of a presumed after-life as well.

Closely related to the contrast of sleeping and awakening is that of **temporary vs. permanent loss of consciousness**. As in many other narratives, Tolstoy's narrators oscillate between the main categories of **potentiality** and **materialization** of death. Presumed death is also opposed to real death when some characters assume

that they are dying or that they have awakened in the nether world. The omniscient narrator proves them wrong (cf. Nikita's assumptions).

As was the case in "Metel",¹⁷ Tolstoy uses the motif of the **dream** to transgress the boundaries of consciousness (losing and regaining it) and death. The perception of death is defined in terms of the discontinuation of the faculty of perception. The dream and hallucinations allow the narrator to build up a sphere from which Brekhunov awakens in another world,¹⁸ whereas Nikita upon regaining consciousness assumes he has arrived in the after-life.

"Zapiski sumasshedshego" (Diary of a Madman, 1912) is a short first-person narrative dealing with moral questions — existential questions in particular. In this work, which was published posthumously, Tolstoy presents a crisis affecting a young man and his attempts to cope with it. The narrator foregrounds the eternal problem of mortality, especially the fear of death and the dominance of natural death over violent death. The thematic opposition constituting this work centres around the illusion of immortality (or suppression of mortality) and the gradual realization of this condition. The title of the narrative alludes to other well-known works and to the

¹⁷Further similarities are the comparison of the snow-covered earth to a sea and a desert.

¹⁸Death as awakening functions in Prince Andrei's death as well.

specific *zapiski* genre of Russian literature, common to such major authors as Gogol', Turgenev, and Dostoevsky (1821-81).

Tolstoy's work deals on a philosophical level with man's realization of his limits of knowledge as evident in his confrontation with death. Throughout this narrative, the main character poses epistemological, ontological and metaphysical questions; he initiates dialogues with his self, with death personified, and with God. The main character's confrontation with the realization of his mortality proves to be the turning point of this work. Only death can answer the first-person narrator's question about the source of his fear, by proclaiming its own personified identity.

This work also reveals the main character's moral conversion. A non-believer, he lives a normal life until he discovers that it is has been dominated by a moral darkness. Then he begins a quest for eternal truths and after three traumatic *memento-mori* episodes reaches ethical and religious enlightenment. The process of his conversion to a believer is divided into three stages (cf. the technique of **gradation**) and connected to the three episodes in question: one of them is set in the provincial town of Arzamas, the second in Moscow — both are set in closed space — while the third, a hunting-scene, takes place in an open space. The motif of the **quest**, manifested through his journeys on a concrete level, corresponds to the search for knowledge on an abstract level.

Although the main character fails to rationalize the irrational, he remembers his dialogue with God: a prayer from his childhood. His willingness to begin a dialogue can be seen as the first step in overcoming his existential **crisis** — a crisis brought about through co-incidence by the realization of his own mortality. It is connected with a specific event: an overnight stay in a small hotel room. The presentation of death in this narrative focuses on human mortality, on the certainty of a future death; while natural death dominates, there are some references to violent death in a figurative sense. The levels of presentation combine the realistic level with the metaphorical and supernatural level, cf. the role of the voice of death.

"Zapiski sumasshedshego" are composed around three traumatic experiences; they are preceded by an introductory report on his childhood, in which the first-person narrator describes his mental condition. The narrator's childhood experiences — presented in a flashback — focus on the experience of fear on the one hand and on the problem of the unanswerability of questions connected with violence and suffering on the other. These aspects are exemplified in references to Christ's crucifixion. The latter's answer (prayer and forgiveness) [26:467] to his tormentors serves later on as a model for the narrator himself as he faces significant borderline situations.

The narrator's confrontations with the fear of death force him to lead a dialogue with his self. Here again, Tolstoy

introduces the motif of 'split personality' as he has the main character start a dialogue with death and with God. The first two of these confrontations lead to the narrator's insomnia during his journey to Arzamas and his 'traumatic' awakenings respectively. The protagonist stays for a night at a hotel in the town of Arzamas. When he awakens in the morning, he is confronted with an overwhelming fear of death for the first time in his life, and is not able to fall asleep again. Up to that point he has avoided meditating on mortality and related aspects. It is this awakening which introduces the two existential questions: "Зачем я еду?" and "Куда я еду?" as well as the narrator's vision about his imminent death:

Я задремал, но вдруг проснулся испуганный, оживленный – кажется, никогда не заснешь. «Зачем я еду? Куда я еду?» пришло мне вдруг в голову. Не то чтобы не нравилась мысль купить дешево имение, но вдруг представилось, что мне нужно ни за чем в эту даль ехать, что я умру тут в чужом месте. И мне стало жутко." [26:468].

The main character's question points at the fundamental problems associated with the meaning of life in general. He becomes aware of the meaninglessness of his life. The first two of the traumatic events can be read as the narrator's private borderline situations. Despite the fact that death 'awakens' him in a very drastic manner, he continues to mentally suppress its existence. All of the experiences are permeated with the motifs of **fear**, ***toska*** (melancholy) and

light. In using the imagery of light, Tolstoy combines the realistic and concrete physical level with the abstract philosophical level. The author presents the fear of death in closed spaces: the two small rooms in a small house in the vicinity of Arzamas in the first episode and the Moscow hotel room in the second are closely intertwined with the geometrical image of the **square**.¹⁹ The smallness and the whiteness of the rooms serve to intensify his fear. Apart from this image, the image of a **circle** manifests itself in the hunting scene, where the image of a **candle** is employed as well. The use of these images and motifs, as well as the use of the colours white and red, is not co-incidental and cannot be isolated from the overall context of the narrative. Both the square and the colours serve to shape and signify corresponding spaces, rooms and objects such as the curtains.

