

Title: A Martial Poetics? New Approaches to *War and Peace*  
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This paper draws connections between military strategy and the authorial strategies employed by Lev Tolstoy in *War and Peace*. The study of strategy as well as literary texts leads to a common dilemma: the desire to establish prescriptive principles to attain martial prowess or artistic perfection, which instead results in epigonous, predictable commanders and authors. Principles run counter to creative agency by definition, and they are equally available to informed enemies and readers. This parallel between tactics and poetics would have been intimately familiar to Lev Tolstoy, who fought as a line officer on three fronts at the beginning of his literary career. His depiction of war in the Caucasus and Sevastopol is already remarkable for its emphasis on chaos and contingency, while his narratives deflate Romantic conventions of the officer's life and heroism.

The paper argues for a reading of *War and Peace* as a critique of tactics and poetics, specifically involving pre-Clausewitzian maneuver warfare and the novel form. The former is part of the novel's fictional content, whereas the jaggy, contingency driven narrative is aimed against the expectations of the genre. It is argued that Tolstoy offers a solution to the shared dilemma of tactics and poetics with his emphasis on scale, where that which is contingent in war and in the narrative on one scale can be anticipated on a different scale. Accordingly, principles can coexist with originality if they accommodate depth of scale, since every scale – from the general to the private, and the epic to the lyric – follows its own principles among contingency and spontaneity. The paper suggests the metaphor of the 'chain' for Tolstoy's approach to war and narrative literature, as used in "the chain of command" and "the Great Chain of Being."