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## WOMEN IN TOLSTOY'S NOVELS

### Женские образы в романах Л.Н. Толстого

**Ключевые слова:** толстовские романы, женский вопрос, роман воспитания, нарратология, психологизм

**Keywords:** Tolstoy's novels, gender/women questions, Bildungsroman, narratology, psychologism

**Аннотация.** Статья представляет собой размышления на тему толстовских романов с точки зрения «женского вопроса». Основное внимание уделяется роману воспитания, преобладают и аспекты нарратологии и психологизма.

**Abstract:** This paper is attempted to show the results of a research on Tolstoy's novels from the aspect of gender/women questions. The characteristic features of Bildungsroman can be found in these novels. The aspects of narratology and psychologism are also represented in the research.

This paper is attempted to show the results of my research and the conclusion of my doctoral (PhD) dissertation (handed in at ELTE University Budapest in 2015) in a wide context. Actuality of this research lies in the fact that the question of gender becomes lively nowadays. It is more and more obvious that in spite of the centuries-old effort we do not know exactly the role of women in family and in society. The art, even inside it literature and literary works especially Tolstoy's novels can give us help to get closer to the solution of the problem, moreover the women's roles, faces and masks, secrets, background of social conditionings, emotional – volitional power relations can be known.

Tolstoy's opinion on the art and that of some his contemporaries as well as the new interpretation of the most important Tolstoy's works were in the centre of my attention during my research.

To focus our attention on literature of Russia and that of other slavic countries one can notice that subject of feminism either was not even touched upon or was hardly mentioned until now. But there is a change in these days. It can be seen that interest in women's question arises among literary men. Scientific conferences are being held in the university centres, series of articles are being published in newspapers, even monographs containig articles on female topic are being issued. These papers try to discuss on the role of women writers and on women's identity in Russia and in other slavic countries.

There are a lot of areas to uncover, more tasks to do, problems to solve; datas already collected to correct, exact figures to find, new facts should be collected, interpretations should be checked up.

It is important to open wide cultural and antropological perspectives, to study comparative aspects that give opportunities for example for the followings: to compare the Russian with the European, the eastern with the western, the national with the universal, the contemporary phenomenon with the past one and the future.

This perception created the basis of the slavic conference held at the university of town in Poland named Opole in October 2013. The title of the conference was: *Między tradycją a nowoczesnością. Tożsamość kobiety w przestrzeni domu, w historii, kulturze i na drogach emancypacji* (Between Tradition and Modernity. Women's Identity at Home, in History, on Ways of Emancipation)

Representatives of several disciplines: philologists, historians, historiographers, theologians, culturologists, philosophers, sociologists took part at this interdisciplinary conference. Even not only Poles, but representatives of international scientific institutions were also present.

I myself also took part on this meeting and first I made known the agenda of my presentation in English, afterwards I presented reults of my doctoral research in Russian. Title of my presentation was: *Каноническая женская судьба и толстовская мораль, их пересечение в романе Анна Каренина* (Canonical Women's Fate and L. Tolstoy's Ethics, their Intersection in the Novel Anna Karenina). Ennek az előadásnak az anyaga megjelenés alatt van (vagy nem...) Oroszországban, Barnaulban, a helyi egyetem digitális folyóiratában.

I also regarded important to intorduce the personality of the author, his opinion on art to unfold the essence of literary works, to use suitable points of view to the research. That is why I took into account aspects of sociology of literature. This topic is introduced in the first chapter of my dissertation. I thought we could know the Tolstoyan description of women more accuratly in this way.

The analysis of Tolstoyan literary works from the aspects of literary and biblical pretexts and parallels of the world literature is in the centre of my research. The women characters described in his novels are educated mostly by their husbands or by a representative of the male society. Characteristic features of Bildungsroman can be found in these works, so I attempted to highlight this question in the second chapter of the dissertation.

Aspects of narratology and psychologism are also represented in the dissertation. I applied these aspects of interpretation mainly in the third chapter where I focused my attention on the women's description in Tolstoy's early works, outstandingly in that titled *Family Happiness*.

Works of Ligyija Ginzburg and László Karancsy are regarded as a main theoretical basis of my psychological approach.