The motif of the **journey** — along with the related motifs of the quest and searching for the meaning of life and death — reveal and foreshadow in some passages the motif of **flight**.²⁰ Re-introducing the existential questions posed in the introductory first episode, the narrator tries to answer them, thereby revealing his dilemma:

Зачем я сюда заехал? Куда я везу себя? От чего, куда я убегаю? — Я убегаю от чего-то страшного и не могу

¹⁹Kathleen Parthé points out this geometrical image in her article "Death Masks in Tolstoy." *Slavic Review* 41 (1982): 297-305.

²⁰The motif of flight and subsequent death was characteristic of the end of Tolstoy's life as well.

убежать.[...] Я хочу заснуть, забыться и не могу. Не могу уйти от себя. [26:469]

Immediately following this reference to an indefinite phenomenon, the narrator describes and identifies it, comparing it almost to *death personified*; the dialogue between him and death personified is restricted to the acoustic channel:

Я вышел в коридор, думая выйти от того что мучило меня. Но оно вышло за мной и омрачало все. Мне так же, еще больше страшно было. «Да что это за глупость, – сказал я себе. – Чего я тоскую, чего боюсь.» – Меня, – неслышно отвечал голос смерти. [26:469]

The three traumatic experiences express an increasing fear of death: the narrator here uses the technique of gradation. The third traumatic experience in the hunting episode forms the climax and affects the narrator even more physically. He gets lost and begins to panic. Facing the tormenting pain caused by the thought of death in general, and of his imminent death in particular, the narrator turns to religion. In all three cases the narrator, remembering the experience of suffering in his childhood, applies the coping mechanism of prayer. But he does not start a critical dialogue with God, involving unsolvable questions.

In the second episode in Moscow, the narrator questions the existence of a God who does not answer for him the unanswerable questions about the meaning of mortality: "Why do people have to die?", nor the question about human

existence as such "Who am I?". Although his suffering and fear increase in the third episode, the narrator is able to cope with this situation better than with the two previous episodes. He does not panic nor does he accuse God.

The historical events of the early 1850s played an important part in the imperialist policy of Tsarist Russia. The South — the Caucasus in particular — attracted many Russian writers and served as a setting for many of their works. Russia's expansionist involvement on its southern border was a favourite source for many of Tolstoy's early military tales. In transforming this source into his literary works, Tolstoy juxtaposed Tsarist historiography (including official propaganda) with his own judgement of historical events. He also uses this artistic strategy in one of the outstanding narratives of his late period: the military tale Khadzhi-Murat (Khadzhi-Murat, 1912).

This narrative, a sub-genre of war literature, deals with historical events which affected the fate of peoples of the Caucasus region. In offering resistance, these nations were trying to withstand Russia's expansionism. Their **resistance** on a global political level is exemplified through the life of one of the leaders of the Tatars, the Chechen Khadzhi-Murat, the main character of this work. His tragic end is regarded as a major turning point in Russia's imperialist policy, since for most of his lifetime he was regarded as one of Russia's main enemies.

The striving for domination over the Caucasus not only involves Tsarist Russia fighting the peoples of this region, it goes hand in hand with the persistent struggle for supremacy among the Caucasus peoples themselves. Tolstoy's literary version of the depicted events closely follows historical documents. Deviating from a chronological progression of historical events, the author-narrator begins the plot employing the device of *in medias res*. These deviations are studied in an article by Peter Drews.²¹ After losing power to his mortal enemy Shamil', also a leader of a Caucasian tribe, the main character is forced to side with him in fighting the Russians. When Shamil' takes Khadzhi-Murat's family as hostages, the main character deserts his ally and rival and seeks an alliance with the Russians. After spending some time in Russian captivity, Khadzhi-Murat decides to flee and liberate his family. His attempt, however, fails, and he and his body-guards are killed by a superior enemy.

Apart from this simplified plot of the main events, A.D.P. Briggs points out a series of significant thematic issues on a philosophical level:

the relationship between civilised man and nature, the wonderful phenomenon of the force of life which animates all of us, the ordering of attitudes to inevitable death, the effect of religion upon mentality and behaviour, the proper

²¹Peter Drews, "Lev Tolstoj's "Chadzhi Murat" als historische Erzählung," Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie, 42 (1981): 97-115. He points out a number of discrepancies between the historical events of 1851 and 1852 and their literary transformation.

arrangement of moral standards, the universality of falsehood, the need for altruism, the all too easily suppressed instinct for brotherly love, the pleasant usefulness of family life, the propensity of those in government to misuse their power and become corrupt, the awful arbitrariness of the workings of nature and history, and, perhaps most obviously in this story, the ease with which men have recourse to violence, allowing it to become an enjoyable and honourable way of life and disregarding its many horrific consequences.²²

Some of these 'profound matters' belong to the standard repertoire of Tolstoyan themes and motifs, which can be inferred from the surface structure of the text from dominant semantic fields. Their number demonstrates the variety of underlying thematic aspects. Moreover, it proves the fact that these thematic aspects do not appear isolated in literary works; they are always interconnected. The dominant thematic opposition of this narrative is built around the concepts of aggression and resistance.

