



**The Incident In Forming Adultery Motif In The Artistic Structure Of The Novel  
“Anna Karenina” By Leo Tolstoy**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article examines the series of events in the artistic structure of the novel "Anna Karenina" by Leo Tolstoy in the context of the concept of *case*, which, as the basic symbol, becomes the focus of the semantic content of the novel. Separate episodes with *casual* events line up in structural episodes of storylines of the Tolstoy's work. The symbolic concentration of the semantic content of *case* receives its transcription in cumulatively built episodes. The semantic content of the symbolically interpreted image of *case* in a number of *random* events is represented by the Russian thinker of the nineteenth century Leo Tolstoy as something that leads to disruption of the primordial order in Russian life, and this way *case* appears to be the historical grain of the novel's narrative storytelling. *Casual*, as Leo Tolstoy understands it, becomes inevitable fatal force of destiny. The results of *casual* confront the reasonable *necessity* accumulated by age-old traditions. This *casual* as an event determines almost the entire *series of events* of the novel as a part of the *plot*. The basic plot situation of Tolstoy's novel is reduced to the confrontation of reasonable *necessity* as the form of existence within the family to what is generated by the age of *enframing* (M. Heidegger).

**Key words:** novel "Anna Karenina" by Leo Tolstoy, event, case, motif.



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Tolstoy's novel "Anna Karenina", which portrays the world contemporary to the author, in many ways is a classic vindication of Hegel, who claimed that in the epic all is "penetrated with the necessity" and "play of chance", which gets "certain space" (op. CIT. in (Literature and literary theory,2004, p. 294)). Following Hegel's definition of the epic as a kind of literature, given through the terms "necessity" and "chance", it seems interesting to us to discuss not only the aesthetics of the genre in general, but the aesthetics of the content of a concrete novel as well. "Play of chance" permeates the entire structure of Tolstoy's novel: it starts with an episode with *accidentally* found note of Stiva Oblonsky and its main part ends with the *accidental* fatal act of Anna. *Casual*, if we use the definition of Y.M. Lotman, becomes a "source symbol", "the first link in the creation of a text" (Lotman,1996, p. 105). Note that a number of researchers in recent years, following the definitions of N.D. Tamarchenko, use the term "case" as a philosophical and aesthetic category in their literary pursuits (see, for instance, works like (Gubaidullina,2016; Khrabrova,2016).

## **2. METHODS**

*Case* in Tolstoy's novel, becoming the starting point for the narrative, contains a potential plot line.

The inter-textual analysis of the role of the philosophical and aesthetic category of "case" builds the semantic content of the event series containing the main motif of the novel – the motif of infidelity ("unfaithfulness", "sin").

In order to confirm the patterns of conflict in the novel, we will turn to N.D. Tamarchenko, who in his arguments, following Hegel, states: "*The need and the case* are connected with the categories of Chaos and Order" (Literature and literary theory,2004,p. 294). Categories of Chaos and Order as an expression of the two principles of the creation determine the essence and pathos of Tolstoy's novel. Moreover, Tolstoy's perception of their confrontation serves as the primary plot situation.

*The Random* event with the found note of Stiva Oblonsky, which begins the story of the families, becomes *a symbolic image* of primordial violation of the family life order in its patriarchal-national terms. Violation of the family life order is the dominant *theme* of



the novel. The beginning the novel with the episode of *accidentally* found note serves as a signal that the theme of the novel has been determined.

Thus, *case* in Tolstoy's work becomes an artistic unit of the entire structure of the novel, defining *the main theme* of the writing, its *narrative scheme*, containing human life in various *forms of being* within the framework of what humanity calls "family".

Tolstoy is, perhaps, the first person in the Russian literature to creates *non-typical* stories in his plot schemes (in contrast to, for example, "typical" (Veselovsky) mythological stories) about Russian life, which depict a *violated order* of family life. Tolstoy's narration of the events based on *case* is perceived as the key semantic content of the novel.

The accidental discovery of the note turns out to be a situation, using the definition given by B.V. Tomashevsky, of "contradictory relations" (Tomashevsky,1996, p. 180). The event with the *casual* discovery of the note consists of mutually exclusive emotional impulses of Stepan Arkadyevich: a *conflict* arises, which, at a first sight, does not lead to any single decisive act of Oblonsky. It is solved in the context of a chain of events determined by the formula "*everything will come round*".