The study of the Russian author deals with psychological analysis of Tolstoyan pieces widely, underlines the writer's psychological and ethical documentarism that escaped his heroes from the „rigid laws of artistic model”. It seemed to be very useful for me in Ginzburg's aspect that she focused my attention on the fact: Tolstoy's heroes have

multidimension description. In interpretation of Anna Karenina I myself also took into consideration this theory. It is very important to know that Tolstoy is an expert of psychological procedures in human being.

Ginzburg draws our attention to Tolstoyan internal monologues. I also refer to the fact of the presence of this method in the portrayal of characters in my paper during the interpretation of his works.

László Karancsy's study shows already in its title (Tolsztoj lélekábrázoló módszere/ Tolstoy's Method in the Art of Psychoanalysis) he is going to approach to the novels of Russian writer from aspects of psychology. From the point of view of my research I regarded the most important parts of this study which deal with the interpretation of the mental processes. Karancsy's study gave me the most useful help in the examination of the following novels: Family Happiness, War and Peace (in the analysis of Natasha's figure from new aspects), Anna Karenina, Kreutzer Sonata and The Evil (to explore the depth-psychological levels of the novel).

Phenomenon genderstudies often contraversary interpreted in the national and international special literature is also applied in my dissertation from the point of view of the analysis of relation between women a men. My aspect was to keep under observation what characteristic features and what roles seem to be valuable for the society (either in Russian novels or in literary works of English romantic authors). For examle judgement of Anna's and Vronsky's behaviour in opera just as different micro-social judgement of adulterous action of Stepanida and that of the male characters in the novel The Evil could be mentioned amongst the other cases.

I wanted to find and work out in details the most important from the aspect of my dissertation critical essays on one hand in the national, on the other hand in the international special litretrature; apart from Hungarian, in Russian and in English languages too. Paul Basinsky's book titled Лев Толстой: Бегство из рая (Leo Tolstoy: Escape from the Heaven) can only be found in Russian language at this time also became a theoretical basic in my work. This is a biography containing a lot of new pieces of information in connection with the life story of Russian genius. We can be informed by the study about difficult correlations in Tolstoy's personal and his artistic life. By the introduction of this correlation the book could be regarded a significant source to unfold main questuion of my writing.

I selected from works of special literature written in Hungarian language, and I regarded Endre Török's whole life-work as normative material for my writing. Moreover Zoltán Hajnády's studies dealing with whole life-work of Russian writer also gave me help in my research.

It is seen that Tolstoy is a continuer of world literary canon and at the same time of Russian classical canon. Ladscape is an important method to portrayal of heroes, especially female characters.

Tolstoy's art is a searching one for happiness. For him happiness could only be realized in a family living in harmony with nature, with dominance of a woman of mother type. Portrayal of women and family relations is not self-contained but it is an organic part of his life-work.

His main goal in his whole life and in his art is to find sources of happiness of

whole mankind and help to realize it.

The Russian writer approaches to gender question from various aspects. In his firstly analysed literary works (Family Happiness, War and Peace, Anna Karenina) women (also marginals) have very important role in hierarchy of heroes.

It is well known that Tolstoy was a determined enemy to emancipation of women. His opinion is also reflected in fate of female heroes of his literary works. Natasa is the only one who has a real family happiness as in her character can be found all the features which are most important for an ideal woman in Tolstoy's opinion. Her figure is described in my dissertation firstly from aspect of her relation with nature and from aspect of Russian literary canon.

The other female characters of his works were not given happiness by the author.

There are women who rebel against their fate, for example Anna Karenina who can not make peace with her life, marriage, husband. She wants to have of whole value happiness in her life but she can not reach it – she is ruined.

There are also women who can make peace with their life, family, still do not reach real happiness. For example Dolly (Anna Karenina).

In his works Tolstoy is interested in intellectual relation between partners in marriage.

In Family Happiness harmony only exists in the first period in their common life.

There is only real harmony only in life of Natasa and Pierre (War and Peace). There is not harmony in other families in the this re-interpreted novel at all.

From the novel titled Anna Karenina all the novels dealing with problem of women-men relation and marriage quoted in my dissertation end with tragedy either with murder or with suicide (Anna, Pozdnisev, Irtyenyev). In his late years Tolstoy already denies the opportunity, legitimacy of marriage.

In life of Tolstoy's figures there are a lot of biographical elements. At the same time they have a very important characteristic feature: they are given ability of desire for love, happiness by the author.

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