The dominant theme of this work is **violence**.²³ This theme contains in turn several related sub-themes and motifs. It involves the characters' motives, and explores the causes and the results of this phenomenon. The narrator reveals the characters' attitudes towards violence on an abstract psycho-

²²A.D.P. Briggs, "Hadji Murat: The Power of Understatement." Malcolm Jones V, ed. *New Essays On Tolstoy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978) 114.

²³Daemmrich and Daemmrich, 16-21.

logical level and their corresponding activities on a concrete physical level. Violence directed against human beings, animals or plants implies the modes of either **partial** (wounding or mutilation, whereby the object of violence survives) or **total destruction**. Total destruction caused by the 'aggressor' co-incides with the mode of violent death of the receiver, the victim of aggression. The dominant artistic tendency of this work manifests itself in the narrator's philosophy to place violent death in the context of Nature and to 'poeticize' or 'mythologize' it, that is, to integrate this mode of death into poetic or mythical contexts — cf. the genres of song as well as those of myths and legends.

The 'naturalization' of violent death, its acceptance and tolerance pre-supposes a deviation from an ethical norm. This norm considers killing as a violation which is not morally justified. This deviation from accepted norms, its perverted manifestation, can be seen in the prologue to the main plot and in the climax of the narrative. These two compositional units display a **chiasmal** structure. In the prologue violent death is 'personified', whereas in the climax, the ending of the tale, the death of a person is 'naturalized' and to a certain degree 'poeticized'. The characters' attitudes towards violent death range from fatalistic acceptance to indifference and suppression.

The manifestations of the two main modes of death — violent death and, to a lesser degree, natural death — are integrated into the plot of mostly **violent** events of this Caucasus story. Violence and related aspects such as striving

for power — closely related to the aspect of its motivation, cruelty, and the significant motif of **blood feud**²⁴ — dominate over scenes in which peace, hospitality, friendship, harmony and other values are expressed.

The narrative abounds in scenes and authorial evaluations focusing on violence, the annihilation of human lives and animals, and the destruction of inanimate objects. As for the outstanding scenes and references to the latter aspect, one may include, for example, the 'violent' destruction (that is, the process of dying) of the burdock (*repei*), a flower, or thistle, called (in colloquial Russian) *tatarin* in the prologue of this narrative. The work itself consists of this prologue and twenty-five chapters.

Through the technique of **association** in naming this flower as well as the chiasmal structure, this event explicitly foreshadows the manner in which the main character fights and finally succumbs to death in the end. In the climax, the narrator focuses on Khadzhi-Murat's dying, referring back to the defiant way in which the burdock faced death in the prologue. Thus, the exposition and the climax of the narrative form a cycle, framing the actual fictional 'historical' events. The narrator employs the motif of resistance on a symbolic level, and emphasizes the deliberate use of the device of **association** as he returns to his fictitious present.

²⁴Daemmrich and Daemmrich, 246.

Although the death of the major character features prominently in this narrative, the author integrates a number of other relevant death-scenes into the plot. Violence causes the death of the Russian General Sleptsov, the ordinary soldier Avdeev, the leader of a Tatar tribe named Gamzat, who is killed by the central character, the Polish student Bzhezovskii (Brzezowski), the deaths of three Cossacks chasing Khadzhi-Murat and his entourage, and finally the death of Khadzhi-Murat himself and his body-guards. Apart from the deaths of these individuals, numerous references to the deaths of anonymous soldiers and civilians can be found in this text.

As is the case in his early military tales, Tolstoy also contrasts the heroic, poetic or romantic death of one of the soldiers with the 'realistic'²⁵ death of another soldier, also the mythologized heroic death of one of the Tatar leaders (Gamzat) with the more realistic death of Khadzhi-Murat. In contrasting these two different attitudes towards death, the narrator re-evaluates and questions the concept and components of **heroic death**,²⁶ cf. also poetological statements on the 'romantic' behaviour of some of the

²⁵The Realist writer strives to present the world as it is or as it was; this is his point of departure; the Romanticist writer focuses on norms and ideals, which determine the presentation of a (possible) world.

²⁶The concept of heroic death depends on the definition of the concept of *hero*; normally, the hero or character in question (a) prefers death to captivity or a possible execution, (b) fights a usually superior enemy, (c) his motives for a sacrifice can be ideological, political, religious or private, and (d) he tries to inflict as much damage as possible upon the enemy. This specific situation can be brought about by the hero himself, i.e., voluntary death, or by circumstances such as fate or co-incidence.

characters in Tolstoy's early military sketches from the Caucasus "Nabeg", "Rubka lesa," and his novella Kazaki.²⁷

The main component of the Romantic heroic death is its integration into extraordinary circumstances; cf. the effect of the sensational. The Romantic heroic death is seen in the weakly motivated death of a secondary character, General Sleptsov [35:25]. His death is reported, but the source of the information is rather vague and unreliable, and the motives for his voluntary act are not disclosed. This event is followed by the more realistic presentation of the wounding and death of the ordinary soldier Avdeev [35:35]. Later, as the narrator describes the thoughts of the officer Butler, another in the series of 'dreamers' in Tolstoy's works, he points out his indifference and his avoidance of the potentiality of violent death.

