Narrator as Ethnographer in Tolstoy's Caucasian Fiction

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Contents

Abstract

Lev Tolstoy's Caucasian cycle – consisting of the early short stories "The Raid" (1853) and "The Wood-Felling" (1855), as well as the longer works *The Cossacks* (1863), "The Prisoner of the Caucasus" (1872), and *Hadji-Murat* (1912) – famously contains an abundance of ethnographic information about various groups of people from the North Caucasus. This Master's thesis examines the way Tolstoy's narrators present that information. The narrators of the early stories have an openly scholarly orientation toward the subject matter, which was part of Tolstoy's attempt to supplant earlier authors' Romantic depictions of the Caucasus with his own realist version and to inform readers about the region. However, these narrators limit themselves to the description of other Russians. Later on in the cycle, Tolstoy began to incorporate more direct depictions of non-Russian characters, such as Greben Cossacks and the Avar naib Hadji Murad. As he did so, he also began to move away from his earlier educational aims. By *Hadji-Murat*, Tolstoy completely abandons the figure of the narrator-ethnographer and instead turns to an examination of the process of Russian myth-making about the North Caucasus and the barriers to intercultural understanding that it created.

Résumé

Le cycle caucasien de Lev Tolstoï comprend des nouvelles écrites en début de carrière comme «L'incursion» (1853) et «Une coupe en forêt» (1855) ainsi que des œuvres plus longues: *Les Cosaques* (1863), "Le prisonnier du Caucase" (1872) et *Hadji-Mourat* (1912). Il est bien établi que ces œuvres contiennent une abondance de détails ethnographiques concernant divers groupes de personnes ciscaucasiennes. Ce mémoire examine la façon dont les narrateurs de ces œuvres présentent cette information ethnographique. Les narrateurs des premières œuvres du cycle ont une orientation ouvertement académique envers leurs sujets ethnographiques. Avec ce style de

narration, Tolstoï espérait supplanter les images romantiques du Caucase avec sa propre version réaliste et d'éduquer ses lecteurs au sujet de la région. Cependant, ces narrateurs ne décrivent que d'autres personnages russes. Plus tard dans le cycle, Tolstoï a commencé à incorporer des représentations plus directes de personnages provenant d'autres groupes ethniques, tels que les Cosaques grebennes (*grebenskie kazaki*) et le naib avar Hadji Murad. En même temps, Tolstoï a renoncé à ses ambitions éducatives. Dans *Hadji-Mourat,* Tolstoï abandonne complètement le personnage du narrateur-ethnographe. Dans ce récit, plutôt que tenter de créer une image fiable de la Ciscaucasie fondée sur l'observation ethnographique, Tolstoï examine le processus par lequel les russes créèrent une mythologie propre à cette région et les obstacles à la compréhension interculturelle qui en furent la conséquence.

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Introduction

1.1 Situating the project

Tolstoy's omniscient narrators, disembodied figures who seem to speak from nowhere, give an illusion of transparency and objectivity that masks their inherent bias as the inventions of a Russian author. The illusion of transparency also frequently characterizes academic prose; this thesis is no exception. But because of my research topic's direct ties to imperialism, I believe it is important not to obscure my own position as a white settler and the implications that this position has for my research.

I completed the majority of this project in Tiotia:ke, on unceded Kanien'Keha:Ka land; I also carried out some of my initial research in Epekwitk (Prince Edward Island) and K'jipuktuk (Halifax), Mi'kma'ki. All three of these places are located within the settler colonial state of Canada, a state whose legacy of colonial violence, like that of the Russian Federation, is still ongoing. My own research is not independent of this legacy, as Canadian scholarship itself has a historical relationship to imperialism. For example, as in Russia, early ethnographic studies in Canada predated the establishment of ethnography as a formal field of study and tended to be carried out by missionaries and "explorers," i.e., by people directly implicated in British imperialism; the earliest efforts at institutionalization were led by the government-sponsored Geological Survey of Canada (Hancock 31-32). While a more thorough comparison of the two countries is beyond the scope of this project, many elements of the Russian imperial project I describe in this thesis are not unique and have parallels in other countries, including my own.

1.2 Literature review and theoretical framework

The ethnographic character of Tolstoy's Caucasian stories and novellas has received a significant amount of critical attention. For example, Rebecca Gould observes that many of Tolstoy's early writings set in the Caucasus are "replete with ethnographic footnotes informing

the reader about the history, languages, and customs of Russia's enemies" ("Topographies of Anticolonialism" 92). The later work *Хаджи-Мурат* is even more "replete," not with footnotes but with phrases and activities drawn from North Caucasian life that are directly incorporated into the narration. A.P. Burnusuzyan and V.T. Sosnovskii, for example, see this novella's inclusion of traditional Dagestani greetings as an essentially factual, ethnographic element of the story. In particular, Burnusuzyan and Sosnovskii demonstrate that as he edited *Хаджи-Мурат*, Tolstoy even adjusted the syntax of Russian translations of some of these greetings so that they would more closely match the original phrases, which suggests a high level of attention to ethnographic — here linguistic — detail (33). Galimat Gadzhalova similarly locates a large amount of relatively accurate ethnographic information in the earlier work "Кавакзский пленник" (225). Finally, Paul Friedrich identifies ethnographic elements as a key feature of Tolstoy's Caucasian fiction more generally, to the extent that "Tolstoy's main Caucasus works raise in acute form the issue of just where the boundary line between ethnography and literature lies" (115). Nonetheless, Friedrich also recognizes some reliance on inaccurate ethnic stereotypes, especially in Tolstoy's earlier Caucasian fiction.

However, none of these studies examine the relationship between Tolstoy's incorporation of ethnographic information and the figure of the narrator. My own analysis of this topic relies to a large extent on Elizabeth Fernea's framework of insiders and outsiders. According to Fernea, an ethnographic novel can be written either "by an outsider about an *other*" or "by an artist within the culture," i.e., by an insider (154). Obviously, all of Tolstoy's Caucasian fiction qualifies as the former — fiction written by an outsider, i.e., Tolstoy himself. However, his narrators vary in the extent to which they align themselves with an "outsider" (Russian) perspective, as well as in the extent to which they include insider voices in their narration.

In general, Tolstoy began to incorporate insider perspectives more extensively over the course of the cycle, beginning from a very limited inclusion of non-Russian characters in "Набег" (1853) and ending with an extended portrayal of the Avar protagonist in *Хаджи-Мурат* (completed in 1904, first published in 1912). At the same time, the figure of the narrator and his approach to ethnographic observation evolved over the course of the cycle, as well. In Tolstoy's early Caucasian stories, the narrators present ethnographic information in an explicitly academic way. Later, Tolstoy began to move away from this didactic orientation; by *Хаджи-Мурат*, the narrator does not present himself in a scholarly way at all, instead integrating ethnographic information directly into the plot. What this reflects is an overall move in Tolstoy's Caucasian cycle away from the extratextual, educational project of his early fiction toward a reflection on the act of story-telling itself. To demonstrate this shift, in Chapter 1, I examine the first-person narrators of Tolstoy's short stories "Набег" and "Рубка леса" (1855) in the context of the Romantic Caucasus and the history of Russian ethnography. Chapter 2 discusses Tolstoy's use of omniscient narrators in two works written during the middle of his career: *Казаки* (1863) and "Кавакзский пленник" (1872). Finally, in Chapter 3, I analyze the combination of first-person and omniscient narration in the final work in Tolstoy's Caucasian cycle, *Хаджи-Мурат*.

Chapter 1. Narrative authority and realist ethnography in "Набег" and "Рубка леса"

2.1 Introduction to Chapter 1

Tolstoy's first story set in the Caucasus was "Набег. Рассказ волонтера" ("The Raid: A volunteer's story"), which appeared in *Современник* in 1853. He wrote several other Caucasian tales during this same period, such as "Рубка леса. Рассказ юнкера" ("The wood-felling. A junker's story") (1855). "Набег" and "Рубка леса" are both rich in ethnographic detail, including paratextual elements like footnotes that translate unfamiliar words and offer cultural explanations. "Набег" also directly engages with Romantic-era writings on the Caucasus and attempts to expose their representations of the "Caucasian theme" as false. In effect, these stories represent Tolstoy's first efforts to reject the Romantic tradition and craft a realist Caucasus.

Many scholars have noted the role of ethnographic features in the realist project of Tolstoy's early Caucasus writings. Susan Layton underlines his "impulse to educate readers by using footnotes" (236); according to Gould, those same footnotes "impart to Tolstoy's fictions a semblance of verisimilitude appropriate to nonfictional discourse" ("Topographies of Anticolonialism" 92). In these stories, ethnographic details and genre markers act as signifiers of reality itself, bringing the author's descriptions outside the realm of fiction. This is an appropriate technique for a writer whose aim was to educate readers he believed had been led astray by previous poems and stories set in the Caucasus.

However, the Romantic Caucasus was also no stranger to ethnographic detail or genre signifiers such as footnotes; Pushkin, Bestuzhev-Marlinskii, and Lermontov all integrated these features to some degree in their own Caucasian stories and poems. Thus, Tolstoy's incorporation of ethnographic detail, while important to the image of the Caucasus that he creates, is not in itself a significant departure from the Romantic tradition. The figure of the narrator, on the other

hand, is crucial to Tolstoy's effort to forge a new, realist way of writing about the region. In "Набег," Tolstoy combines present-tense narration by a naïve young volunteer and implied retrospective narration by a seemingly older and wiser version of this narrator. And while the junker who narrates "Рубка леса" is less naïve than the volunteer in "Набег," he also has barriers to his knowledge of the Caucasus as a result of his Russianness and his noble status. These narrators' limited perspectives, combined with the stories' emphasis on their outsider status, lends Tolstoy's early stories an air of fictionalized authenticity that distinguishes them from earlier writings in the tradition of the literary Caucasus.

2.2 The Russian conquest of the Caucasus and the development of Russian ethnography

Tolstoy was far from the first Russian writer to address the so-called "Caucasian theme." As early as 1804, Derzhavin described the region in his ode "На возвращение Графа Зубова из Персии" (Layton 38); Zhukovsky's 1812 poem "К Воейкову" is also set in the Caucasus (93). It was Pushkin, however, who firmly established the place of the Caucasus in the Russian canon with his narrative poem *Кавказский пленник* (1822). This poem was the first major work of Russian literature set in the Caucasus that was written during the Caucasian War (1817-1864). The timing is significant: while Russian relations with the Caucasus go back as far as the age of Kievan Rus', the Caucasian War was Russia's most significant incursion into the region to date, and it was this conflict that resulted in the annexation of the North Caucasus (Gammer 1).

