

READERS' EXPERIENCE OF REPETITION IN TOLSTOY

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"Yes, the best way to true happiness in life is this: without any laws, throw out from yourself in all directions like a spider a prehensile web of love and catch all that comes along...." (47, 71) wrote Tolstoy in a diary entry for May 12, 1856.¹ Three days later he wrote, underlining his words to give them emphasis, "I give myself a rule for all time never to enter a single inn or brothel." (47, 72) A tenacious and sometimes contradictory statement and restatement characterize Tolstoy's lifelong attempt to understand why we live and how we ought to live.

Continually and impatiently seeking answers to these questions, Tolstoy would perhaps have liked to comprehend in a single glance the enormous and detailed canvas that is life, but he knew such a unified and complete comprehension was not possible. So he worked instead to achieve a sense of the whole, the general, by paying attention to and piecing together the parts, the particulars in a way that would not compromise or artificially reduce their multiplicity.

Intensely, almost obsessively, self-observant from an early age, Tolstoy became more and more interested in the question of how human beings acquire knowledge of themselves and of the world. He came to view life as an infinite calculus of moments and saw the extent to which countless past events, feelings, and thoughts continue to influence and shape an individual's life in the present. Self-knowledge and knowledge of the world seemed to be a matter of making connections, understanding

¹All translations of Tolstoy into English are my own and are based on the original Russian as found in the Jubilee edition, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii (Moscow, 1928-1958). Parenthetical references refer to the volume and page, except in the case of quotations from War and Peace, in which case they refer to volume, part, and chapter so that citations can be found easily in any edition of the novel.

As Viktor Shklovsky points out in his biography of Tolstoy, this quotation is Tolstoy's paraphrase of a passage in Laurence Sterne's A Sentimental Journey, which Tolstoy translated for his own edification and amusement. In Chapter 28 of The Cossacks Olenin pens almost the identical line in his diary: "In order to be happy one thing is necessary--to love, and to love selflessly, to love everyone and everything, to spread out in all directions a web of love and catch in it all who come along". (6, 105)

changing relations, and moving between the particular and the general, or universal. One of the most visible elements of Tolstoy's constant double vision backward and forward is his use of repetition, which began in his diaries and later marked his fiction as well. Repetition in Tolstoy's work is more than an artistic device, because it was directly related for him to the way in which human beings impose design on the seemingly endless continuum of their own and all physical nature. Tolstoy's literary aim, as Viktor Shklovsky notes, was ambitious: "[H]e wanted literature to attain greater heights of morality and knowledge, through analysis." (Tolstoy 197).

Tolstoy's epistemology rests upon a desire for universal truths and values tempered by a recognition of the variability and relativity of human perceptions and responses. His simultaneous insistence upon both the stable existence of universal values and external truths that abide for all people, and the dynamic becoming of chance possibilities and changing relations that affect us as individuals, needs to be seen in the context of the general epistemological revolution taking place in nineteenth-century Europe and Russia. The widespread belief in the possibility of a positivist and scientific synthesis of all knowledge, which reached its height from the 1850s to the 1880s, had among its opponents Tolstoy, who objected that science could not teach people how to live.² There was at this time a continuum of attitudes toward science that ran from the conviction that science would lead to greater understanding of the mind, a new morality, and an eventual reconstruction of society, to undaunted faith in traditional Christian values and teaching, which could never be replaced by science. Tolstoy's position in this debate is not on the continuum, but rather to the side of it. Rejecting both science and the Church, Tolstoy put his faith in a kind of ethical consciousness, which in his view would give human beings the ability to join a sense of the harmony and unity associated with some higher and unfathomable general purpose with the discontinuities and multiplicities of everyday life. Addressing all who would call themselves civilized, Tolstoy's narrator in "Lucerne" asserts"

And who is able to tear himself away so completely from life with his mind, even for a moment, so as to look upon it independently from above? One, we have only one infallible instructor, a universal spirit, penetrating all of us together and each of us as individuals, endowing each of us with a yearning for that which ought to be; that same spirit which tells the tree to grow towards the sun, tells the flower to scatter its seed in autumn, and tells us unconsciously to draw closer to one another.

²Joravsky 1989, 11-13.