The narrator introduces the motif of **blood feud** combined with the threat of death in the beginning of the work when Khadzhi-Murat tries to find shelter in the Caucasus village Makhket at the home of Sado, one of his supporters [35:8-9]. Sado knows that he risks his own life in providing Khadzhi-Murat refuge. Then, in the middle of the work (Chapters XI-XIII), when the narrator describes the childhood and youth of the main character, this motif gradually begins to

²⁷Tolstoy's poetological statements within fictional texts fulfil the function of distancing the author's literary concepts from that of other (preceding) literary movements and schools; cf. his comments on Romantic writers, or Romantic characters in his works (Ensign Alanin, the officers Rozenkrants, Olenin, Sleptsov, Butler) as well as on dominant Romantic concepts.

play an even more significant role. Among the 'primitive' Caucasus tribes, killing for the sake of vengeance, which implies the power to decide over the life and death of other people, seems to be a natural and legitimate policy.

The vicious circle of blood feud affects Khadzhi-Murat's life even in his youth. This specific mode of solving political solutions pre-supposes enmity or hatred between two adversary factions — tribes or families — and the underlying motif of striving for power. Killing one of the enemy faction triggers the chain of violence, as the killing must be revenged. The revenge itself is announced in the rite of an 'oath of revenge', that is, through an official death-threat.

Khadzhi-Murat is involved in the vicious circle of blood feud; it is initiated through a confrontation between two tribes, and leads to violent death of one of the opponents, following which an ally of his opponent's threatens to kill Khadzhi-Murat in revenge. Khadzhi-Murat repeatedly escapes this threat of death, which can be compared to a permanent death sentence. For the participants of this vicious circle the fear of being killed by the enemy is almost constant.

Cruelty, however, is not a quality which can be ascribed in this work exclusively to primitive man. In the middle of this narrative (Chapter XV), Tsar Nicholas himself, another ruler who decides over the life and death of his subjects, proves that he can be as brutal and unforgiving as the savage man, the despot Shamil' in particular. These attitudes become evident in the death sentences issued by both rulers. Tsar

Nicholas is also responsible for the death of soldiers killed in the Dagestan expedition in the 1840s. In 1852, he gives the order to attack the Chechen region which results in the devastation of the village of Makhket — the same village where Khadzhi-Murat seeks refuge — and in the violent death of Sado's son.

As the plot approaches its end, the numerous references to violent death increase. Violent death reaches its climax in the depiction of the deaths of the main character and his bodyguards. The effect of cruelty is brought about by focusing on details of violence, especially on 'fragmentation' — that is, the partial destruction of the human body, its mutilation, such as cutting off heads or hands, or blinding. Death itself ceases to be a moral threshold, a limit which is not to be transgressed. The presentation of violence evokes the impression that killing of people and mutilation of bodies are justified by the pretext that extraordinary circumstances demand extraordinary measures.

One of the few instances in which **natural death** plays an important role is evident in the dialogue between Khadzhi-Murat and the Commander-In-Chief of the Russian troops in the Caucasus, Vorontsov, who is seventy years old [35:46-47]. In this scene the narrator unmasks the old man's striving for power — which appears inappropriate and ridiculous for people in their seventies — who may be close to the potentiality of either violent or natural death.

The narrator introduces the discourse of violence in the exposition of the narrative. After pointing out the quality of human aggression, that is the tendency to destroy human beings, animals and other phenomena for the sake of self-preservation — "Экое разрушительное, жестокое существо человек, сколько уничтожил разнообразных живых существ, растений, для поддержания своей жизни." [35:6] — the narrator continues to introduce and insert comparisons, such as *otrublennaia ruka*, taken from different semantic fields — e.g.: "Куст татарина состоял из трех отростков. Один был оторван, и, как отрубленная рука, торчал остаток ветки", [35:6] — which culminate in the graphic description of a destroyed flower:

Точно вырвали у него кусок тела, вывернули внутренности, оторвали руку, выкололи глаз. Но он все стоит и не сдаётся человеку, уничтожившему всех его братьев кругом его. [35:6]

Placed in an agricultural and horticultural context, such as harvesting or cutting trees,²⁸ this description reminds the reader of slaughtering and clearly anticipates the mutilation of Khadzhi-Murat's body. It prepares the reader by alluding to the possibility of tragedy which may or may not materialize. De-emphasizing the moment of death itself, the narrator focuses on the effects of destruction, such as the degree of

²⁸Cutting appears to be the dominant mode of violence leading to wounding, mutilation and death in this work; hence the importance of weapons or objects used for cutting; both the savage man and the civilized Russian soldier use such weapons.

brutality of the source and deformation of the object of violence. Mutilation serves as the expression of either hatred or the denigration and de-humanization of the dead person.