In the event under consideration the following is important: in the event, beginning the novel, not only a private *situation* (the fate of Stiva), as the stage of the plot development and its' component part, is manifested, but the total one. This event defines the construction of the whole plot of the novel, the main idea of which is the idea of family.

The general situation of the work as a source of development of the plot is expressed by Tolstoy with the words *infidelity*, *sin* and reveals the state of a family as "the state of the world" (Hegel) (Hegel,1977) as the state of the age of *enframing* (Heidegger) (Heidegger,1973; Heidegger,1996; Heidegger,1978). The age of *enframing* yet before Heidegger was foreseen and anticipated by Goethe, who wrote about it in his "Faust" (see: (Sayapova,2015).

*Case* as the basic part of the entire story defines the conflict (collision) of the novel. We will consider this dominant motif of the novel in the storylines with the events of the *accidental* meetings of the characters, which involve a *dialogue*. These events of *random meetings* form internally linked semantic complex, telling about the characters'



attitude to the phenomenon called *necessity* (reasonable) or to something that destroys this *necessity*.

### 3. RESULTS

Inter-textual consideration of the motif of *infidelity* in the novel resulted in the need to address philosophical and aesthetic definition of such an occasion in a novel as *meeting of characters*, given by N.D. Tamarchenko. Describing historically formed variants of meetings of characters in the genre of novel, he says that a meeting of characters in the epics represents "the opposite parts (spheres) of the epic world" and that "a meeting of characters reveals *the kinship of opposites*: the event reveals *the contradictory unity of the world*" (1, p. 289).

Stiva Oblonsky and Konstantin Levin in the author's conception of the novel are two human natures, two views of the world, including views on love and family life. The dialogue of the first chance meeting of Oblonsky with Levin is a dialogue about love, its two forms: about Levin's love, sublime and pure, but which, as he understands it, may face *infidelity* (Levin learns about Vronsky, caring for Kitty), and about the *sinful* love of Stiva ("A loaf will sometimes smell so good that one can't resist it") (T1., p. 49).

Thus, the motif of *infidelity* defines the semantic content of both voices of the dialogue. In this dialogue, yet there's no the author's evaluation of the characters' voices. Both views are given in their original balance.

From this very event of the meeting between Stiva and Levin, Tolstoy begins to represent the world in all its diversity of opinions, judgments, views, which makes his work a "sweeping" novel. Based on his novel, one can judge the classical canons of the genre, and of the epic type of event, in particular, which is characterized by – using the terminology of Tamarchenko – "the kinship of opposites" that express "the contradictory unity of the world" (Literature and literary theory, 2004 p. 289). This principle of the novel was artistically presented by Tolstoy in the characteristic of the heroes, preceding the dialogue, as people with opposite views and opinions.

### 4. DISCUSSION

We should stay on the main *focus* point of the novel, describing the *accidental* meeting of Anna and Vronsky, which takes place the moment Anna gets out of the carriage. The motive of *sin (adultery)* in this event of meeting is given in the subtext of a silent dialogue, a dialogue of eyes, which is given in the author's transcription.



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On the principle of mirror reflection is given the meeting of Anna with Vronsky - *random*, "strange and bad", at the house of the Oblonskys' on the eve of the dinner, which the Oblonskys gave for "a foreign celebrity" (T1., p. 86). In this episode – the eyes of Vronsky.

A scene, in which Tolstoy evaluates Anna with the eyes of Kitty, also begins with the fact, *accidentally* discovered by Kitty. In this scene the motive of *sin (wickedness)* is again expressed through dialogues of glances, facial expressions. The dialogue of glances leads Kitty to the hard evaluation judgment: "Yes, there is something uncanny, devilish and charming about her," said Kitty to herself" (T1., p. 94).

In the dialogue of Anna with Vronsky during the meeting (*random* for Vronsky) at Princess Betsy's a declaration of love takes place and recognition of this love by Anna as a "wrong" action. The dialogue of this event indicates the evidence of the fact that the result of the relationship between Anna and Vronsky depends primarily on the desires of Anna.

The next event *focus* point of the novel is a scene of Anna's conversation with her husband. And again, case becomes the impetus for this explanation - Vronsky's fall from his horse at the races. The dialogue of Anna with Alexei Alexandrovich leads her to confession of *infidelity*.