And this one infallible, beatific voice
muffles the loud, hurried development of
civilization. (5, 25)

Tolstoy vacillates between an intuitive belief in the possibility of unified and complete wholes and an empirical recognition of the fragmentary, discreet nature of observation and hence of knowledge. Description, he realizes, will always be incomplete since it cannot include every detail. In his essay on Tolstoy's view of history, Isaiah Berlin discusses Tolstoy's theory that a complete and continuous understanding of history would require an integration of the infinitely small and numerous events that determine it. (31) As Berlin points out, Henry Bergson with his notion of "pure duration" develops a similar point about fragmentation that distorts.

Repetition is a device precariously perched on an epistemological border: on one side of this border, repetition is the possibility of knowledge guaranteed by similarity and continuity, whereas on the other side it is the impossibility of knowledge due to difference, discontinuity, and fragmentariness. Repetition is the elevation of the word to image or symbol that assists in the structuring of experience and knowledge, and it is the reduction of the word to sound that reverberates meaninglessly in a nihilistically relativized world. For Tolstoy both of these possibilities, both sides of the border are important as he discovers in repetition a device that can negotiate between discreteness and wholeness. Tolstoy's use of repetition in his novels and short stories is thus related to his view of life as a never-ending series of changing relations among parts and wholes and to his understanding of how we ought to live in a world that may be ultimately unifiable, but is presently fragmented.

Many scholars and critics have included a discussion of repetition in Tolstoy's fiction as part of a general consideration of his style and method. Sergei Bocharov, for example, in his study of War and Peace demonstrates how Tolstoy's use of repetition helps to create a framework of irony and insight that permits the novel to be read as a system of relationships. In his comparative analysis of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, D. S. Merezhkovsky draws mostly upon examples from War and Peace to show how Tolstoy uses repetition to underscore and represent themes, and, more importantly, to strengthen readers' impressions of both the physical and related spiritual traits of individual characters. And George Steiner, who takes a more philosophical approach to Tolstoy in his book, sees that there is a connection between Tolstoy's metaphysics and poetics, that Tolstoy's use of repeated elements is related to his quest for unity, for universal and eternal truths.³

³It might seem that in any discussion of literary devices in Tolstoy mention should be made of Victor Shklovsky, who, after all, declared that art is the sum of its devices and used Tolstoy as one of his primary models for illustrating his contention.

The work of Shklovsky and the Formalists on the device in general and on

These and other studies have suggested the importance of repetition in Tolstoy, and I propose to contribute to the discussion by focusing on the impact of this device on the reading experience. Repetition in Tolstoy's works operates for readers in a variety of ways. Perhaps most fundamentally, repetition serves as an aid to readers' memory and comprehension. The reiteration of descriptive details of character, for example, (Princess Marya's heavy tread in War and Peace or Māslova's shiny black eyes and full bosom in Resurrection) helps to reinforce a specific and meaningful image of that character. These details often become synecdoches for characters' entire moral, intellectual, or physical being. Repeated elements, especially in a long novel, help readers keep characters straight, follow the plot, and gain some understanding of the novel's themes or ideas.

But because repetition operates as much on the principle of difference as on that of similarity, Tolstoy is able to use repetition to make increased demands for readers' active participation in constructing the text. Repetition sets up meaningful comparisons among the various characters. Differences, including the subtle differences masked by apparent similarities, contribute to the individualization of characters, which readers must assess. Such particularization is especially significant for Tolstoy since it plays a role in the theme of unity in diversity, which is critical to his aesthetic and ethical views and is, of course, related to his search for wholes.

In the opening five chapters of War and Peace devoted to the depiction of an exemplary Petersburg social gathering, Tolstoy uses the verb "to smile" and the noun "smile" repeatedly in his descriptions of the various guests present in Anna Pavlovna's drawing room. Sometimes we read simply that a character has smiled; other times we are treated to lengthier descriptions of a smile or manner of smiling. Of course, it makes sense that at a social gathering intended to provide amusement people would be smiling. On the one hand, the various images of people smiling contribute to the artistic and faithful recreation in literature of a Petersburg soiree. And at the same time Tolstoy's insistent

Tolstoy in particular deserves more attention than I can give it in this article, and would take me too far afield from my line of inquiry, but I want at least to acknowledge their contribution.

In his study entitled Material i stil' v romane L. N. Tolstogo "voina i mir," Shklovsky discusses repetition primarily as a device of ostranenie, or estrangement, but also as a device of characterization. Tolstoy, he notes, was never careless with details so that repetitions which occurred across the boundaries of texts were an indication of Tolstoy's good artistic sense.