Soldiers participating in wars face a paradoxical situation: they know that they approach the potentiality of violent death; this modality, however, contradicts their instinct for self-preservation. That is why avoidance or denial of death by far outweighs the attitude of acceptance of violent death. Accepting this mode of death in a military confrontation comes close to suicide, and is the exception rather than the norm. As for the outcome of threshold situations, soldiers either die or survive. This alternative does not apply to those who voluntarily seek a no-win situation. There are a number of characters in Tolstoy's works who deliberately choose or purposely select this mode of death; compare Tolstoy's description of Olenin's daydreams in the first chapter of Kazaki as he plans to fight against Tatars.

Without revealing the ultimate motives for General Sleptsov's actions, the narrator first mediates this event and then comments on the soldiers' attitude towards violent death, suppressing the thought of its potentiality. In a war-scene, the narrator describes wood-cutting, a military activity used in fighting the Caucasus tribes. In describing the demise of General Sleptsov, he also defines the significance of death as such:

Между офицерами шел оживленный разговор о последней новости, смерти генерала Слепцова. В этой

смерти никто не видел того важнейшего в этой жизни момента – окончания ее и возвращения к тому источнику, из которого она вышла, а виделось только молодчество лихого офицера, бросившегося на горцев и отчаянно рубившего их. [35, 25]

In contrasting the existing Romantic or idealist conception of heroic death in art, in literature in particular, from the perspective of a Realist writer, based on his concept of reality, the narrator points out this concept as unrealistic. The author-narrator refers to the composition of this narrative in the prologue, claiming that he witnessed the events in question, that he used historical sources, but that he has added information based on his imagination:²⁹

... что на войне на Кавказе, да и никогда нигде не бывает той рубки врукопашную шашками, которая всегда предполагается и описывается (а если и бывает такая рукопашная шашками и штыками, то рубят и колют всегда только бегущих), ... [35:25].

There are two different modes of heroic death, depending on the motives for participating in wars and exposing one's self to the danger of death. In Sleptsov's case an individual attacks a superior enemy and then succumbs to a violent and 'heroic' death. The individual normally decides to fight the enemy on his own. The other mode of heroic death excludes the

²⁹The status of the narrator and author in Realist prose is often a point of discussion in the works themselves; narrators of Realist works attempt to reduce the distance between the two entities and in many cases try to identify both of them.

possibility of avoiding this mode of violent death; this mode comes close to a delayed execution.³⁰ Usually an individual or a group of individuals — as exemplified in the defence of Khadzhi-Murat and his bodyguards at the end of the narrative — find themselves in an inescapable borderline situation; in fighting for their lives they voluntarily accept death and rule out the option of surrendering to the enemy.

Another mode of violent death deviating from the modes described above is the **non-heroic death**; it excludes the voluntary suicidal aspect as a motivating force, and comes close to the condition of **co-incidence** or the fatality of the majority of soldiers. This is the case regarding the violent death of the soldier Avdeev. He accepts death only when he begins to realize that he must die. He is wounded by coincidence. From this moment on, his attitude towards approaching death manifests above all the qualities of equanimity and self-control. He does not panic as he faces this hopeless situation, even though he experiences pain.

Avdeev's life has been dominated by the tragic, witness the fact that he was obliged to join the army, even though he suffers from homesickness. His death appears as the culmination of the tragic; however, he accepts this condition 'heroi-

³⁰Cf. the function of **execution** in the genre of the heroic epic, and the concept of **martyrs**; for the most part executions (and the inevitability of violent death) serve the function of addressing ideological and political questions (Gogol's character Taras Bul'ba in his novel *Taras Bul'ba*); they do not provide, at least in these genres, psychological introspections of the people facing them; cf. Leonid Andreev's (1871-1919) narrative *Povest' o semi poveshennykh* (The Seven Who Were Hanged, 1908) and the question of capital punishment.

cally'. He manages to notify his relatives about his demise (cf. the message, 35:36) and tries to integrate his death and dying into a ritualized form: he asks for a candle and tells other soldiers that he is about to die. Earlier, his condition allows him to gain access to exclusive knowledge which the living are not able to attain:

Когда же доктор ушел, он открыл глаза и удивленно оглянулся вокруг себя. Глаза его были направлены на больных и фельдшера, но он как будто не видел их и видел что-то другое, очень удивлявшее его. [35:35]

This presentation of an individual's (Avdeev's) death from a private perspective stands in sharp contrast to the description of military events through the official version of Tsarist propaganda [35:36], especially the references to mass deaths, where the individual is reduced to a statistical figure. The evaluation of the military confrontation magnifies the non-existent success of the Russian army, and the number of enemies killed deviates extraordinarily from the historic truth: "В деле легко ранены два рядовых и убит один. Горцы же потеряли около ста человек убитыми и ранеными." [35:36]

The presentation of Avdeev's death focuses on the portrayal of a rather 'external' course of events. As for Avdeev's introspection or a possible reflection on his life, the narrator omits these aspects. Avdeev's tragedy continues in the description of his mother's mourning and in the pretended mourning of his wife [39:40]. The narrator points out her

hypocrisy, thus emphasizing the tragic fate of her husband. Avdeev belongs to those selfless people who readily sacrifice their lives and are extremely exploited and betrayed. Another interesting aspect is the view voiced by Avdeev's father that military life equals death: "Солдатство было, как смерть. Солдат был отрезанный ломоть, и поминать о нем – душу бередить, не зачем было." [35:38]