Russian ethnography developed over the course of this war. While A.N. Pypin argues that the discipline's origins should be traced to the early eighteenth century, "from the Petrine reforms and the first studies of the Russian territory and population" (4), the academic field of ethnography was not formally established in Russia until the 1840s (Knight 108-9). In other words, while the study of different ethnic groups' ways of life would not have been an unfamiliar

concept to Pushkin's contemporaries, this study was not formalized into a coherent discipline until mid-century.

According to Nathaniel Knight, early Russian ethnography was split into two camps: imperially oriented ethnography, i.e., the study of non-Russian peoples within the expanding empire, and nationally oriented ethnography, or the study of ethnic Russians (117). Several related disciplines emerged within the imperial camp during the nineteenth century, also influenced by the ongoing conquest of the Caucasus (and later Central Asia). For example, Востоковедение (Orientalism or Orientology) — a multidisciplinary subject encompassing ethnography as well as geography, history, and philology — followed a timeline similar to that of ethnography: while examples of proto-Orientalist research occurred under Peter I and Catherine II, it did not become a coherent academic discipline until the 1840s (Tolz 7).

The more specific field of Кавказоведение (Caucasus Studies or Caucasology) also originated under Peter I and developed under Catherine II but did not take shape as a formal field of study until later (Gutmeyr 137-38). Dominik Gutmeyr identifies Semen Bronevskii's 1823 *Новейшие географические и исторические известия о Кавказе* as "the first breakthrough in early Russian Caucasus studies," but notes that this volume was not immediately followed by more work on the subject (147). Even by 1833, an ethnographic description of the North Caucasus compiled by the military officer I. F. Blaramberg was praised by government officials for being "one of the first... of its kind" (Kolosovskaia 170). The institutionalization of Caucasus Studies occurred half a century later (mid-1800s), either within university departments of Orientalism or in the form of research institutions like the Tiflis (Tbilisi) branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, which was founded in 1851 (Jersild 642).

Ethnographic studies from this period varied in their orientation as well as in their accuracy. Adalyat Issiyeva notes three varieties of Russian ethnographic publications in the nineteenth century: "(1) publications, intended for wide circulation, that denigrated oriental culture, intensifying the long-standing antagonism between 'us' and 'them'; (2) works written for Russian officials and military agents that followed paternalistic patterns; and (3) ethnographic literature written *for* and *by* orientologists" (14). Aside from popular ethnography (the first variety Issiyeva outlines), Russian readers could also obtain ethnographic information from non-expert sources, such as first-hand accounts by officers serving in the Caucasus. For example, the newspaper *Кавказ*, established in 1846 and published in Tbilisi, sometimes printed factual essays about life in the Caucasus by contributors such as the colonel Arnold L. Zisserman. Austin Jersild writes that "Zisserman's early essays for *Kavkaz* read like Marlinsky, and included harrowing rides on horseback, dangerous moments of combat, and descriptions of the indecipherable geography of the mountains"; nonetheless, "in his essays Zisserman was moving toward ethnographic description" (642). Other potential sources of information included field notes, such as Iakov Kosenetsky's *Записки об Аварской экспедиции на Кавказе 1837 года* (first published in 1851). However, sources such as these did not become widespread until several decades into the Caucasian War.

2.3 Romantic narrator-ethnographers

When Pushkin published *Кавказский пленник*, then, academic studies and other non-fiction writings on the Caucasus were still sparse in Russia (Layton 20-21). For this reason, Pushkin was in the perfect position to produce an authoritative text on the region, as he had witnessed the Caucasus first hand while in exile in the 1820s, spending roughly two months near Piatigorsk (Layton 26). It is therefore natural that Pushkin's narrator, performing the roles of

both storyteller and ethnographer, opens the poem with a pseudo-ethnographic description of a "Circassian" (Adyghe) *aul* and its inhabitants. Pushkin frequently incorporates information on the local people and their culture into the plot; the poem is also rife with footnotes that translate non-Russian words, as well as notes on topics like the local climate (e.g., notes #1-7, pp. 87-90, 94, 96).

The narrator adopts the tone of an expert who, while Russian-coded and so not a member of the community he describes, is knowledgeable about the Caucasus and is thus able to educate readers unfamiliar with the region. To use Knight's terminology, the poem is imperially oriented: the ethnographic approach is reserved for the narrator's description of the Caucasian characters, not the Russian prisoner. In Fernea's terms, because of its imperial orientation, *Кавказский пленник* is an example of a work of literature not only written but also narrated by an outsider. As I will demonstrate, authors throughout the literary Caucasus played with this insider/outsider distinction, sometimes adopting the same stance as Pushkin but sometimes also incorporating fictionalized insider voices into their work.

Of course, the fact that Pushkin had visited the Caucasus before does not mean that all of the details in the poem are based on genuine observations or that they are always accurate. Pushkin relied on his imagination to a large extent in formulating not only the plot of *Кавказский пленник* but also many elements of the ethnographic description that lends the story its apparent verisimilitude. Gutmeyr notes that the labels "Circassian" and "Chechen" function basically as synonyms for "non-Russians" in this poem and do not actually reflect an attempt to accurately portray the ethnic composition of the region Pushkin is describing (100-1). In addition, the "Circassian Song" is, in Layton's words, "thoroughly ersatz" (100). Accuracy aside, however, the footnotes and other ethnographic features of the poem indicate that Pushkin's

narrator assumes the position of an expert reporting on the "Circassians" for his implied audience of other European Russians.

Aleksandr Bestuzhev-Marlinskii, another major figure in the tradition of the literary Caucasus, had more first-hand experience to draw on than did Pushkin: he served as a soldier in the region from 1829 until his death in 1837 (Layton 111). Writing after Pushkin, for an audience already familiar with the "Caucasian theme," Marlinskii had to establish his position as a reliable descriptor of the Caucasus in new ways. His narrators derive their authority not only from the inclusion of ethnographic details such as explanations of local words and traditions, but also from complaints about the proliferation of misinformation about the Caucasus in the popular consciousness. For example, on the very first page of Bestuzhev-Marlinskii's 1834 "Рассказ офицера, бывшего в плену у горцев," the narrator criticizes the squad leader's "totally European ideas about the mountain [i.e., Caucasian] war" (совершенно европейские понятия о горской войне), particularly his belief in myths about the Russian army's conduct there (3). By contrasting his own knowledge and experience to this character's presumed ignorance of the "true" Caucasus, the narrator enhances the perceived authenticity of his ethnographic observations in the rest of the story.

Bestuzhev-Marlinskii's *Аммалат-Бек* (1831) also has a Russian-coded narrator who speaks as an expert on the Caucasus. Here the narration is in the third person, as in *Кавказский пленник*, rather than in the first person as in "Рассказ офицера." And like *Кавказский пленник*, this novella has abundant footnotes explaining linguistic and cultural details. Furthermore, Bestuzhev-Marlinskii includes a note (примечание) at the end of the novella where he explains that it is based on the life of the *shamkhal* Umalat-Bek of Buinak (Ullubiyaul). This explicit note

about the story's supposed verisimilitude is another way of strengthening the narrator's apparent authority and reliability.

Lermontov, who visited the Caucasus regularly as a child and was stationed there twice, first in 1837 and then again in 1840, sometimes incorporated the same pseudo-ethnographic features as did Pushkin and Bestuzhev-Marlinskii (Layton 136, 212). He picks up on the tradition of having a Russian narrator (the traveller in *Измаил-Бей*; the editor, Maksim Maksimych, and Pechorin in *Герой нашего времени*) who describes Caucasian characters to his readers, acting as an outsider informant on the region's inhabitants. *Герой нашего времени* includes some footnote translations of words from local languages, though the footnotes in this novel are more limited than in the other two writers' works. Both *Измаил-Бей* and *Герой нашего времени* also take up the falsified folk art tradition initiated by *Кавказский пленник* in their incorporation of a so-called "Circassian song" actually based on a Russian folk song (Layton 138).

However, Lermontov was generally less concerned with educating his readers than were the other two writers. According to Layton, "the poet's Caucasian [characters] have ethnographically appropriate decor but virtually no didactic paraphernalia"; *Измаил-Бей* in particular "is an exemplary illustration of Lermontov's general withdrawal from the extra-literary enterprise best represented by Bestuzhev-Marlinskii" (138). Lermontov's Caucasian works also tend to use a more critical and ironic tone when describing the Russian characters than did previous authors'. *Герой нашего времени*, for instance, contains extended satirical depictions of the culture of Russian officers stationed in the Caucasus. Through the character Pechorin, Lermontov even pokes fun at Russians' attempts to mimic North Caucasian styles of dress – a theme Tolstoy would later take up (488-89).

2.4 "Набег" and "Рубка леса": Authenticity, narrative authority, and the insider/outsider dichotomy

Tolstoy is more ethnographically oriented than Lermontov; unlike Pushkin and Bestuzhev-Marlinskii's, however, the ethnographic material in Tolstoy's early Caucasian stories has more of a national than an imperial orientation. "Набег," for example, rarely gives the reader a direct glimpse of the Chechen characters because the information provided is limited to what the narrator himself has the opportunity to observe. The majority of the footnote translations in this story are either explanations of Caucasian soldiers' dialect (кавказское наречие) or of local words adopted by the Russians, not of the local languages themselves. For instance, in one footnote, the narrator explains that soldiers in the Caucasus use the term "he" (он) as a collective pronoun to refer to "the enemy in general" (113). There is also a note about the "special dialect that the Russians and Tatars *[sic.]* have invented in order to speak to each other," further suggesting the mediating effect of Russian presence on any information we receive about the Chechen characters (106, footnote #10). In addition, translators — a character type that recurs throughout Tolstoy's Caucasus cycle — appear twice in this story, functioning as symbols of intercultural mediation (107, 111). Their presence underlines the narrator's, and the readers', lack of direct access to knowledge about Chechen culture.

