

**Anna Karenina, the 'English novel'.
Towards the study of Anglomania in Leo Tolstoy's
novel Anna Karenina**

Natalia Sarana
Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia

Abstract

The article deals with one storyline of the novel *Anna Karenina* that stands as the key for the research into the significance of Anglomania in the novel. The 1850-1870s in Russian culture is the time of a most intensive formation of the image of the UK as a highly complex combination of real and mythological elements. The novel *Anna Karenina*, which Tolstoy himself called the novel about modern life, sets forth the fashion for everything 'English' in Russian high society in the 1870s with almost documentary precision. The episode the article deals with is Anna Karenina's reading of an English novel. The article looks at different theories of the origin of the novel and suggests a particular novel as the source for the English novel in *Anna Karenina*. Article argues that the knowledge of the particular English novel contributes not only to the research of Anglomania in *Anna Karenina* and other Tolstoy's works but also gives a significant in-sight into the study of the characters in the novel.

Parole chiave

Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, Anglomania, Comparative Literature, Russian Literature.

Contatti

sarananatalya@gmail.com

The image of England, the English thread as a paradoxical mix of cultural, artistic, and political realities becomes the subject of reflection and sometimes the source of acute conflict experiences in the Russian culture of the XIX century. The 1850-1870s is the time of most intensive formation of the image of England as a highly complex combination of real and mythological elements.

The reception of these attributes of English culture has become a common pattern in many interdisciplinary researches. England and English culture in Russian cultural life in the middle of the XIX century are the topic of a large amount of scholarly works. Using various kinds of approach, some researches are based on the analysis of historical sources (e.g. *Anglomania* by A.V. Predtechenskiy), others are based on journalistic works and memoirs (*Russkaya publicistika konca 50-x I nachala 60-x gg. XIX v. ob obchesvennom i ekonomicheskom razvitií Anglii* by T.V.Udalova) or on ethnic relations (*Tumanniy Albion* by N.A. Erofeev). Moreover, the work *Zapadnoe vlianie v russkoy literature* by N.A. Veselovskiy stands as a key research for Anglo-Russian literary relations.

Furthermore, in the process of examining the text of *Anna Karenina*, the findings in following works were essential to the present analysis: *Leo Tolstoy* by N.K.Gudziy, the works on Leo Tolstoy by B.M. Eikhenbaum and *Puteshestvie vglub' romana. Leo Tolstoy: Anna Karenina* by Barbara Lonkvist.

The work by Barbara Lonkvist was of particular interest for this article. By using the method of “detecting the logic of Tolstoy’s artistic thinking in the text of the novel, without attracting the facts of his biography or his own theorizing about life and art”(9), the author shows how ‘English’ motives thicken around certain heroes of Anna Karenina. Lonkvist’s approach helps to reconstruct the ‘English’ *topos* in the novel without using any facts outside the text of Anna Karenina.

Consequently, this article presents the attempt of finding the sources for English motives in Anna Karenina. I argue that the analysis of the elements of Anglomania in Anna Karenina is inseparable from exploring the sources of the ‘English’ motives outside the novel.

The novel Anna Karenina, which Tolstoy himself called the novel about modern life, sets forth the fashion for everything ‘English’ in Russian high society in the 1870s with almost documentary precision. In this article, we will focus on one storyline of the novel that stands as the key for the research into the significance of Anglomania in Anna Karenina.

In chapter 29 of the first part of the novel, Anna travels from Moscow to St. Petersburg by train and reads an English novel:

Anna answered a few words, but foreseeing no great interest in their conversation, she asked her maid for a reading lamp, and fixing it on to the arm of her seat, she took out a paper knife and an English novel and settled down to read. At first she found it difficult to concentrate her thoughts on the book. [...] Her maid had already gone to sleep, holding the red bag on her knees in her large, broad hands, clad in gloves, one of which was torn. Anna Arkadyevna read and understood what she read, but she found no pleasure in entering into the lives and interests of other people. She had too keen a desire to live herself. The heroine of the story was in a sick-room, nursing an invalid, and Anna wanted to be there, walking about with noiseless tread. A member of a parliament was making a speech and she wanted to be making that speech herself. Lady Mary rode on horseback, teased her sister-in-law, and astonished every one by her boldness, and Anna wanted to do what Lady Mary had done. But she could do nothing. She twisted the smooth paper knife about in her little hands and tried to get still further absorbed in the book.

The hero of the novel had at last reached the summit of his English ambition [happiness], a baronetcy and an estate, and she wanted to go with him to that estate. Suddenly she felt that he must feel ashamed and that she herself was ashamed. “But should he be? And why should I be?” she asked herself with astonishment. (Tolstoy 1923: 98)

We dare suggest that Tolstoy puts together the most characteristic scenes from English novels and turns them into an absolute cliché of an English novel. Indeed, the motif of ‘nursing’ a sick man and English hunting scenes can be found in many English novels of the XIX century.