Shklovsky's biography of Tolstoy includes many insightful observations about how Tolstoy viewed and understood the world and about how he translated his personal experience into literature. Shklovsky remarks on Tolstoy's habit in his letters and diaries of continually repeating, comparing, and relating the details of his experience. He demonstrates how sometimes these details even made their way into Tolstoy's fiction.

repetition of the noun "smile" and the verb "to smile" encourages readers to make comparisons and draw conclusions about what the various instances of repetition may suggest.

For example, Tolstoy's descriptions help readers begin to differentiate among the characters in terms of their individual concerns and personality traits, and to relate, to compare, even to judge them. From initial descriptions of Prince Vasilii's manner and appearance, that make him out to be a self-satisfied, disdainful, and bored nobleman, it would seem that little would penetrate his affected exterior. But when Anna Pavlovna questions him about his sons, his demeanor changes and he admits, "smiling more unnaturally and animatedly than usual," that they are a constant source of worry to him. His pained smile at the thought of his children connects him with Anna Mikhailovna, who also smiles unnaturally when she speaks to the Prince about her son, Boris. Like Anna Mikhailovna, Prince Vasilii wants to secure a position for his son. In fact, both parents have come to the soiree expressly in order to make inquiries on behalf of their children.

Tolstoy uses repetition not only to encourage readers' evaluation of relations among characters, but to focus their attention on the mental experiences of individual characters as well. Just as he depicts his characters questioning and testing their perceptions, memories, and beliefs as they work to construct a developing whole that is never quite whole, he encourages his readers to follow a similar course of development. He uses repetition not only to call attention to the thought processes of the characters, but also to make readers aware of their own thought processes.

In his description of the retreat of the Russian army after the loss at Shevardino in War and Peace, Tolstoy uses a repeated phrase to follow the course of Pierre's thoughts as he participates in and observes the preparations for the next battle. Studying the wounded men, Pierre notices that "almost all of them stared with naive, childlike curiosity at [his] white hat and green swallow-tailed coat." (3, 2, 20) After the road has cleared Pierre continues on his way:

Pierre drove on, looking along both sides of the road, searching for familiar faces and encountering everywhere only the unfamiliar military faces of men belonging to various branches of the service, all of whom stared with surprise at his white hat and green swallow-tailed coat. (3, 2, 20)

At last Pierre recognizes an acquaintance, a doctor, coming along the road from the opposite direction. The doctor's predictions for the upcoming battle act as a catalyst for Pierre's thoughts:

This strange notion that of the thousands of people, alive, well, young and old, who stared with cheerful surprise at his hat,

twenty thousand were surely doomed to be wounded or to die (maybe those same [soldiers] he had seen), struck Pierre.

"They may die tomorrow, why do they think about something other than death?" And suddenly by some mysterious association of thoughts, the descent from the Mozhaïsk hill, the carts with the wounded, the ringing of the bells, the slanting rays of the sun, and the songs of the cavalrymen vividly recurred to him.

"The cavalrymen go into battle and meet the wounded, and never for a minute thinking about what awaits them, they pass and wink at the wounded. And of all of them twenty thousand are doomed to die, yet they are surprised at my hat! Strange!" thought Pierre as he continued on his way to Tatarinovo. (3, 2, 20)

Isolating the detail of the soldiers' surprise at his hat and coat as an initial clue to the enigmatic resilience and vital force of human beings, Pierre begins to piece together the elements of his perception--the sights and the sounds--in order to begin to achieve an understanding of the people around him. Because this scene is told from Pierre's perspective with no additional omniscient insights on the part of the narrator, readers observe only as much as Pierre observes. Readers may not experience the "mysterious association of thoughts" that Pierre experiences, but they do have the ability to go back and re-experience the complex web of details, which acquire significance for Pierre, and perhaps for readers too, only in retrospect. Like Pierre, readers begin to create, that is to select and organize the elements of, a conception of events, and of the characters and ideas that constitute them, that may still be modified by later events.

Repetition for characters as well as for readers involves recognition of the repeated and discovery of the new.⁴ With repetition Tolstoy encourages independent, active readers whose own impressions and past experiences contribute to their understanding of characters and conflicts: he attempts in effect to construct his own ideal reader.