Even the imperially oriented ethnographic information that is provided in this story is usually mediated by Russian characters in some way, rather than given directly as in *Кавказский пленник* and "Рассказ офицера." For example, Tolstoy never directly portrays any Chechen characters' appearance and clothing. He does, however, offer a detailed description of the officer Rosencrantz's "black beshmet... yellow cherkeska... tall... papakha" and general attempt "to look like a Tatar *[sic.]*" (100). Elements of local culture are filtered through a Russian (here, Russian-

German) character's adoption of them — and given Rosencrantz's ridiculousness, it is more likely that his manner of dress represents a grotesque attempt to mimic Chechen style than an accurate reproduction of it. Rather than trying to supplant earlier writers' falsified images of non-Russian characters with his own version, Tolstoy focuses on the Russians themselves. He also uses Rosencrantz to critique previous writers by stating that the misguided character was "formed by Marlinskii and Lermontov" (100). This jab at the two foremost prose writers in the tradition of the literary Caucasus strengthens the seeming verisimilitude of Tolstoy's own story in comparison.

"Рубка леса" takes the ethnographic treatment of Russian characters even further and actually includes a mock-ethnographic classification of the three "types" of Russian soldiers and officers: "submissive" (покорные), "commanding" (начальствующие), and "reckless" (отчаянные) (39). While most nineteenth-century Russian ethnographers were less interested in cultural comparison and hierarchies than their Western counterparts (Knight 131), classification was still an important element of imperially oriented ethnographic texts; researchers would categorize different groups of people according to their religion (e.g., Bronevskii 27), "tribe" (племя; e.g., Danilevskii 11), and other attributes, such as language. In "Рубка леса," Tolstoy turns this classifying gaze on Russian characters and parodies it by grouping the soldiers based on their personalities rather than their cultural backgrounds.

However, even though most of the ethnographic subjects the narrators describe in these stories are Russian, the narrators themselves do not speak from an insider perspective. Fernea's definition of outsiders mainly applies to ethnic groups, but in this context it can also be applied to other types of communities because the narrators use ethnographic conventions to describe people who are Russian, but who differ from them in other ways. In "Набег," the narrator's

outsider status is due to his newness: he has only been in the Caucasus for a month and is not yet familiar with the culture of soldiers and officers stationed in the Caucasus (94). Tolstoy does not give any moments of insider perspective from the more experienced characters here because "Набег," unlike his later Caucasian fiction, is narrated in the first person.

The narrator of "Рубка леса" is also an outsider, not because of inexperience but because of the gap in education and rank that separates him from the peasant soldiers under his command. (There is also an element of cultural difference here in that some of the soldiers are Ukrainian.) The junker's outsider status is clear in the way he distances himself from the soldiers within his narration. For instance, he sometimes italicizes their mispronunciations of words like "*сихарки*" (for "сигары"), thus marking these pronunciations as separate from his own use of language (45). The narrator's later comment about noticing "the particular tact of our [Russian] soldiers" has a similar effect, highlighting the gap between this aristocratic junior officer and the peasant soldiers who are the subject of his ethnographic commentary (64).

In addition to being an outsider, the volunteer in "Набег" does not assume the role of an expert on the Caucasus talking down to an ignorant readership the way many previous narrators in the literary Caucasus did. Instead, because of his inexperience, the narrator functions as a figure with whom the reader can identify and who even replicates the reader's own experience of gaining knowledge. To give the most obvious example, the narrator starts off the story with a glorified view of war and the nature of bravery that evolves as a result of the ensign Alanin's death — an event that should presumably cause the reader to re-think these issues, as well.

The process of information gathering also occurs at the level of specific details. For example, at one point the narrator is riding next to a "Tatarin" and takes the opportunity to ask him a few questions about the political situation in the Caucasus (107). While the narrator's

description of the Chechen character is condescending in tone — he describes his "obsequious" expression when talking about Shamil — the conversation openly exposes the volunteer's ignorance about Chechnya and the means by which he is slowly acquiring more knowledge about the region.

The older and wiser narrator who is presumably writing these experiences down sometimes does intervene in an "expert" role, especially in the footnotes. But because these intrusions are confined to a paratextual space, they do not interrupt the reader's identification with the more naïve narrator who is directly involved in ethnographic observation. By combining these two contrasting narrators, Tolstoy is able to provide ethnographic information while still maintaining the rhetorical position of a newcomer whose process of gaining knowledge and experience is fully exposed to the reader. This delicate balance of newcomer and expert is what ultimately allows Tolstoy to cultivate perceived narrative authority and a seemingly authentic representation of the Caucasus in this story while rejecting previous authors' attempts to do the same thing. In "Рубка леса," inexperience is less of a factor, but the narrator's ethnographic observations are still oriented toward the Russian characters, and his outsider status is still highlighted, in a way that foregrounds the mediating influence of both his Russianness and his aristocratic origins on the ethnographic information he presents.

In Tolstoy's early Caucasian stories, then, he limits his narrators' scope and denies them privileged access to knowledge about the non-Russian characters, drawing attention to the way their Russianness impedes their ability to gain direct insight into the "real" Caucasus. By crafting his narrators in this way, Tolstoy moves away from the position of the Romantic expert-narrator toward a model of fictionalized authenticity based on his attentiveness to Russians' position as interlopers in the Caucasus. However, the first-person narration and short form of these stories

limits the depth with which Tolstoy is able to develop the theme of the Russian officer's outsider status. Tolstoy would examine this issue more thoroughly in his later and longer Caucasian works, such as *Казаки* (1863) and "Кавказский пленник" (1872).

Chapter 2. Omniscient ethnographic observation in *Казаки* and "Кавказский пленник"

3.1 Introduction to Chapter 2

In the middle of his career, Tolstoy abandoned the naïve narrator in favour of an omniscient figure who was more knowledgeable about the Caucasus. Sometimes these narrators' authority comes from the incorporation of the same kind of pseudo-academic textual features found in the earlier stories; this is the case in *Казаки* (1863). In "Кавказский пленник" (1872), the narrator is less academically oriented, a change tied to an overall shift in Tolstoy's style at this time; however, he still demonstrates a high level of comfort when describing the Caucasus, making him an authoritative figure based on what seems to be the result of firsthand experience rather than academic study. The narrators' omniscience also means that they are able to incorporate the perspectives of "insider" characters, which provides a new source of seeming authenticity. Nonetheless, both *Казаки* and "Кавказский пленник" are dominated by the perspectives of their Russian protagonists. Furthermore, at the same time as he begins to include more direct representations of non-Russian characters in these works, Tolstoy also begins to move away from the educational project of his earlier stories and from his attempt to replace the Romantic Caucasus with a realist alternative.

3.2 The outsider-expert in *Казаки*

In his external descriptions of non-Russian characters, the narrator of *Казаки* often adopts an explicitly ethnographic tone. Direct depictions of Chechen and Nogai characters are sparse in this novella; most of the narrator's attention is devoted to the Greben Cossack characters. Frequently the narrator's ethnographic observations take the form of broad descriptions of the Cossack settlement that tie the community's cultural traditions to the landscape. The best example is Chapter 4, which Layton calls an "ethnographic essay about the

Grebensk [Cossack] community" (236). In this chapter, the narrator begins by explaining the *stanitsa*'s location along the Terek and then continues on to discuss elements of Cossack culture such as their clothing. Later, when describing a holiday, the narrator gives a panoramic view of the different groups of villagers present at the celebration: "на площади... больше всего стояло народа. На завалинке дома правления сидели и стояли старики... Казачки... сидели на земле и завалинках хат," etc. (112). Integrated into this overview of the celebration are descriptions of the sky, the mountains, and the river.

The integration of ethnographic detail into a description of the surrounding landscape was also present in some nineteenth-century volumes of ethnography on the Caucasus. For example, Vol. 1 of Bronevskii's *New geographical and historical information about the Caucasus* (1832) combines information on "size," "borders," and "geographical progress" alongside topics like "religion" and "language," all within the same chapter (xxix). Danilevskii (1846) opens with a discussion of the Caucasus's rivers and mountains before segueing into the section on its inhabitants (5-10). And as Nathaniel Knight notes, the first official body for the study of ethnography in Russia was a section of the Russian Geographical Society (109). In other words, the narrator's combination of ethnographic with geographical or topographical information follows the tendencies of ethnographic study at Tolstoy's time of writing.

Another trend in early Russian ethnography was the compilation of songs and stories (Knight 128). This is also present in *Казаки*. Sometimes the narrator simply mentions that a character is singing, as in the description of the holiday in Chapter 13, but he also frequently transcribes elements of the Cossacks' oral tradition directly. For example, in Chapter 27, the narrator provides the lyrics to a song that Lukashka sings (93); he also gives the lyrics to two songs sung by a group of villagers in Chapter 38.

Often the narrator not only presents ethnographic information but also explains its significance. For example, early on in the novella, he notes that the Cossacks have adopted many elements of Nogai and Chechen culture as a result of their proximity to these groups, which helps to clarify some of the customs presented later in the novella (18). In another section the narrator tells us that a group of Cossacks is riding "mostly silently" (большею частию молча) and then explains why: "Бренчащее оружие — величайший срам для казака" (124). The narrator is not just a compiler of ethnographic observations; he is also an expert who is able to interpret various aspects of Cossack culture for the reader.

A related task that the narrator takes on is that of translation, either within the text or in the footnotes as in "Рубка леса" and "Набег." But even though there are some footnotes (mainly used for words that require a longer explanation), the presence of in-text translations in this novella clearly reflects this narrator's position as an expert, unlike the naïve narrators of the two short stories; this narrator knows enough about the region that he could plausibly be author of the footnotes himself. For example, at one point in the novella, Lukashka comes to see Diadia Eroshka and calls out in Nogai: "Уйде-ма, дядя?" Immediately after this line of dialogue, the narrator provides a translation in parentheses: "то есть: дома, дядя?" (56). Later in the story, he explains that the term "Kabarda Lov-Tavro" refers to a breed of horses that is "considered one of the best in the Caucasus" (91).

The narrator also sometimes treats the non-Russian characters as ethnographic exemplars. He frequently refers to characters simply by their ethnonym, calling them "a/the Chechen" (чеченец) (e.g., several times in Ch. 9) or "a/the Cossack" (казак/казачка) (25, 30, 48). Even Lukashka, a major character, occasionally receives this treatment (32, 51, 115). Descriptions of the individual characters' clothing, routines, and so on thus take on a second function: they not

only help create an image of a specific individual but also contribute to the ethnographic record that the narrator is creating. Mar'iana's "red *sorochka*, that is, the silk handkerchief on her head" and Lukashka's "curly white *papakha*" appear to be not only specific items of clothing belonging to individual characters but also representations of Greben Cossack culture more generally (99, 114; emphasis added). Even the title of the novella attests to this ethnographic orientation.