One of the few instances in which **natural death** plays an important role is a dialogue between two old men: the Commander-in-Chief Vorontsov and Khadzhi-Murat. After setting forth official opinions, the narrator reveals the true thoughts of these men:

Глаза этих двух людей, встретившись, говорили друг другу многое, невыразимое словами, и уж совсем не то, что говорил переводчик. Они прямо без слов, высказывали друг о друге всю истину: глаза Воронцова говорили, что он не верит ни одному слову из всего того, что говорил Хаджи-Мурат, что он знает, что он – враг всему русскому, всегда останется таким, и теперь покоряется только потому, что принужден к этому. И Хаджи-Мурат понимал это и все-таки уверял в своей преданности. Глаза же Хаджи-Мурата говорили, что старику этому надо бы думать о смерти, а не о войне, но что он, хоть и стар, но хитер, а надо быть осторожным с ним. И Воронцов понимал это и все-таки говорил Хаджи-Мурату то, что считал нужным для успеха войны. [35:47]

The relationships between Khadzhi-Murat and these minor characters range from bitter enmity to true friendship. The extreme hatred manifests itself in the motif of the **blood feud**, while friendship manifests itself in hospitality and the exchange of presents.

The events surrounding the materialization of blood feud, including attempted murder, are numerous. They initiate, promote and determine the main character's life to a large degree. Finding himself repeatedly in a weaker position than his enemies, Khadzhi-Murat is several times forced to flee. In fact, **flight** appears to be a recurrent motif of his life — flight not only from his mortal enemies but also from violent death.

As a rule, violent death caused by a human being or an animal implies a **dynamic** and dramatic presentation of events. The narrator may present violent death either as an expected and predictable or as an unexpected and sudden event. Fighting as a cause of violent death prepares the reader for an expected and probable outcome as seen in the presentation of Khadzhi-Murat's tragic death.

The narrator describes the scenes of violence with brutal frankness. In the majority of scenes he focuses on the process and effects of violence, de-emphasizing death and the moment of death. Often this moment is excluded from the presentation of the scenes in question, the outcome being implied:

Умма-Хан лежал ничком в луже крови, а Абунунцал бился с мюридами. Половина лица у него была отрублена и висела. Он захватил ее одной рукой, а

другой рубил кинжалом всех, кто подходил к нему.
 При мне он срубил брата Гамзата и намернулся уже
 на другого, но тут мюриды стали стрелять на него, и
 он упал. [35:51]

This quotation refers explicitly to the image of the violent fragmentation of the human body — an effect brought about by cutting or piercing with different weapons. It reaches its climax in the cutting off of Khadzhi-Murat's head at the end of the narrative. The episode in which his separated head appears is followed by the actual presentation of the main character's fight for his life. Thus, climax and resolution are again reversed. The separation of parts of the living or dead human body and of animate Nature — cf. the burdock in the prologue of this narrative — can be considered as the leitmotif of the story.

Other prominent causes of violent death are cannons or pistols as in the death of the soldier Avdeev; Khadzhi-Murat shoots one of his enemies, Gamzat. As for the chronology of events surrounding Khadzhi-Murat's tragic and violent end, the relations between cause and effect are reversed. That is, the reader learns first about Khadzhi-Murat's killing before he learns about the details of this act — a technique also detectable in Smert' Ivana Il'icha and Pozdnyshev's act of murder in Kreitserova sonata. The presentation of this fact catches the reader by surprise; it shocks some of the characters as well. The narrator approaches the identity of the killed person gradually: it is only after the officer Kamenev asks one of his

soldiers to get something out of his sack that the narrator goes into more detailed description:

Это была голова, бритая, с большими выступами черепа над глазами и черной стриженной бородкой и подстриженными усами, с одним открытым, другим полузакрытым глазом, с разрубленным и недорубленным бритым черепом, с окровавленным полотенцем. Несмотря на все раны головы, в складе посиневших губ было детское доброе выражение. [...] Бутлер не мог отвести глаз от страшной головы. Это была голова того самого Хаджи-Мурата, с которой он так недавно проводил вечера в таких дружеских беседах. [35, 109]

The custom of showing the head of the enemy in public is quite common among both primitive and 'civilized' societies, and quite typical of European history, as is the mocking and denigration of the deceased — as exemplified by the behaviour of the drunken Russian officer Ivan Matveevich, who wants to kiss the head of Khadzhi-Murat. This behaviour is strongly rejected by one of the minor characters, Mar'ia Dmitrievna, who calls the soldiers cut-throats: "Вы все живорезы. Терпеть не могу. Живорезы, право, — сказала она, вставая." [35:110]. She also pleads for respect for the body of the dead person: "Мертвое тело земле предать надо, а они зубо-скалят." [35:110]. She implicitly compares these men to animals. This woman appears to be the only character in this work who is aware of the limits of humanitarianism.

As the plot of events approaches the climax of the narrative, the narrator emphasizes again and again the disparity between artistic models and his view of reality. These models manifest themselves above all in the tendency to “poeticize” specific passages of the narrative, that is, by inserting texts within the main text, thus contributing to intratextuality.