As Seymour Chatman and Wolfgang Iser--among others--have pointed out, every text has its implied reader: that reader which, implied by the

⁴This phrase is Mikhail Bakhtin's and is taken from a passage in "From Notes Made in 1970-71," in which Bakhtin is anxious to establish the ethical, as well as intellectual and emotional nature of "understanding." (Speech Genres and Other Late Essays. Trans. Vern W. McGee. Ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: Univ. of Texas, 1986).

language the author uses, is an internal structure of the text.⁵ Tolstoy's ideal reader is his attempt to reduce the indeterminacy of the implied reader always already implicit in his text. Tolstoy's comments concerning the potential audience of War and Peace suggest that he knew that there are different kinds or degrees of engagement readers can have with literary texts. For Tolstoy, the ideal reader is the reader who brings to the text a special kind of understanding or intuition:

It is the artistic readers whose judgment is dearest of all to me. They will read without reasoning (rassuzhdaia) everything that I wrote in the reasonings (rassuzhdeniia) and would not have written, if all readers were like them. Before these readers I feel guilty for having disfigured my book by inserting these reasonings (rassuzhdeniia)... (15, 241)

Already from the very beginning of his career as a writer, Tolstoy envisioned an ideal reader. In an essay entitled "Notes About the Caucasus. A Journey to Mamkai Iurt" written in 1852, Tolstoy talks about the subjectivity of the reading experience:

Without trying to understand the sense of each phrase, you continue to read, and from some words intelligible to you, a completely different sense comes into your head; true it is unclear, vague, and inexpressible in words, but therefore all the more beautiful and poetic. (3, 215)

Tolstoy knew from his own experience as a reader that the images that take shape in the imagination during reading are colored by memories or associations called up by the words on the page. (3, 215) To the extent that a reader's sense of the text as a whole is built upon a construct of these images colored by memory, the reader's individual experience, which includes knowledge of the conventions of reading and literary traditions, is crucial to an understanding and interpretation of the text. Repetition is one of the devices Tolstoy uses to awaken in readers their own memory-images and imaginative constructions.

Repeated elements, then, play an important role in bringing out the ideas and questions Tolstoy, via his characters, explores in his

⁵Seymour Chatman defines the implied reader as "the audience presupposed by the narrative itself." (150) The desired audience stance is made explicit when there is a narratee-character, but can only be inferred on ordinary cultural and moral terms when there is no clearly depicted narratee.

Wolfgang Iser explains what he means by the term this way: "Thus the concept of the implied reader designates a network of response-inviting structures, which impel the reader to grasp the text." (34)

fiction. Readers' sense of a story or novel by Tolstoy as an aesthetic whole rests upon a construct of ideas, impressions, observations built by memory and aided by repetition. At the same time, Tolstoy uses the device of repetition to represent the complicated mental activities of his characters as they construct and reconstruct forever unstable concepts that help them to structure and understand their experience. Readers not only observe characters in the process, but take part in it themselves, for they too must continually recast past knowledge and experience in terms of present experience and future expectation in order to structure and understand their experience of the text. Repetition, for both characters and readers, brings order into something which may in immediate experience be wholly disordered. This ordering has aesthetic as well as ethical implications.

Conscious repetition, or remembering, by characters of a word, phrase, or gesture and the recognition of these repetitions as such by readers, contributes to the shaping of experience which allows both characters and readers to achieve a sense of the completeness and harmony among parts that is often characteristic of an aesthetic experience. At the same time to the extent that conscious or intentional repetition involves choices and decisions that effect and reflect a person's opinions and beliefs, it is an ethical act. Readers are implicated in this act to the extent that they apprehend and react to the repetitions in a text.

Tolstoy frequently uses repetition to set up comparisons among characters or to suggest something about the relationships among characters which he leaves for his readers to apprehend and analyze. These repetitions are usually not and, in fact, often cannot be noticed by the characters themselves. When Pierre in War and Peace suddenly realizes that there is no need to ask the question "what for," because "there is a God, that God without whose will not one hair of man's head falls," (4, 4, 12) he does not know that Princess Marya utters this same thought, which is expressed in various places in the Bible, two separate times earlier in the text: once in a letter to her friend Julie and once in her thoughts as she prepares to meet Anatol, a potential suitor, for the first time. When Marya and later Pierre make this biblical allusion concerning God's will and the hair on a person's head, they reveal something about themselves as individuals: readers learn not only about what they think, but about how they think. If readers notice the repetition of the allusion, they may begin to think about the differences and similarities between the separate scenes and between Marya and Pierre. The allusion has three separate contexts, but it has a single inclusive context as well.