In contrast, the narrator never refers to a Russian character as simply "the Russian," and he also rarely offers cultural explanations of their behaviour. Of course, this is partially because there is no need to translate French and Russian for aristocratic readers who presumably would have spoken both of those languages, or to explain aristocratic Russian culture to them. However, this difference has the effect of underlining European Russians' status as unmarked vs. the Cossack, Chechen, and Nogai characters' as marked. It also suggests that the narrator himself is Russian, confirming his outsider-expert position relative to the non-Russian characters and putting a Russian in the position of omniscience.

3.3 The experienced outsider in "Кавказский пленник"

In the early 1870s, Tolstoy began to develop a more streamlined, plot-oriented (rather than description-oriented) style inspired by folklore and the Greek classics. In Boris Eihkenbaum's words, the new style contained "no psychological colouring, no digressions, no descriptive details... the whole action [was] based on the basic struggle for life" (604). Through these changes, Tolstoy hoped to reach a broader audience, especially peasants. "Кавказский пленник," named after Pushkin's famous narrative poem, was Tolstoy's first attempt to put his new theory of writing into practice. Despite the historical subject matter, it lacks the author's usual historical and cultural commentary. Thus, the change in Tolstoy's writing style at this time creates a shift in the way the narrator of this story presents ethnographic information.

Rather than a naïve outsider or an outsider expert, the narrator of "Кавказский пленник" is an experienced outsider — a narrative figure that was new for Tolstoy. This experienced outsider has a higher degree of familiarity and comfort with the Caucasus than the naïve outsider, and he writes in the third person, not the first person. At the same time, though, he has a less academic approach to the ethnographic material than outsider-experts such as the narrator of *Казаки*. This narrator gives the impression of being "an ordinary Russian officer [with]... a talent for observation," not a scholar (Zhiliakova 133).

Unlike in *Казаки*, in "Кавказский пленник," the narrator keeps cultural explanations to a minimum. In fact, there is only one footnote in the entire story: the translation of the word "аул" (307). (He also provides some bracketed translations of other words, such as "Allah," but these are infrequent [317]). On a purely visual level, this change makes "Кавказский пленник" different from any of Tolstoy's previous Caucasian writings. Even aside from the lack of paratextual features, within the text itself, this narrator tends to observe rather than interpret. As Sainaroeva notes, Tolstoy provides detailed descriptions of various Nogai characters' clothing, but it is up to the reader to infer the significance of these descriptions (i.e., the implied differences in age and rank) (56). Later, when the narrator is describing a funeral that takes place in the *aul*, he goes over each step in detail from an external perspective but does not explain why the funeral is carried out in this way (317).

This narrative style relies on motivated rather than unmotivated description. According to Ansgar Nünning, "Descriptions tend to be apparently realistically (e. g. psychologically) motivated mainly in those novels in which they are either focalized through one of the characters or closely tied up with the experiences made by the narrator," whereas unmotivated descriptions come directly from an omniscient narrator (108). The lengthy ethnographic essay in *Какзаки*, for

instance, is unmotivated in that it is not linked to the perspective of any individual character. The same is true of many of the ethnographic explanations that occur throughout this novella. In contrast, the ethnographic information in "Кавказский пленник" is always psychologically motivated. This is primarily because this narrator, while he is omniscient, is more biased toward the perspective of the protagonist than is the narrator of *Казаки*, and most of the ethnographic passages in the story are seen through the eyes of this protagonist, the officer Zhilin.

The relatively consistent narrative perspective indicates that the gap between narrator and protagonist here is smaller than in any of the prior works in Tolstoy's Caucasian cycle. Tolstoy's earlier Caucasian stories employ a dynamic of a knowledgeable narrator contrasted with an ignorant protagonist whose ideas about the Caucasus often come from Romantic literature rather than firsthand experience. Zhilin, however, does not seem to harbour these kinds of illusions. He appears to be relatively competent and experienced in the Caucasus, and the narrator describes how he is able to fit into the Nogai community where he is a prisoner — in marked contrast to Olenin, who is never able to find a place within the Greben Cossack community in spite of his efforts (314). The narrator does not need to elaborate on the observations he gives from Zhilin's perspective because their perspectives are very similar to begin with.

3.4 Native informants

Like their counterparts in other countries, Russian ethnographers frequently consulted members of local cultures – so-called "native informants" – as sources of information. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some of these native informants went on to become scholars themselves. However, prior to this, their input tended to be incorporated within Russian-authored texts. Vera Tolz gives the example of the local "guides" consulted by the ethnographer Petr Uslar (1816-75), most of whose " names... are not remembered today" (115).

In Tolstoy, as well, the voices of non-Russian characters are used to add an appearance of authenticity to the narrators' depictions of the Caucasus but remain subjugated within texts that are dominated by the perspectives of the Russian protagonists. *Казаки*, for instance, sometimes includes glimpses of Cossack characters' perspectives. Near the opening of the Chapter 8, the narrator reports Lukashka's thoughts about an *abrek* he suspects is nearby: "'Ведь тоже караулит или ползет где-нибудь'" (31); later in the chapter, he tells us Lukashka's feelings: "досадно было ему на абреков" (35). Occasionally the narrator also enters the mind of Chechen characters. There is one section late in the novella where the narrator shifts from what is seemingly Olenin's perspective on the Chechens to the thoughts of the Chechens themselves: "Вдруг со стороны чеченцев раздались странные звуки заунывной песни... Чеченцы знали, что им не уйти." The contrast between the insider perspective and Olenin's point of view in this scene is striking: while Olenin compares what he sees to his imagined version of what the Caucasus is like — for example, noticing that the place where the abreks are sitting seems like "exactly the place where abreks should sit" — the Chechens themselves are thinking about more urgent matters (126).

The narrator portrays the thoughts of the Chechens as a group here, not the thoughts of an individual character, which contributes to the sense that he views these characters in particular as typified ethnographic subjects rather than as individuals. There is only one section in the entire novella where the narrator adopts the perspective of an individual Chechen character: in Chapter 21, during the meeting with the brother of the man Lukashka killed. But even this character is described mainly from the outside; the one insight we are given into his internal state is a brief description of his anger (74).

Sometimes ethnographic information also comes from dialogue by insider characters. Frequently this occurs in situations where a Cossack character is explaining some element of their culture to Olenin, a similar rhetorical situation to the scene in "Набег" where the narrator asks his Chechen companion about Shamil. For example, in one scene Lukashka explains the concept of *kunachestvo* to Olenin using the example of a sword he received from Girei-Khan (91). Later on, Diadia Eroshka recounts some of his memories of holidays from his youth and reflects (probably exaggeratedly) on the way traditions have changed: the women used to dress more elaborately, the men used to drink more, and so on (113-14). In both cases, as in "Набег," the reader is led to identify with Olenin, an outsider receiving new information about a culture with which he is unfamiliar.

The narrator also portrays conversations between Cossack characters, with no Russians present. At the end of Chapter 5, Mar'iana and Lukashka's mothers have a conversation about their children's potential marriage that gives the reader insight into cultural issues like matchmaking (24). Later on in the novella, Usten'ka tells Mar'iana that it is important for her to have fun while she can because once she marries Lukashka, she "won't even think of joy, only of children and work" (101). This gives some further (fictionalized) insight into Cossack women's lives, expanding on the external descriptions that the narrator has been providing directly up to this point.

In contrast, the narrator of "Кавказский пленник" does not give us insight into the Nogai characters' minds; in this story, dialogue is the sole source of insider perspectives. When Zhilin first arrives at the *aul,* an interpreter explains the process behind the exchange of prisoners to him: "Тебя... взял Кази-Мугамед... и отдал тебя Абдул-Мурату... Абдул-Мурат теперь твой хозяин" (310). Later on, Abdul-Murat tells Zhilin the meaning of the title "hadji" (hajji): "Кто в

Мекке был, тот называется хаджи и чалму надевает" (315). These explanations seem to get through to the perceptive Zhilin much more effectively than do the Cossack characters' discussions with Olenin. However, the reader never receives access to the conversations the Nogai characters have in Zhilin's absence; the Russian filter in this story is always present.

3.5 Understanding the Caucasus

From Olenin's perspective, informed by the Romantic Caucasus, understanding of the Caucasus is intrinsically linked to self-understanding. Romantic portrayals of the Caucasus, for all their "didactic paraphernalia," frequently treated the region as an outward projection of the inner world of the artist and did not make a firm distinction between the Russian self and the Caucasian other. Romantic-era writers tended to identify with the "Circassians" even as they exoticized and Orientalized them (Greenleaf 114). Olenin, as well, cannot conceive of any method of understanding the Caucasus or the Cossack *stanitsa* that is not intimately linked to his identification with the region's inhabitants. He wants to do more than observe the Cossacks and abreks; he wants to become one of them.

The novella demonstrates the fundamental problems with this attempt to identify with the other. Sometimes this is accomplished through the portrayal of Olenin's own thoughts: "Опомнистя, спросит: о чем он думает? И застает себя или казаком... или абреком... или кабаном, убегающим от себя же самого" (79). The image of Olenin "running away from himself" demonstrates that his attempt to identify with the Caucasian other, even to become the other, requires that he forget his own position as a Russian interloper. This thought also demonstrates the lack of ethnographic specificity with which Olenin approaches the inhabitants of the Caucasus: Cossack, abrek, and boar are all the same to him insofar as they are all representatives of the "natural" way of life that he associates with the Caucasus.

Furthermore, Olenin also fails to recognize that his attempts to become a Cossack render him unintelligible to the members of the very community he is trying to join. This is clear thanks to the narrator's ability to access the perspectives of the non-Russian characters. For instance, the way Mar'iana describes Olenin's behaviour to Usten'ka reveals that it does not endear him to her but instead simply confuses her: "Говорит: я бы хотел казаком Лукашкой быть или твоим братишкой Лазуткой. К чему это он так сказал?" (102). In another scene, the narrator comments on the way Olenin appears to outsiders directly, rather than through a character: "Он думал, что он хорош, ловок и похож на джигита; но это было несправедливо. На взгляд всякого опытного кавказца он все-таки был солдат" (81). Aside from demonstrating the narrator's occasional lapses in objectivity, this comment underlines the fact that in this text, self-understanding requires an awareness not just of one's internal world, but also of one's place in a given community: an ability to see oneself from the outside, in context. Similarly, anyone who wishes to truly understand the Caucasus needs to be cognizant of his own vantage point as an outsider. This attention to perspective is something that Olenin fundamentally lacks and that makes him unable to see the Caucasus for what it is or to fit into the *stanitsa*. (Beletskii, on the other hand, both understands and conforms to the expected role of a Russian officer in the Caucasus, which is what makes him more successful than Olenin in his relations with the Cossacks.)