One genre which features prominently in the climax of this narrative is the **song**. Tolstoy uses the motif of **music** throughout his works. In this narrative, music as well as the presentation of a variety of different sounds produced by human beings and Nature is meticulously described. Sounds accompany and frame Khadzhi-Murat's fate, especially the sounds of Nature demonstrated in the singing of nightingales — which on a symbolic level serves to anticipate a horrible event. Music and poetry are connected with tendencies of ‘mythologization’ or poeticization, thus forming a contrast to pure prose and the tendency to strive for realistic presentation.

Music and singing are part of military life, as manifested through singing and marching. The musical highlight in this work is the staging of an Italian opera in Tiflis.³¹ Here the savage Khadzhi-Murat's behaviour is contrasted with that of the civilized man of culture. Music also serves religious functions, cf. the singing of the Muslim warriors, which

³¹The narrator contrasts opera as one of the most sophisticated of art forms with a culture more integrated with nature.

appears natural, or the singing of songs by 'primitive' man. The first significant song dealing with the motif of blood feud is sung by one of Khadzhi-Murat's companions, Khanefi. As it turns out later, this song foreshadows an attempt on Khadzhi-Murat's life.

Anticipating future events, the **transitoriness** of human life is contrasted with the 'immortality' or eternity of the blood feud. It also expresses the acceptance of violent death on the part of the Tatar warrior who knows that he will die for his ideals [35: 91-92]. It is following this song that one of Khadzhi-Murat's numerous enemies, Arslan-Khan, attempts to kill him.

The second major song also anticipates Khadzhi-Murat's tragic fate. Sung again by the Tatar Khanefi, this song deals with the heroic death of Khadzhi-Murat's former mortal enemy, Gamzat. Deviating from the narrator's version of his death in which Khadzhi-Murat kills his enemy and flees, the song portrays Gamzat as fighting the Russians before he finally succumbs to death. This song foreshadows the final stages of Khadzhi-Murat's life: his flight and the subsequent manhunt culminate in the depiction of his brutal death. The final passage of this song introduces birds as messengers of death:

Гамзат увидал птиц на небе и закричал им: Вы,
перелетные птицы, летите в наши дома и скажите вы
нашим сестрам, матерям и белым дедушкам, что
умерли мы все за хазават. Скажите им, что не будут
наши тела лежать в могилах, а растаскают и оглодают

наши кости жадные волки и выклюют глаза нам
черные вороны. [35:104]

This symbolic comparison of birds to one's enemies — a common device in folklore — is used repeatedly by the Tatars in reference to the Russians. The singing of nightingales, framing the final death-scene of this narrative, stands in sharp contrast to all other sounds, especially those produced by the fighting. The nightingales themselves are introduced in the scene in which Khadzhi-Murat and his entourage prepare themselves for their flight. The narrator juxtaposes their singing with the sounds of death — the sharpening and repairing of weapons:

В сенях еще громче чем вчера и чаще, чем с вечера,
слышны были заливавшиеся перед светом соловьи. В
комнате же нукеров слышно было равномерное
шипение и свистение железа по камню оттачиваемого
кинжала. [35:104]

A third minor song, 'composed' by Khadzhi-Murat's mother, deals with a component of heroism, namely, the suppression of the fear of death [35:105], which he and his companions display in the climax of this work. During their last fight, one of these men, Kurban, continues to sing until he is killed.

The final, fatal turning point in Khadzhi-Murat's life coincides with his decision to escape Russian 'protection': he is basically kept captive after he joins them. His flight turns into a manhunt after he and his body-guards kill some of the Cossacks who accompany them on their daily rides. Racing

against his enemies, Khadzhi-Murat kills the Cossack Nazarov, and his helpers manage to kill two other Cossacks. This persecution displays a dynamic manifest in a sequence of violent 'external' acts. The narrated time almost exactly corresponds to the time of the events narrated, because of the brevity of style. The Tatars butcher their enemies. The parallel with the burdock in the concluding sentence, which describes the result of killing rather than the moment of death itself, is striking: "Петраков лежал навзничь с врезанным животом, и его молодое лицо было обращено к небу, и он, как рыба, всхлипывая, умирал." [35:113] This is just another example of the integration of violent death into the context of Nature, — i.e., its 'naturalization'.

In the final scene of the narrative, as often happened during his lifetime, Khadzhi-Murat and his helpers are outnumbered by their enemies. He and his warriors know that they must face death and prepare themselves for this outcome. They approach death with singing and valour. In depicting the death-process of Khadzhi-Murat, the narrator employs the technique of **introspection**, distinguishing between the stages of awareness and the transition to the loss of perception. After he is wounded, Khadzhi-Murat perceives images of his past life, remembering people who were important to him. At this point, he becomes aware of a total indifference towards his past life:

И все эти воспоминания пробегали в его воображении, не вызывая в нем никакого чувства: ни злобы, ни

какого-либо желания. Все это казалось так ничтожно в сравнении с тем, что начиналось и уже началось для него. [35:117]

In describing the transition from life to death, the narrator resumes the motif of the cut burdock, introduced in the prologue of this work. Furthermore, the parallelism of the colours designating flowers in the prologue and blood in this passage becomes apparent.