In Part 4, Chapters 9-12, the author describes two events with dialogues. The first event is a polite conversation of Stephan Arkadyevich in the salon. The second event that took place in Stephan Arkadyevich's living room the same evening – is the dialogue of Darya Alexandrovna, for which she had prepared herself, with Alexei Alexandrovich, for whom the upcoming conversation was *unexpected* and unpleasant.

Having heard about the "facts" of Anna's behavior from Karenina and of his decision to divorce, Dolly says: "But wait a little! You are a Christian. Think of her! What will become of her, if you cast her off?". And further: "No, it's awful. She will be no one's wife; she will be lost!" (T1., p. 430).

The following event happens immediately after the return of Karenin from the Oblonskys'. A telegram from his wife was waiting for him, she asked Alexei Alexandrovich to come to her. The monologue of dying Anna addressed to her husband, is a monologue of a sick, *borderline* consciousness, revealing the essence of the inner "I" of Anna. The situation of Anna's childbirth changes Alexey Alexandrovich's



attitude towards the current situation dramatically. The Christian sense of love and forgiveness wakes up within him.

If in Chapter 12, Part 4 of the novel Darya Alexandrovna begs Alexey Alexandrovich not to initiate a divorce, in Chapter 22 of the same part, Stiva Oblonsky comes to Karenin with a diametrically opposite proposition in solving the question "What's to be done?" in the present family situation. He proposes the necessity of "the formation of a new attitude to one another" that is a divorce as "the most rational course for married people who find themselves in the situation" (T1., pp. 470-471) Karenin and Anna are in. The reaction of Alexei Alexandrovich on Oblonsky's offer is shown in the description of their dialogue: «"Divorce," Alexei Alexandrovich interrupted in a tone of aversion. "Yes, I imagine that divorce... Yes, divorce," Stephan Arkadyevich repeated reddening». Not so much the arrival of Oblonsky, as his offer is perceived *unexpected* by Karenin (*random*, it might not have occurred) and impossible for many reasons. Tolstoy's character, having experienced the events related to his wife's childbirth, changes dramatically: if before Anna's experiencing the *borderline* state, Darya Alexandrovna's words concerning forgiveness only frustrated him, now Alexei Alexandrovich's opinion on the question "What's to be done?" has completely coincided with the opinion of Darya Alexandrovna. They both made similar arguments: Anna will be no one's wife (Darya Alexandrovna), "She will join him, and in a year or two he will throw her over, or she will form a new tie" (Karenin).

Commenting on the dialogue between Oblonsky and Karenin, the author writes: "He didn't believe a single word Stepan Arkadyevich said to him; to every word he had a thousand objections to make, but he listened to him, feeling that his words were the expression of that *mighty brutal force which controlled his life, and to which he would have to submit*" (T1., p. 472) (emphasis added – A. Z., A. S., O. A.). Tolstoy writes out the formula of life of his hero tendentiously and very clearly: he will have to submit to this destructive "*mighty brutal force*". Such are the laws of the emerging new time, the age of "enframing", i.e. the time of civilization, urbanization.

The motif of *infidelity* in the context of the question "What's to be done?" is represented in two dialogues of Darya Alexandrovna (with Anna and Vronsky) during her visit to the estate of Vronsky. Darya Alexandrovna's trip to the Vronskys was "*intentional*": "



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Darya Alexandrovna carried out her intention and went to see Anna" (T2., p. 181). For Anna and Vronsky Dolly's visiting them was an *unexpected* joyful event.

The dialogue with Anna consists of two parts. The first conversation of Dolly with Anna begins with a question about Anna's girl. The question was asked awkwardly, as Dolly didn't dare to ask directly, on the substance of the situation. But Anna understood and, as always, "dropping her eyelids till nothing could be seen but the eyelashes meeting" the way she did when she had to say about the most important thing in her soul, about things that caused her pain and suffering, replied: "You meant to ask about her surname? Yes? That worries Alexei. She has no name – that is, she's Karenina <...> Come, I'll show her to you" (T2., pp. 196-197). Thus, the first part of the dialogue is interrupted. Then follows the dialogue of Vronsky with Darya Alexandrovna, who was "rather astonished" at the desire of Vronsky to talk to her. Addressing Darya Alexandrovna, Vronsky tells directly of the *intention* of his appeal to her. The essence of Vronsky's appeal to Darya Alexandrovna is his desire to convince Anna of the necessity of divorce. Answering the question of Darya Alexandrovna "But what can Anna do?", Vronsky approaches the goal of his conversation: "Anna can, it depends on her..." (T2., p. 206).