However, while Olenin's Romanticism makes for an inadequate understanding of the Caucasus, it is not clear that the narrator's realist, ethnographically oriented approach can overcome it. Kyohei Norimatsu argues that the Romantic illusions about the Caucasus represented by Olenin were so conventionalized by this point that they were actually "compulsory" and therefore impossible to supplant with a more realistic perspective (408).

While Olenin displays signs of disillusionment as a result of his experiences in the *stanitsa*, he is unable to fully abandon his Romantic ideas about the Caucasus as a sight of "freedom" and a "natural" way of life. In addition, as Katya Hokanson points out, the "gap between [the narrator and the protagonist] narrow[s]" over the course of the novella, even though it never completely goes away; the binary opposition between realism and Romanticism thus breaks down as the plot develops (220).

In *Казаки*, then, Tolstoy displays less confidence than he did in his earlier stories in the potential of the realist Caucasus to replace pre-existing Romantic portrayals of the region. While the reality that Olenin confronts in Chechnya contradicts the images created by the Romantics, it cannot fully replace these images in his mind. This leaves him in an impossible situation, caught between two different Caucasuses but unable to fully embrace either one. Rather than providing a solution to Olenin's dilemma, Tolstoy limits himself to dwelling on the difficulties inherent to his situation, as summarized by Eroshka's song near the end of the novella: "Мудрено, родимый братец, / На чужой сторонке жить" (130).

In "Кавказский пленник," as well, ethnographic study is not sufficient as a source of knowledge about the Caucasus; in fact, as outlined above, the narrator of this story abandons the scholarly orientation altogether, instead integrating ethnographic information into his narration in a way that keeps the focus on the plot. However, unlike *Казаки*, this novella does suggest it may be possible for Russians to understand the Caucasus. While Zhilin does not draw grandiose conclusions about the Caucasus the way Olenin attempts to, he does manage to acquire some knowledge about Nogai life. He learns the Nogai language and gains acceptance amongst most inhabitants of the *aul* (314). This is a different kind of understanding than the one Olenin seeks,

however: Zhilin never expresses any desire to become Nogai. His knowledge of Nogai culture is purely functional, allowing him to survive his kidnapping.

On the other hand, even this practical portrayal of the North Caucasus, grounded in experience, does not ultimately function as a replacement of the Romantic Caucasus. Like *Казаки*, this story appears at first glance to enter into polemics with the Romantics: Tolstoy takes the title from Pushkin's poem, but changes elements of the plot, most notably replacing the romantic element of Pushkin's poem with Zhilin's friendship with Dina. However, there are elements of the Romantic Caucasus that Tolstoy actually ends up reproducing rather than overcoming in this story, particularly in his depiction of the Nogai characters.

Romantic-era literature set in the Caucasus, as well as non-fiction works like travelogues, tended to stereotype North Caucasians as inherently violent and predatory through their portrayal of practices like kidnapping and abrekism (Bobrovnikov 240). By the 1870s, when Tolstoy published "Кавказский пленник," Russian ethnographers had already begun to realize the inaccuracies of this interpretatoin of North Caucasian cultures. Bobrovnikov notes the linguist Petr Uslar as one example. Writing in 1868, Uslar characterized the Romantic notion of Caucasian "violence" in highly critical terms:

> В эпоху романтизма, и природа и люди на Кавказе были непонятны... Горцев не могли мы себе представить иначе, как на виде людей, одержимых каким-то беснованием... людей, режущих на право и на лево, пока самых их не перережет новое поколение беснующихся. (4-5)

In "Каваказский пленник," Tolstoy reproduces the Romantic stereotype of predatory tribesmen, representing the Nogai characters' violence as an inherent feature of their culture. This impression is largely attributable to the focus on plot and limited discussion of historical

details that characterized the new style Tolstoy began developing in this period. It is also a result of the narrator's Russian perspective: we never get any insight into the Caucasian characters' thoughts and therefore cannot understand their motivation. Without the context of the historical details of the war or the Nogai characters' point of view, when Tolstoy depicts the seemingly mercenary kidnapping of Zhilin or describes how the Nogai children throw stones at the officer upon his arrival in the *aul*, these actions appear to be spontaneous rather than a response to the imperial violence committed by the Russian state (307).[1] This contributes not only to the idea that North Caucasian cultures are inherently "violent" but also to the Romantic-era binary opposition of Russians as "civilized" and Caucasians as "natural" (a feature of Orientalist thought in general).

This is not to say that there is no acknowledgement of Russian violence in this story: we learn that one elderly villager lost his entire family during a Russian raid on the *aul* (315). However, that particular act of violence is contained within the past and is not associated with any of the named Russian characters; Zhilin and his companion Kostylin never commit any violence themselves, whereas the Nogai characters threaten Zhilin with violence throughout the story. The violence associated with the Nogai characters is personalized rather than abstract and is therefore more memorable than the one Russian raid that is mentioned. Thus, partially as a result of Tolstoy's overall move away from the earlier educational project of "Набег" and "Рубка леса," the portrayal of Nogai culture in "Кавказский пленник" does not fully overcome Romantic-era tropes about the North Caucasus. But this story was not Tolstoy's final word on

[1] As Bobrovnikov notes, even the interpretation of "violent" practices (e.g., abrekism and kidnapping) as a reaction to the Russian invasion is too simplistic because it ignores the codification of these practices within local legal systems, i.e., *adat*. However, this "reactive" interpretation was the most common one amongst Russian ethnographers at Tolstoy's time of writing (244).

the issue of Russian violence in this region. The next work in his Caucasian cycle, *Хаджи-Мурат*, would include a much more extensive critique of the Russian imperial project.

Chapter 3. Ethnography and myth-making in *Хаджи-Мурат*

4.1 Introduction to Chapter 3

Хаджи-Мурат is by far the most ethnographically dense work in Tolstoy's Caucasian cycle. Tolstoy composed this novella between 1896 and 1904; it was published posthumously, first in a censored version in 1912 and then in full in 1917. The novella is Tolstoy's final work set in the Caucasus, and in many ways it represents a culmination of the themes he grappled with throughout the earlier parts of the cycle. The narrator of this novella has a less stable identity than the others, shifting between a first-person narrator in the novella's frame and an omniscient figure when recounting the story of Hadji-Murat. [2] He provides the most extended representation of a non-Russian character (the protagonist) found in any of Tolstoy's Caucasian stories. These attributes create the illusion of the reader's having unconditional access to knowledge and understanding of the Avar and Chechen characters in this story, but that illusion belies the novella's attention to the barriers to intercultural understanding that existed by this late point in the Russian imperial project. The novella places particular emphasis on the barriers created by the development of Russian myths about the Caucasian War. In *Хаджи-Мурат*, Tolstoy interrogates the process and mindset behind this myth-making explicitly rather than limiting himself to examining its effects, which sets this novella apart from the rest of his Caucasian cycle.

4.2 Ethnographic knowledge in *Хаджи-Мурат*

By the time Tolstoy completed *Хаджи-Мурат*, it had been several decades since the end of the Caucasian War (1817-64) and Russia's resulting annexation of the North Caucasus. Russian ethnographic research on the Caucasus continued to develop during the intervening

[2] In this chapter, I use the spelling "Hadji-Murat" when referring to Tolstoy's character and "Hadji Murad" when referring to the historical person.

period. According to Vera Tolz, "Not until the 1890s... did Oriental Studies become the second largest area of research after Slavic Studies in the Academy [of Sciences] with thirteen members—all of them either partly or exclusively involved in researching 'Russia's own Orient': the Caucasus, Turkestan, and the non-European communities of western and eastern Siberia and the lower Volga region, as well as 'Oriental' societies bordering the Russian empire" (9). Several journals dedicated to ethnography were founded over the course of the 1880s and 1890s; these included *Этнографическое обозрение* (1889-), published by the Imperial Society of Friends of Natural History, Anthropology, and Ethnography (Императорское общество любителей естествознания, антропологии и этнографии) and *Живая старина* (1891-1916), published by the Imperial Russian Geographical Society (Императорское Русское географическое общество) (Issiyeva 57).

The scope of Russian ethnographic research on the Caucasus also broadened following the end of the war in that independent (non-government-affiliated) researchers began to participate in the field more frequently. Two major figures in the history of Russian Caucasus Studies, Vsevolod Miller and Maksim Kovalevskii, were both active during this time (roughly the late 1870s into the early 20th century). While these researchers' work on various elements of society and culture in the Caucasus helped to "draw attention" to this field of research, Sergei Tokarev notes that "the prevailing character of ethnographic work [in the postwar period] remained official" (i.e., government-run) as the imperial administration strove to gather information on subject peoples from newly annexed regions (312, 310). For example, another important Orientalist from this period, Adol'f Berzhe, was not only a professional researcher but also a bureaucrat. One of his most important publications was the official collection *Акты, собранные Кавказской археографической комиссией*, a series of archival documents on the

Caucasus published in several volumes between 1866 and 1904 (Hamburg 203). Around the same time, the Caucasus Mountain Administration (Кавказское горское управление) commissioned a series called the *Collection of information about the Caucasian mountains* (*Сборник сведений о кавказских горцах*) (1868-81), later renamed *Collection of materials for the description of the localities and tribes of the Caucasus* (*Сборник материалов для описания местностей и племен Кавказа*) (1881-1916) (Tokarev 311). These collections include examples of Caucasian folklore in addition to articles on ethnographic and historical topics.

Tolstoy made extensive use of the large body of ethnographic materials that was available to him by the time he began working on *Хаджи-Мурат*. For instance, he consulted several entries in the *Collection of information* as well as Berzhe's *Акты* and other scholarly publications on the Caucasus (Hamburg 203). Tolstoy also relied on non-academic sources by veterans of the Caucasian War; he read *Двадцать пять лет на Кавказе (1842-1867)* by A. L. Zisserman (the essayist mentioned in Ch. 1), a multivolume work that was published between 1879 and 1884, and the memoirs of V. A. Poltoratskii, which were published in *Исторический вестник* in 1893 (Sergeenko, "Неизданные тексты," 519).

This research is reflected the novella's rich ethnographic content. As in all of his Caucasian texts, Tolstoy pays close attention to the Chechen and Avar — as well as Russian — characters' clothing in this story. The rhythm of the narrative is often punctuated by the Muslim characters' daily prayers. Vladimir Goudakov notes the novella's portrayal of *kunachestvo* between Hadji-Murat and Sado, and later Vorontsov, as another example of its ethnographic focus (38-39). *Хаджи-Мурат* also contains multiple examples of North Caucasian songs and stories, many of which Tolstoy took directly from the *Collection of information* (Hamburg 204).