The presentation of violent death in this work is built on the basic thematic opposition of **aggression** and **resistance**. The author employs several strategies to present violence (along with violent death) as one of its components. One of the main strategies affecting human beings comprises the 'naturalization' and 'poeticization' combined with 'mythologization' and 'heroization' of violence. This phenomenon is integrated with concepts typical of the Romantic movement. The second strategy is the **personification** of phenomena of Nature which experience death and dying in the same manner as human beings; Tolstoy had already used this technique in his early works. There are similarities in the depiction of the death of the burdock and the death of the ash-tree in "Tri smerti".

Furthermore the narrator contrasts unusual, sensational and romantic heroic death with ordinary death. As for the moment of death, and the meaning of death itself, the narrator focuses principally on the motives, causes and effects leading to death. **Horror** is the dominating effect brought about by the

explicit presentation of violence.³² As for the aesthetic functions of violence, Edmund Heier emphasizes the cathartic effect of the presentation of this phenomenon on the reader. This objective can be deduced from Tolstoy's theoretical writings on art. As for the technique of introspection, the narrator presents only Khadzhi-Murat's final thoughts and perceptions, while the majority of the other characters' deaths are reported from an observer's point of view.

³²Edmund Heier, "Hadji Murat in the Light of Tolstoy's Moral and Aesthetic Theories," Canadian Slavonic Papers 9 (1979): 324-35.

Conclusion

In presenting a variety of themes in his literary works, Tolstoy chooses between the two fundamental modalities of death: (a) the **potentiality** and (b) the **materialization** of either natural or violent death. He presents these two modalities within the framework of Realist poetics: as a rule, he refers to death and other topics directly; there are, however, a few instances in which he refers to this phenomenon *indirectly*, i.e., metaphorically or allegorically.

In the majority of his works, the reader encounters death both in its physiological and its philosophical aspects. Through the selection of specific settings and circumstances, Tolstoy presents **avoidance** and **survival** as well as the **materialization** of natural and violent death.

A large number of major characters die in his narratives. The number of named and anonymous male adult characters who die outweighs the number of corresponding principal female characters. The deaths of adults outnumber premature deaths of young people and children.

Unlike Dostoevsky or Leskov (1834-95), Tolstoy, with a few exceptions, excludes the motifs of infanticide, fratricide, patricide or the killing of other relatives in his prose. Two notable exceptions are Pozdnyshev's act of murdering his wife in Kreitserova sonata, and Irten'ev's murder of his mistress in one of the alternate endings in D'iavol.

Tolstoy never presents death, the death of characters or meditations on mortality, in an isolated manner. As a rule, the moment of a character's death does not serve the dramatic function of moving other characters or readers, and the narrators often omit or de-emphasize the actual moment of death. Tolstoy focuses rather on the 'internal' perspectives of the dying characters, detailed characterizations of their thought-processes, conveying above all **emotional and ethical-philosophical reactions and attitudes**. Characters facing death either turn to their past lives or expect the inevitable.

Tolstoy is fully aware of the Realist precept of excluding the realm of the unreal. Hence his characters as a rule do not envision the after-life or transgress the boundary of this world into the nether world and continue to 'live' there (or *vice versa*). The main artistic tendencies involved in the presentation of this topic, therefore, are '**de-romanticization**', '**de-sensationalization**' and '**de-dramatization**' in presentation.

There are two main tendencies affecting **semantic transfer**: the extension of life into death and *vice versa*. Apart from the occasional (direct or indirect) reference to such phenomena, Tolstoy restricts himself to a partial 'anthropomorphization' and personification of inanimate Nature (e.g., in "Tri smerti" and Khadzhi-Murat) and animals (in his narrative "Kholstomer"). A partial personification is introduced through the 'voice of death' in Voina i mir and in "Zapiski sumasshedshego". Similarly, illness is personified in

Smert' Ivana Il'icha. By establishing these personified entities, Tolstoy enables his characters to communicate and express their thoughts.

As far as the temporal ordering of events involving death and dying is concerned, Tolstoy has characters refer directly to their own or other characters' deaths, anticipating their materialization — a strategy which leads to **anti-dramatization**. The presence of a reliable narrator, moreover, makes it easier for the reader to draw conclusions about the plot of events and its tragic outcome in particular. As soon as characters face 'at-death' or 'actual' death situations, Tolstoy's narrators often employ the device of **retrospection**. Another significant device to be noted here is the author's frequent **chronological reversal of the cause-and-effect relationship**.

The treatment of death in literary works implies the fundamental **opposition** of temporariness and eternity as well as of life-creation and -destruction. In Tolstoy's narratives, however, the opposition of falseness and honesty plays a more significant role. As a Realist and a moralist, Tolstoy is obliged to strive for objectivity and truthfulness in his art. That is why he sides with the truth and makes use of non-fictional techniques and genres. These two objectives become apparent in his presentation of characters facing either the possibility or the materialization of death. As a rule, characters who deny death reveal **hypocrisy** and **theatricality**; other characters, usually members of the

lower classes, manifest **honesty** in accepting death, and thus are more likely to be able to cope successfully with death.

Comparing the three different stages of Tolstoy's prose, one can observe a **growing artistic sophistication** in the use of poetic devices and an ever greater **variety** in the author's selection of different aspects of death. The differences in selection and variation of elements of this complex theme are connected with the author's new emphasis on and addition of certain modes and variants of death in the major novels and the late works. Particularly noteworthy is his inclusion of specific cases of **violent death** — such as Pozdnyshev's murder of his wife — which he omitted in his early works.

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