This series of repetitions requires the perspective of the whole. The repetition is "transgredient" to the experience of the characters themselves and suggests the perspective and values of the author. This notion of the surplus of the author's vision vis-a-vis the characters from a position outside them, which is the basis for the consummating or unifying aesthetic consciousness of the author, belongs to Bakhtin:

The author not only sees and knows

everything seen and known by each hero individually and by all the heroes collectively, but he also sees and knows more than they do;...And it is precisely in this invariably determinate and stable excess of the author's seeing and knowing in relation to each hero that we find all those moments that bring about the consummation of the whole--the whole of each hero as well as the whole of the event which constitutes their life and in which they jointly participate, i.e., the whole of a work. ("Author and Hero" 12)

The particular use of the "hair on one's head" quotation is in the mind of each of the two characters, but the repetition is intelligible and visible as such only in the context of the whole, which makes the same phrase fit in two different contexts.

Up to this point I have been concerned with the role repetition plays in readers' experience of individual works of fiction. But readers more familiar with Tolstoy know the extent to which intertextual repetitions occur in his work as well. To be sure, most authors have characteristic habits of thought which are bound to be repeated across works or deliberately re-use characters, themes, or motifs in more than one text. This observation, however, does not vitiate the question of what might be the significance of intertextual repetitions in Tolstoy for readers.

When we recognize repetitions across the boundaries of works and if we do not believe that they are mere coincidence, we begin to see how Tolstoy integrated the details of his past with his present experience. Each phrase or meditation that has an intertextual antecedent elsewhere in Tolstoy serves a particular function in its particular context, but it also becomes a marker of the connections, recognitions, and recollections triggered in the mind of Tolstoy the author. These repetitions, if recognized as such by us, Tolstoy's readers, make us aware of an important element of continuity in his work and thought. Connections among works that are not readily apparent, now become obvious. We can look to intertextual repetitions in Tolstoy's work in order to confirm the persistence of certain images or ideas in his thought, to follow the development of his thought about these images and ideas, and to discover something about his authorial thought pattern.

Not all of the intertextual repetitions a reader may encounter in Tolstoy, or in any other author for that matter, will be intentional. Some repetitions may reflect stylistic habits and some may have started out as habits but, when recognized by the author have been subsequently used as intentional signals. With those intertextual repetitions that are intentional the author creates a whole larger than a single work, which nevertheless remains a whole. Intertextual repetitions, that is, may serve as clues to the fact that in addition to a given work there is a

larger work in view. This larger work or whole consists of the combined significances that attach to the repeated element in its separate contexts. When taken together by a reader the separate iterations can be seen to comment upon, embellish, or interact in some other way with one another. The reader constructs an "as-if" model of the author, as if passages from separate works were somehow intended to allude to, to anticipate, or to recall one another, whether or not they were, and as if his fiction were somehow designed as one large work, whether or not it was.

In the following example I discuss Tolstoy's use of a similar theme--the link between music and memory--in Childhood and in War and Peace. This theme appears in other works by Tolstoy as well, including Anna Karenina, Resurrection, and Hadji Murad. The repetition of this theme in more than one work is important for several reasons. First of all, it suggests the persistence of Tolstoy's fascination with what was for him an actual and significant, if elusive connection between music and memory, which when taken in the context of Tolstoy's known love and appreciation for music and his frequent attention to memory in both his fictional works and his diaries, becomes a subject relevant to his intellectual biography. The repetition is also important because it allows readers to see similarities between particular characters and circumstances, to bring these particulars into a new and separate context defined by those features which make the experience a shared one, and perhaps to draw large conclusions from the small, complex specifics.⁶

In an 1847 diary entry Tolstoy includes the "faculty of memory" as one among five "main intellectual faculties." (46, 271) His "rules" for developing this faculty dictate to the practical and factual aspects of memory, but Tolstoy was aware of the more confounding aspects of memory as well. And he recognized that it is when memory is used to relate the details of our lives, to give our lives narrative form, that it acquires ethical significance. In this context ethics has to do with the decisions people make whether as individuals or as members of a collective that shape their lives and the lives of others, and the responsibility they assume for these decisions.

In his fiction Tolstoy rarely uses the word pamiat' (memory) to refer to that part of the mind where memories or reminiscences (vospominaniia) are, metaphorically speaking, awakened; instead, he uses the word voobrazheniie (imagination). This choice of words suggests that Tolstoy recognized the extent to which imagination and memory commingle in the recalling and retelling of past experiences. Memory and imagination together aid in the transformation of the separate moments of life into a unified, if unfinalizable, whole, at the same time that they

⁶Cf. Clifford Geertz who argues that the aim of cultural anthropology is "to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts," (28) because "it may be in the cultural particularities of people...that some of the most instructive revelations of what it is to be generically human are to be found." (43)

make it possible to isolate and give meaning and value to the separate moments.