4.3 Omniscience and the identity of the narrator

But just who is providing us with these ethnographic details? In the opening and closing passages of the story (the frame narrative), the narrator is a clearly Russian-coded figure. He speaks in the first person as he tells the reader about his experience of walking through a field, seeing a thistle, and being reminded of the story of Hadji-Murat. (This passage is based on one of Tolstoy's own experiences, though Donna Orwin notes that Tolstoy altered his depiction of this scene in a way that clearly distinguishes the narrator from the author [126]). The narrator's reference to the "part [of the story of Hadji-Murat] that [he] saw" ("часть которого я видел") establishes his identity as a veteran of the Caucasian War (another parallel with Tolstoy) (28). In the final sentence of the novella, the narrator again returns to the first-person perspective and to the rhetorical stance of someone reminiscing about the past: "Вот эту-то смерть и напомнил мне раздавленный репей среди вспаханного поля" (118). In between the opening and closing passages, though, when telling the story of Hadji-Murat, the narrator loses his physical form and morphs into an omniscient figure who has access to a variety of different perspectives.

Despite his omniscience, the internal narrator has a highly variable level of objectivity. Ani Kokobobo writes that the novella is "surprisingly devoid of Tolstoy's opinionated authorial voice," which is mainly true of the scenes describing non-Russian characters ("Enigmatic" 38). Even the description of Shamil contains little to no commentary from the narrator himself; while the narrator does portray actions clearly meant to evoke the reader's judgment, such as Shamil's threat to blind Iusuf, he does not offer his own opinion on them (90). But when describing Russians, the narrator is less restrained. His description of Nikolai I is particularly scathing. Amongst other flaws, the narrator highlights the tsar's lack of sexual morals by indicating his state of mind when having an affair with a young girl: "О том, что распутство женатого

человека было не хорошо, ему и не приходило в голову" (79). Later, he points to the hypocrisy of Nikolai's pride in Russia's lack of a death penalty, given the punishment he assigns to the Polish student:

> Николай знал, что двенадцать тысяч шпицрутенов была не только верная, мучительная смерть, но излишняя жестокость, так как достаточно было пяти тысяч ударов, чтобы убить самого сильного человека. Но ему приятно было быть неумолимо жестоким и приятно было думать, что у нас нет смертной казни. (72-73)

Nonetheless, while he is not entirely objective, this narrator, in contrast to previous ones, is unbiased in an ethnographic sense in that he does not openly align himself with any one ethnic group. Tolstoy's early short stories have first-person Russian narrators, and the narrator of "Рубка леса" even refers to Russian soldiers as "our soldiers" (64). While *Казаки* has an omniscient narrator, the narration is dominated by the perspective of the Russian protagonist, Olenin; the narrator gives extensive insight into Olenin's thoughts and feelings but provides only occasional glimpses into those of the non-Russian characters. A similar phenomenon occurs in "Кавказский пленник," which is narrated entirely from Zhilin's point of view and has no narration from the perspective of the Nogai characters. The narrator of this latter story aligns himself with Russianness even more explicitly by referring to various elements of Nogai culture as "ихний" ("their"), as in the passage about Zhilin's acquisition of the Nogai language: "Стал Жилин немножко понимать по-ихнему" (314). In contrast, Elena Masolova observes that the narrator of *Хаджи-Мурат* never uses the term "наш/наша/наши" unless he is speaking from the perspective of a character; the same is true of the word "враг" (169). This careful use of language creates an illusion of cultural neutrality.

This narrator also continues the shift begun in "Кавказский пленник" away from a scholarly narrator toward more of a storyteller figure. In his earlier Caucasian stories, Tolstoy rarely presents a piece of ethnographic information without explaining it for a presumably ignorant readership; here, with the exception of a handful of in-text translations, such explanations are sparse. Readers are left to interpret the meaning of non-Russian phrases and cultural practices themselves. The novella is also completely void of footnotes. These changes deprivilege the Russian perspective: readers accustomed to having cultural information explained for them have to adapt themselves to the North Caucasus and its people, rather than the other way around.

Additionally, while Tolstoy does often incorporate ethnonyms in *Хаджи-Мурат*, much as he did in *Казаки*, they do not have the effect of reducing individual characters to ethnographic types here the way they do in the earlier novella. In *Казаки*, non-Russian characters, including major characters such as Luka, are frequently referred to simply as "казак" or "татар *[sic.]*"; this reduction of non-Russian characters to their ethnicity is also present in "Кавказский пленник," where the narrator often refers to the villagers as "ногаец" or "ногайка." In *Хаджи-Мурат*, on the other hand, a character may be called "аварец Ханефи" or "чеченец Гамзало," but a single character is never referred to simply as "аварец," "чеченец," or "горец" unless the narrator is speaking from the perspective of a Russian character (the narrator himself uses words like these to refer only to groups, not individuals) (23). The characters' individual functions in the story take precedence over their status as representatives of various ethnic groups.

Further suggesting Tolstoy's continued shift away from an overtly ethnographic orientation is the fact that he relied on his own imagination for many elements of the story, including some seemingly factual parts. For instance, while most of the songs in the novella

come from ethnographic sources, Tolstoy made up the words to Patimat's song himself (Layton 278). He also changed the names of several of Hadji Murad's family members. The historical Hadji Murad's mother was named Zalmu; he had two wives, Darizha and Sanu, and two sons, Gulla and Hadji Murad. In *Хаджи-Мурат*, Zalmu becomes Patimat; Gulla becomes Iusuf, while the second son is never named; we also only find out the name of one of his wives, who in the novella is called Sofiat. These changes are clearly intentional and cannot be attributed to simple ignorance or error. Masolova suggests that Tolstoy might have chosen these names for their Arabic meanings (Fatimat meaning "light-faced," Sofiat meaning "pure" or "stainless," etc.) (167). Sofiat is a particularly appropriate choice given the novella's running thread comparing virtuous North Caucasian women with their immoral Russian counterparts. In sum, these alterations indicate a turn away from the educational aims of Tolstoy's earlier Caucasian fiction and from his allegiance to extratextual accuracy.

4.4 Insider voices and proximity

Хаджи-Мурат provides the most direct representation of non-Russian characters found within Tolstoy's Caucasian cycle. There is no Russian protagonist within the novella to act as a filter between the Caucasian cultures presented and the narrator. Instead, *Хаджи-Мурат* has an Avar protagonist whose perspective is the first one the reader encounters within the internal narrative; it opens with a description of his journey to Sado's house: "Это было в конце 1851-го года. В холодный ноябрьский вечер Хаджи-Мурат въезжал в курившийся душистым дымом чеченский немирной аул Махнет" (6).

This narrator appears to have more access to the thoughts and feelings of the non-Russian (here, Avar and Chechen) characters than Tolstoy's previous narrators did, which creates an illusion of proximity between these characters and the reader. For instance, in the opening

chapter, the narrator tells us Sado's feelings about his dangerous decision to have Hadji-Murat as his guest:

> Садо знал, что, принимая Хаджи-Мурата, он рисковал жизнью... Но это не только не смущало, но радовало Садо. Садо считал своим долгом защищать гостя — кунака, хотя бы это стоило ему жизни, и он радовался на себя, гордился собой за то, что поступает так, как должно. (11-12)

This passage is also an example of the way the narrator integrates ethnographic information (here, on *kunachestvo*) into the narrative rather than marking it out as separate from the flow of the story: he portrays Sado's feelings about the practice directly rather than drawing broad, extratextually oriented conclusions about Chechen culture that would distract the reader from the plot.

Of course, the protagonist's thoughts are also frequently the subject of the narrator's omniscient perspective. Early on in the novella, when Hadji-Murat is contemplating his resistance to Shamil, the narrator informs us that he is confident in his ability to achieve success because he "always believe[s] in his own luck" (всегда верил в свое счастие) (24). Later we find out his feelings about Major Petrov and Mar'ia Dmitrievna: "К Ивану Матвеевичу Хаджи-Мурат с первого знакомства с ним почувствовал отвращение... Марья Дмитриевна... особенно нравилась ему" (84). But the most significant insight into Hadji-Murat's mind comes in the final scene, during his death, where the narrator shifts between an internal and external perspective:

> Когда первый подбежавший к нему Гаджи-Ага ударил его большим кинжалом по голове, ему казалось, что его молотком бьют по голове, и он не мог понять, кто это

> делает и зачем. Это было последнее его сознание связи с своим телом... Алая кровь хлынула из артерий шеи и черная из головы и залила траву. (117)

The internal passages in this scene demonstrate that the narrator has access not only to Hadji-Murat's thoughts, but also to a deeper level of his consciousness during the all-important moment of his death.

Finally, as in *Казаки*, this narrator sometimes represents the perspectives of non-Russian characters as a group rather than as individuals (as Tolstoy sometimes does with Russian characters in his other works). For instance, when surveying the aftermath of a Russian raid on a Chechen *aul,* the narrator describes the Chechen characters' feelings about the event and the people responsible for it:

> О ненависти к русским никто и не говорил. Чувство, которое испытывали все чеченцы от мала до велика, было сильнее ненависти. Это была не ненависть, а непризнание этих русских собак людьми и такое отвращение, гадливость и недоумение перед нелепой жестокостью этих существ, что желание истребления их, как желание истребления крыс, ядовитых пауков и волков, было таким же естественным чувством, как чувство самосохранения. (81)

In this passage, the narrator uses the Chechens as a mouthpiece for the novella's anti-imperial message.

The adoption of the Caucasian other's perspective was a common device in the Romantic literary Caucasus as well. By naming his novella after and basing it around the life of a non-Russian protagonist, Tolstoy picks up on a tradition found in earlier works like Bestuzhev-Marlinsky's novella *Аммалат-Бек* (1831) and Lermontov's long poems *Хаджи Абрек* (1835) and *Измаил-Бей* (1843). All three works are, like Tolstoy's, based on the lives of real historical

figures: *Хаджи Абрек* drew inspiration from the life of the Chechen leader Beibulat Taimiev (1779-1832); *Измаил-Бей* is based on the Kabardian prince Izmail-Bei Atazhukin (1750-1811/12); as mentioned in Ch. 1, *Аммалат-Бек* is based on Umalat-Bek of Buinak (date of birth unknown; d. sometime after 1831).