When Dolly and Anna were left alone before going to sleep, the conversation, begun before dinner, was continued. Dolly, who had asked Karenin not to divorce Anna, because then she would be "no one's wife", now having become Vronsky's "advocate", from the desire to "correct, or improve" Anna's position, is trying to lead her to the idea of divorce. Responding to Dolly's offer, Anna makes her main argument, explaining why she can't decide on a divorce: "You must consider – I am not his wife; he loves me as long as he loves me. And how am I to keep his love?" Dolly, like Vronsky, speaks about children who will and should be legal. That's, in her opinion, the main argument of the necessity of divorce. Anna, ignoring, first of all, the argument of Vronsky, says: "He need not trouble on that score; I shall have no more children" (T2., p. 216). Another important argument, not allowing Anna to ask Alexei Alexandrovich for a consent to the divorce, is the son.

And finally, we will focus on the *borderline* feelings and experiences of Anne before her death, which as an event also happened *by accident*: Anna did not have a clear, open intention to commit a suicide, she wanted to go somewhere away from Vronsky,



realizing that they were "irresistibly drifting in different directions" (T2., p. 346). However, the motif of death presents in the novel from the very beginning and it is connected with the motive of *infidelity*: it is enough to remember the episode of the first meeting of Anna with Vronsky, a symbolic background of which is "terrible" death of a guard. *Accidentally* seen by Anna, and evaluated by her as a "bad omen", controlling the subconscious, it haunts her through entire life, as it is evidenced by her dreams. This *accidentally* seen becomes a "foreshadowing" of what has begun with *a chance* meeting of Anna with Vronsky. This *accidentally* seen, as the memory of the subconscious, would "suddenly" flash before Anna's act, which becomes the answer to the question "What's to be done?", tormenting her for a long time.

In the last part of Tolstoy's narration of Anna's love to Vronsky, the motif of death as the dominant one determines the emotional and psychological state of the heroine. Anna's thought of death was suppressed by the power of "vital life" (Veresaev): "No, anything – only to live! Why, I love him! Why, he loves me!" (T2., p. 334). However, the force opposing the "vital life" turned out to be stronger than Anna's lust for life. The *Borderline* state of feelings and experiences of Anna before her death, doesn't contain her dialogue with someone. This state is presented by Tolstoy as an inner monologue in the form of a stream of consciousness, consisting of a specific internal dialogue of Anna's voice with the entire human world. A mental dialogue with the world in the inner monologue of Anna, already in the first segment of the stream of consciousness ends with almost Tutchchev's phrase: "Can one ever tell anyone what one is feeling?" (T2., p. 343). With her sick mind Anna has realized that she was rejected by all, that there was no sense in appealing to someone with her question "What's to be done?". Anna realized she was alone in this big human world, which confronted her for some rules of life, accepted by someone, and finally has destroyed the essential in her natural "I", crushed the "vital life" of her nature. Thus, the "piercing light" of her subconscious revealed to her the truth of the human world.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Thus, in Tolstoy's work *case* determines not only the series of events of the plot, but also a specific philosophical-ethical category: Tolstoy, writing about Russian life of his time, a time when "everything was in confusion", when something destroying comes into life, speaks about non-accidental in *accidental. Casual*, as Tolstoy understands it,





becomes inevitable fatal force of destiny. The results of *casual* confront the reasonable *necessity*, accumulated by age-old traditions. The basic plot situation of the novel by Tolstoy is reduced to the confrontation of reasonable *necessity* as the form of existence within the family to something that is generated by the age of enframing (Heidegger), the existential content of which is artistically represented with a symbolically capacious image of a *case*.

Thus, *case* as an artistic-aesthetic category of the novel's structure defines its end-to-end motif – the motif of *adultery*, the motif, as Tolstoy defines it, of "*infidelity*", of "*sin*". It is through this motive the theme of the work is expressed, as well as its problem – a problem of time when "everything was in confusion", when the "old" clings to its foundations, determined by *necessity*, when the efforts of the "old", eventually have turned into a tragedy, into the suppression of essential in the human "I".

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## **7. SOURCE**

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