As he recalls and retells the early years of his life, the narrator of Childhood records the many memories and musings he experienced already as a child. He remembers not only what memories he had as a child, but how these memories made him feel and still make him feel, and he readily attributes to his imagination a role in forming or coloring these memories, even if he is not able to explain precisely what his role is.

In Chapter Eleven of Childhood Irtenev remembers his mother at the piano and the feelings evoked by her playing. But he adds that even then he felt as if he were remembering feelings that never were:

Mama was playing the second concerto of Field, her musicmaster. I was dozing, and in my imagination there arose some kind of airy, luminous, and transparent memories. She started playing Beethoven's Sonata pathétique and I remembered something sad, oppressive, and gloomy. Mama often played these two pieces and so I well remember the feeling they aroused in me. This feeling resembled memories--but memories of what? It seemed like remembering something that had never been. (1, ch. 11).

The dreamlike state Irtenev enters as his mother plays is a state in which thoughts and feelings are indistinguishable from memories of thoughts and feelings. That they should seem like memories suggests they are familiar to him, that they are in some way repetitive of or continuous with something in his past experience. Tolstoy here hits upon two feelings induced by memories--pastness and familiarity--that Bertrand Russell later identified as the two feelings necessary for an image to be a memory. (163) Irtenev, however, questions the status of these images as memories. His uncertainty suggests that Tolstoy knew the difficulty of distinguishing images of memory from those of imagination.

Music is the origin of Irtenev's memories, and with these memories return the actual feelings associated with the music. For Tolstoy memory is, like music, literature, or painting, an aesthetic form: it can represent, shape, and even alter experience and can evoke powerful emotional, intellectual, psychological, or ethical responses.

In a diary entry for August 10, 1851 Tolstoy recalls with satisfaction a night spent listening to the songs of gypsies and comments: "One characteristic feature reproduces for us many memories of occurrences associated with that feature." (46, 82) And in another diary entry several months later Tolstoy asks himself: "Why does music affect us like memory?" (46, 239) In the passage cited from Chapter Eleven of Childhood, Tolstoy returns to the intuitions expressed in these diary entries. A

song or a musical composition once heard becomes powerfully linked, for Tolstoy, to the feelings and images with which the listener originally associates it. And music, like memory, is capable of conveying sensations and meanings for which words provide no vehicle.

The music Irtenev's mother plays evokes in him sad and oppressive feelings, but these are feelings in which he willingly indulges. Much later readers learn of the death of his mother while he is still a child, and they realize that his recollections of her playing and of its effect on him are certainly somewhat colored by his knowledge that her death means these events can no longer actually be repeated, but can only return via memory. We might say that he narrates not memories, but re-memories insofar as time, events, and his imagination have continued to shape his recollection.

Irtenev says that his mother "often played those two pieces." So his recollection of this particular moment may actually be a generalized conceptualization of all the times he heard his mother at the piano. His mother's playing, to say nothing of the music itself, is forever associated with feelings of sadness and loss. This conceptualization is one detail among many that contributes to the idealized image of his mother that the adult narrator presents to readers over the course of the book.

Tolstoy explores this same theme--the link between music and memory--via the experience of Natasha in War and Peace. Left alone to occupy herself one winter afternoon after dinner, Natasha sits in a dark corner of the ballroom and plays her guitar. Thinking of her absent fiance, Prince Andrei, she strums a tune from an opera the two of them recently attended in Petersburg. The music, whose significance would be unintelligible to any other listener, recalls to Natasha's mind still more memories associated with Andrei: "That which came from her guitar had no meaning for outside listeners, but in her imagination there rose a whole series of memories from these sounds." (10, 275) Imagination is the faculty and music is the vehicle that enables Natasha to join her separate memories of Andrei. For Natasha, as for Irtenev, the music becomes inextricably associated with the feelings and images given form by imagination/memory. Together memory and music stabilize these feelings and images into an idealized conception of the beloved.

Whether in a single work or in more than one work, repetition in Tolstoy can help readers to perceive and sometimes co-experience the mental processes of characters, see similarities and differences among characters or situations, and join the many and "densely textured" particulars into an unfinalized, but unified conception of the whole. Repetition in Tolstoy is not only a sign of, but a means for the achievement of a sense of continuity without which the world seemed to Tolstoy hopelessly contingent and ephemeral.

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