Even more than Lermontov's poems, *Аммалат-Бек* shares a number of points in common with *Хаджи-Мурат*. Like Tolstoy's novella, *Аммалат-Бек* has an omniscient narrator who has access to the perspective of the novella's non-Russian (in this case, Kumyk) protagonist. Bestuzhev-Marlinskii's text also includes letters and diary entries by both Ammalat-Bek and the Russian colonel Verkhovskii, a parallel to Tolstoy's own use of inserted documents. However, this novella contains many more explanations of non-Russian words and cultural practices than does *Хаджи-Мурат*, particularly in its abundant footnote annotations. In addition, Bestuzhev-Marlinskii's narrator, unlike Tolstoy's, does not mask his cultural identity; his footnote explanations refer to Russian culture using the term "наш," as in his explanation of the word Jumu'ah: "Джума соответствует нашей неделе, то есть воскресенью" (182). While Tolstoy employs a culturally neutral narrator, Bestuzhev-Marlinskii's speaks from an openly Russian perspective, as an outsider expert on the Caucasus.

4.5 Autobiography and the native informant figure

The life history is an ethnographic genre that is intimately linked to the figure of the native informant. The first two volumes of the *Сборник сведений* include an example of this genre: a memoir by Abdulla Omar-Ogly (Omarov) of the *aul* Kumukh, entitled "Воспоминания муталима." (Omarov was a rare example of one of Uslar's "guides" who went on to establish his own academic career.) An editor's note appended to the first instalment of the memoir, which the editor frames as an ethnographic document, reflects the attitude Russian researchers had toward

native informants. He notes the memoir's interest as a source of ethnographic information and insight into "aspects of the mountaineers' daily life" (черт из быта горцев). Additionally, according to the editor, native informants' testimonies are an even more valuable source of information than reports by Russian ethnographers because they offer a glimpse of the "local worldview" (туземное мировоззрение) (13). Of course, interest in the opinions and experiences of local people was not driven merely by scholarly inquiry. A line from the introduction to this same volume of the *Collection* makes this clear: "Тут представляется множество, так сказать, девственного материала для любознательности, для науки. Но к этому присоединяется новый интерес, не столько научный, сколько гражданственный, практический" (I).

In the novella, the fictional Hadji-Murat dictates his own life history to Vorontsov's aide-de-camp Loris-Melikov, who transcribes it and translates it into Russian. This scene is based on a real event; the resulting document was published as part of a collection of materials about Hadji Murad in the journal *Русская старина* in 1881. (The collection also includes a series of letters by Vorontsov, one of which Tolstoy reproduced directly in the novella.) Tolstoy mentions reading this collection in the notes he kept while working on *Хаджи-Мурат* (Sergeenko, "История писания," 584). The real Hadji Murad's testimony consists mainly of an accumulation of information on various battles, the size of Shamil's army and wealth, and the reasons why Hadji Murad began to oppose the Imam; his childhood, an important topic in Tolstoy's narrative, is never even mentioned.

Tolstoy supplemented his version of Hadji Murad's life with information he gained from Zisserman's memoir as well as through interviews with Zisserman himself (Sergeenko, "Неизданные тексты," 519). The first part (часть) of the memoir includes some information that Tolstoy may have used in the life history scene, such as background on Hadji Murad's milk

brother Osman (412), while the second outlines many of the events of 1851-52 that make up the rest of the novella's plot (Hadji Murad's defection to the Russians and his death) (87-95). Tolstoy also combined Hadji Murad's life story with ethnographic information that he obtained from Omarov's memoir. In particular, Tolstoy's notes demonstrate that he consulted the memoir for "details of life, food, education" in Dagestan (Sergeenko, "Zapisi," 276).

One type of source that Tolstoy seemingly did not have access to when researching Hadji Murad was the wealth of Dagestani narratives of the naib's life (partially because some of these sources did not become available until after Tolstoy's death). The biography of Hadji Murad by his son Gulla and his grandson Kazanbii, for example, was first published in Russian in 1927. This text includes a theme that was common in reports of Hadji Murad's life: comparisons between the naib and Imam Shamil. Unsurprisingly, Kazanbii's account interprets Hadji Murad favourably in comparison to the Imam. The conclusion quotes Shamil himself as claiming that had he kept Hadji Murad close and not listened to the people who slandered (кляузничали) him, he (Shamil) would not have ended up being imprisoned in Gunib (49).

According to Gould, positive presentations of Hadji Murad like Kazanbii's are common in "vernacular [i.e., non-Arabic] sources" from Dagestan, whereas "many Daghestani Arabic sources stayed with the narrative that was generated from within the imamate." Gould gives the example of the chronicle of the Caucasian War written by the Imam's "official historian" Muhammad Tahir al-Qarakhi, who "goes out of his way to portray Ḥājjī Murād in a negative light and to insist that the nāʾib's desertion to the Russians was an act of cowardice, springing from flaws intrinsic to his character" (*Writers and Rebels* 98-99). The text, which was first published in 1872, characterizes Hadji Murad's actions as betrayals of Shamil (e.g., al-Qarakhi 52) and at one point refers to Hadji Murad's followers as an "army of hypocrites" (41).

Hence, Tolstoy's overall interpretation of Hadji Murad's life, favourable in its presentation of the naib compared to Shamil, aligns with vernacular Dagestani sources (rather than official Arabic-language sources), including the version produced by Hadji Murad's family. However, Tolstoy took some liberties at the level of specific details, especially compared to Hadji Murad's own account of his life. In his adaptation of Loris-Melikov's transcription, Tolstoy transformed what was essentially a collection of military intel into a complete life narrative for the purposes of his story. By adding information about Hadji-Murat's childhood and his family to the transcription, Tolstoy makes his protagonist a more sympathetic figure, which helps to strengthen the anti-imperial message of the novella.

In addition, by expanding on Hadji Murad's testimony and inserting ethnographic information into it that he gleaned from other sources, Tolstoy transforms Hadji-Murat into an insider source of information on Avar culture. The protagonist also takes on this role in some of his dialogue, in scenes where Tolstoy has him convey a piece of ethnographic information to a Russian character rather than having the narrator explain it directly (much as he does with Diadia Eroshka in *Казаки*). For instance, in one scene Hadji-Murat explains the gift-giving aspect of *kunachestvo* to Mar'ia Dmitrievna (31). Later in the novella, when the officer Petrovskii asks for his opinion on Tbilisi, he replies in a manner that hints at the differences between Avar and Russian women: "У каждого народа свои обычаи. У нас женщины так не одеваются" (92). In both cases, Hadji-Murat is put in the position of a native informant, explaining his culture to outsiders.

At the same time, however, Hadji-Murat's perspective does not function as an unproblematized source of ethnographic authenticity in the sense that the editor of Omarov's memoir describes. The occasional glimpses of Hadji Murat's perspective, outlined above, do not

mean that his mind is fully accessible to the reader; there are many places where the narrator chooses to represent him only from an external perspective. These external representations occur above all in scenes where Hadji-Murat is among aristocratic Russians, such as when he is staying with Vorontsov Jr. and when he attends Vorontsov Sr.'s ball. In scenes like these, the reader has to rely on descriptions of Hadji-Murat's body language and reports of his speech. And depending on whom he is speaking to, the protagonist's speech can either clarify or further obscure the situation: while he explains *kunachestvo* to Mar'ia Dmitrievna in a relatively straightforward way, his response to Petrovskii is more evasive. As the latter example demonstrates, Hadji-Murat's way of speaking about his own culture is sometimes far more ambivalent than that of the more direct native informants Eroshka and Luka.

The narrator also uses an external perspective when describing the scene in which Hadji-Murat dictates his life story to Loris-Melikov, providing what amounts to a transcript of the characters' dialogue. The narration is aligned with Loris-Melikov's perspective, and yet we never get any insight into Loris-Melikov's own thoughts. In addition, any information we receive about Hadji-Murat's thoughts comes either from Loris-Melikov's observations of his body language or from the dialogue, as a direct result of the questions Loris-Melikov himself asks. Many of the questions he poses during the interview are inquiries into Hadji Murad's thoughts, feelings, and motivations. For example, upon learning that Hadji-Murat became more sympathetic to *khazavat* (*gazavat*) after his visit with Baron Rozen in 1832, Loris-Melikov asks: "Отчего ж переменились мысли?... не понравились русские?" (50). Later, when Hadji-Murat reports that he fled Khunzakh following the death of Umma-Khan, Loris-Melikov expresses his surprise: "Вот как?... Я думал, что ты никогда ничего не боялся." The latter statement prompts Hadji-Murat to respond in a way that gives the reader insight into the naib's personal

code of behaviour: “Потом никогда; с тех пор я всегда вспоминал этот стыд, и когда вспоминал, то уже ничего не боялся” (51). In this scene, Loris-Melikov acts as a surrogate narrator, transforming the usually concealed process of the narrator’s inquiry into characters’ thoughts into explicit questions. By structuring the scene in this way, Tolstoy changes the text of the historical Loris-Melikov’s transcription, which, aside from Zisserman’s footnotes, reads as a single-authored, cohesive narrative, into an overt dialogue between the Avar leader and the Russian aide-de-camp.

Like the narrator himself, Loris-Melikov adopts a stance of full transparency in this scene. He presents himself as a vessel through which Hadji-Murat can convey his story to the Tsar, thanks to Loris-Melikov’s ability to translate it into a language Nikolai can understand (Russian) and to transform the oral account into a written document, which will allow for the story to be physically transported from Tbilisi to the imperial centre, St. Petersburg. Of course, the appearance of transparency is an illusion: through his questions and his repeated insistence that Hadji-Murat tell “everything, from the beginning” (все с начала), Loris-Melikov takes part in shaping the narrative, not just recording it (49). Hadji-Murat himself also participates in this shaping process; by the end of the scene, it becomes clear that he is telling this story in the hopes of accomplishing a specific goal (retrieving his family), not just providing Loris-Melikov with raw material. What emerges in this dialogue, then, is a form of fictionalized co-authorship, a collaboration between the surrogate narrator and the protagonist. This co-authorship rests on a kind of contract between the narrator and his subject: after Hadji-Murat instructs Loris-Melikov to tell the Tsar that “while [his] family is [with Shamil], [he] can’t do anything” (пока семья там, я ничего не могу делать), the aide-de-camp repeats his earlier promise to pass along his

message: “Я скажу” (59). The repetition of Loris-Melikov’s promise emphasizes that the narrator has a basic responsibility to the person whose story he is attempting to convey.

Of course, Loris-Melikov ultimately fails in his effort to pass on Hadji-Murat’s story. The transcription never receives mention during Nikolai’s audience with Chernyshev; they refer only to Vorontsov’s report. Nikolai also neglects to consider the one issue that is most important to Hadji-Murat: his family. Even if Nikolai had read Hadji-Murat’s account, we can assume it would not have made a difference, anyway, because of what the narrator tells us about his decision-making process near the opening of the chapter: “благодаря дурному расположению духа Николая, Хаджи-Мурат остался на Кавказе, и судьба его не изменилась так, как она могла бы измениться, если бы Чернышев делал свой доклад в другое время” (64). In the grotesque intersection of autocracy and imperialism depicted here, Nikolai does not even pay attention to the opinions of his own bureaucrats, let alone that of Hadji-Murat himself; he follows only his own whims. The imperial government in this story collects the voices of native informants like Hadji-Murat as sources of intel, but this does not mean that native informants themselves have a say in Russian decision-making, even when it comes to decisions about their own fate.

4.6 Myths

Like Nikolai, Russian readers at Tolstoy’s time of writing tended to get most of their knowledge about the Caucasus from Russian texts about the region rather than from first-hand experience. According to Layton,

> old Tolstoy in *Hadji-Murat* tackled a textual enterprise about the civilizing mission which was much vaster than the big romantic ‘poem’ he had spurned in his youth. By the end of the century in Russia, a complete interpenetration of popular history and literature had

> taken place to form a giant imperial epic of European 'triumph over obstinate barbarism' in the Caucasus... there was no clear-cut division between the historical and literary Caucasus in popular consciousness in the post-war decades of the nineteenth century. (261)

By the late nineteenth century, then, it was clear that earlier efforts to replace the variety of Orientalist myths surrounding the Caucasus with an authoritative representation grounded in extratextual fact had failed. Faced with this realization, Tolstoy, who had already begun to move away from this educational project in earlier texts, adopted a new approach to his portrayal of the Caucasus in *Хаджи-Мурат*. Tolstoy's previous stories often referenced the misleading effects of authors like Lermontov and Bestuzhev-Marlinskii, and *Хаджи-Мурат* contains a similar critique of the Romantic Caucasus via the character Butler. But *Хаджи-Мурат* is also the first work in Tolstoy's Caucasian cycle to examine not just the effects but the process of Russian myth-making about the Caucasus.

The theme of myth-making is clear from the very beginning of the novella, when the narrator openly admits to having "imagined" parts of the story he is about to tell (6). This acknowledgement is in sharp contrast to many previous representations of the Caucasus, which, as outlined in Ch. 1, tended to emphasize the veracity of their plots rather than the imaginative element. Pushkin's numerous footnote references to non-fiction sources explicitly link his "Кавказский пленник" to extratextual reality; Bestuzhev-Marlinskii goes even further, including a "Note" (Примечание) at the end of *Аммалат-Бек* that states outright that he did not invent the plot of this story: "Описанное выше происшествие не выдумка" (304). Sometimes this attestation to a story's basis in fact was accomplished through its generic label: Verderevskii's *Плен у Шамиля* (1856) is labeled "правдивая повесть," while *Аммалат-Бек*

was published under the label "быль," a term referring to a story based on real events. Tolstoy's "Кавказский пленник" shares this label "быль," and while his other Caucasian stories do not have the explicit notes on their factual basis that Bestuzhev-Marlinskii's frequently do, their narrators still do not openly admit to inventing parts of the story the way the narrator of *Хаджи-Мурат* does.

But it is not just the narrator who creates fictions in *Хаджи-Мурат*. The aristocratic Russian characters in the story also participate in their own form of oral myth-making about the protagonist. For instance, the narrator does not present the story of Hadji-Murat's death directly; instead, he frames it by having the Russian officer Kamenev, who witnessed the events in question, recount it to Butler (110). The narrator's role becomes that of someone reporting an instance of storytelling rather than an actual event.

In an earlier chapter, Vorontsov receives news about Hadji-Murat's imminent arrival in Tiflis and reports the news to his guests in terms that underline how Hadji-Murat's reputation precedes him: "знаменитый, храбрейший помощник Шамиля Хаджи-Мурат." What follows is a lengthy scene in which Vorontsov's guests exchange their own stories about the protagonist: "генерал рассказал про то, как Хаджи-Мурат в 43-м году, после взятия горцами Гергебиля, наткнулся на отряд генерала Пассека и как он, на их глазах почти, убил полковника Золотухина... грузинский князь... громким голосом стал рассказывать про похищение Хаджи-Муратом вдовы Ахмет-хана Мехтулинского" (41).

After the latter story, Vorontsov and the prince disagree over whether Hadji-Murat acted "honourably" in his treatment of the widow, with Vorontsov defending Hadji-Murat. This prompts a realization on the part of the other guests: "Придворные поняли, что чем больше приписывать значения Хаджи-Мурату, тем приятнее будет князю Воронцову" (41-43). The

sudden shift in tone that follows this realization demonstrates the extent to which Russians' interpretations of the North Caucasus are determined by their own interests and perspectives rather than by allegiance to fact; the guests begin to praise Hadji-Murat as a "great man" (большой человек) and a talented military commander who "could have been a new Napoleon" had he not been born in Asia (41-44). The guests' conversation also reflects some standard elements of Russian discourse about "mountaineers" from this period. The general's description of Hadji-Murat's ambush on a Russian regiment (prior to the realization that Vorontsov expects to hear praise of Hadji-Murat) is reminiscent of the depictions of sword-wielding maniacs criticized by Uslar; the prince's tale reflects the hold that kidnapping stories had on the minds of nineteenth-century Russian audiences (Grant xiv).

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said states that "Orientalism is premised... upon the fact that the Orientalist, poet or scholar, makes the Orient speak" (20). The Russian characters' habit of consulting one another as authoritative sources of information about Hadji-Murat exemplifies this tendency to ignore Indigenous people's ability to speak for themselves. Tolstoy's presentation of characters who are more interested in Romantic-era stories of the Caucasus than in the Caucasus itself, a thread that runs through his entire Caucasian cycle, is also similar to what Said calls the "textual attitude" inherent to Orientalism, i.e., "the idea... that people, places, and experiences can always be described by a book, so much so that the book (or text) acquires a greater authority, and use, even than the reality it describes" (93). Nonetheless, Tolstoy did not fully escape this "textual attitude" himself, as his reliance on Russian ethnographic studies and travelogues as sources for the plot of *Хаджи-Мурат* demonstrates. Tolstoy was highly critical of other writers' depictions of the North Caucasus, but his own representation of the region in

this novella is deeply embedded in Orientalist texts, including texts produced by the same imperial government that Tolstoy condemns so strongly.[3]

[3] The idea that Tolstoy's use of Russian ethnographic sources implicates him in Orientalism is one I originally used in a paper completed for Prof. Stephanie Posthumus's LLCU 609 seminar (Fall 2019/20).

Conclusion

Tolstoy's vision of the Caucasus shifted significantly over the course of his career. Initially, in the 1850s, he set out to replace what he viewed as the falseness of the Romantic Caucasus with his own realist image of the region. Simultaneously, he attempted to educate his readers through his incorporation of ethnographic information, though he limited his ethnographic focus to the portrayal of ethnic Russians. Tolstoy later expanded this vision by shifting to omniscient narration and incorporating depictions of non-Russians more directly; at the same time, he slowly began to move away from the extratextual orientation of his earlier stories. Finally, in *Хаджи-Мурат*, the ethnographic information is not presented didactically at all, but is instead fully incorporated into the plot. This last work is ultimately more focused on drawing the reader's attention to Russians' tendency to create myths about the Caucasus than it is on replacing those myths with a "true," reliable representation of the Caucasus and the people who live there.

The semi-factual portrayal of the Caucasus in Tolstoy's work has led to mixed responses, particularly in the North Caucasus itself. *Хаджи-Мурат*, as the most iconic work in the cycle, is the best representative of this trend. Gould writes that "[m]ore than any other Russian text, Tolstoy's novella informs vernacular Caucasus narratives of anticolonial insurgency... Tolstoy's text [has] acquired an afterlife its author could hardly have foreseen." She notes that Rasul Gamzatov, for example, drew inspiration from Tolstoy's novella for his poem "Голова Хаджи-Мурата" (*Writers and Rebels* 166). The citation of Tolstoy on two monuments to Hadji-Murat recently built in Dagestan further attests to the author's enduring influence there (Kokobobo, "Why," 273). At the same time, Tolstoy's novella has also drawn criticism for its inaccuracies. For example, just last year the historian Patimat Takhnaeva stated that her disagreement with

Tolstoy's version of Hadji Murad was one of the inspirations for her decision to write her own biography of the naib: "Я не поверила 'Хаджи-Мурату' Льва Толстого. Это чужой человек, не имевший никакого отношения к нам, аварцам" (Gafurova, n.p.).

In *Хаджи-Мурат*, Loris-Melikov's promise to the protagonist suggests that writers have a duty to represent their subjects faithfully. As Takhnaeva's comment indicates, Tolstoy's Caucasian fiction does not necessarily accomplish this. While Tolstoy incorporated more accurate ethnographic information into his stories than did most previous writers, the strong element of fictionalization present in his Caucasian cycle is undeniable. But a purely factual portrayal of the Caucasus was not, in the end, Tolstoy's goal. In his Caucasian cycle, as in some of his other works, Tolstoy instead aimed at a form of truth that he believed was only possible in fiction.

Gary Saul Morson, discussing *Война и мир*, calls this a "negative" approach to truth, based on a total rejection of the possibility of a truly reliable representation of reality. As Morson argues, for Tolstoy, the advantage of fiction is not that it contains fewer distortions than historiographical or even eyewitness accounts but that "a novelist can depict the kind of process that must have introduced distortions," as Tolstoy does by turning Hadji Murad's life story from a document into a live interview, thereby exposing the various factors that were at play in its composition (110). What is important is that in both *Война и мир* and his Caucasian cycle, Tolstoy does not attempt to replace the distorted narratives with his own authoritative alternative; his versions of events have their own limitations, of which he is aware. Thus, Tolstoy's ethnographic knowledge, while extensive, did not allow him to create a singularly "truthful" image of the Caucasus because truth does not actually come from this kind of seemingly objective information. Instead, the ability to perceive the truth relies on an awareness of the

constraints imposed by one's own perspective and, as the frame narrator of *Хаджи-Мурад* exemplifies, on a willingness to acknowledge the act of "imagination" that is inherent to any attempt to represent another person.

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