The presence of an MP in the novel, making a speech in the British Parliament, as well as the Parliament itself, is also a characteristic feature of the XIX century English novels, especially in connection with the Chartist movement, for example, in the novel *Sybil* by B. Disraeli (1845), or *Alton Locke* by C. Kingsley (1850). One can also recall an episode from Charles Dickens's novel *David Copperfield* (1850), where the main character worked as a parliamentary reporter for some time. A ‘speech in the Parliament’ is also a reflection on the circumstances of Tolstoy's life: he attended a session of the Parliament during his trip around Europe in 1860-1861.

Furthermore, the name of Mary can be found in many novels of the late XVIII-XIX century, starting from the novel *Mary* by M. Wollstonecraft, as well as *Mary Barton* by E.

Gaskell, to *The Adventures of Dr. Brad* by W.H. Russell, which was known to Russian readers from its publication in "Russkiy vestnik" from October to December 1868.

There is another hypothesis about the source of the novel described by Tolstoy. In his book *Who betrayed Elizabeth Bennet? Puzzle in classical literature*, J. Sutherland (221 - 222) suggests that Tolstoy describes excerpts from several Trollope's novels such as *Phineas Finn*, *the Irish Member*, *Is he Popenjoy?* and *The Claverings*. It is worth noticing that Tolstoy had a collection of Trollope's works in his home library.

Moreover, a more precise theory exists: Tolstoy chose a single Trollope's novel to stand as a source for the English novel we are looking for – *The Prime Minister*. Advocates for this theory prove their point by Tolstoy's letter (Tolstoy 2006, Vol. 62: 302) to his brother Sergey Tolstoy on January 10, 1877, where he wrote "*The Prime Minister* is wonderful".

We argue that this theory is wrong. Trollope's novel was written in 1876, while the first chapters of *Anna Karenina* had been written in 1873-1874. The novel *Is he Popenjoy?* (1878) provided by J. Sutherland as one of the possible sources for Tolstoy, was also written after *Anna Karenina*.

I will try to suggest a different source for Tolstoy's 'English novel'. A reader knows that at the end of winter Anna goes from Moscow to St. Petersburg. Like any other Russian high society lady, Anna reads new magazines to keep abreast of all the news, new fashion trends and literary novelties. "Otechestvenniye zapiski" could have been one of the magazines she read. In January 1872 "Otechestvenniye zapiski" begins the publication of *Middlemarch* by George Eliot (continued until August 1873). I assume this novel to be the one that Anna could have been reading on the train.

When comparing Tolstoy's 'English novel' and *Middlemarch* the described events in both novels appear to be the same. For example, one of the names for the main characters in the novel is Mary, and one of the novel's characters is running for the Parliament. Other details of the plot of the novel correlate as well, whether it is the scene of 'nursing' or the similarity between Anna's fate and the story of Dorothea Brooke, who, being unhappy in her marriage, falls in love with a young and interesting gentleman. The only difference in the plot lies in the absence of hunting scenes as such. Nevertheless, in *Middlemarch* there is much talk about hunting, horses and dogs. Perhaps, a hunting scene, like a classic English one and one of Tolstoy's favourite (see a hunting scene in *War and Peace*), could have been included by Tolstoy in the narrative as a common English feature.

Tolstoy himself read *Middlemarch*. In the Tolstoy family library, there were several works by George Eliot, and the volume of *Middlemarch* contains numerous underlining and notes, including those by Leo Tolstoy. Moreover, in a letter to a book publisher M. Lederle dated October 25, 1892, Tolstoy (Tolstoy 2006 V. 66: 68) sends the list of books where "George Elliot, novels" is mentioned along with the works of Trollope, Hugo, *The Iliad* and *Odyssey* as the works that influenced the writer from the age of "35 - to about 50". And in the preface (1902) to *A farmer (Farmer Büttner, 1895)*, the novel by Wilhelm von Polenz, Tolstoy (1955: 500) notes that: "As far as I can recall, for the last 50 years, there has been a striking decline in taste and common sense of the reading public [...]. Here is another striking example of English prose. Descending from the great Dickens first to George Eliot, then to Thackeray. From Thackeray to Trollope, and then begins the countless rows of Kiplings, Hall Caines, Rider Haggards etc."

Anna as a grande dame could have been reading the new issue of "Otechestvenniye zapiski" with *Middlemarch* in late winter. The first issue of the novel appeared in January

and was being published in "Otechestvenniye zapiski" throughout two winters in a row - during the winter of 1832 and 1833. She probably could have read this novel in the original, as a single book, not a translation in the supplement to the magazine.

Subsequently, the image of Anna reading an English novel - is a matrix of her personal history. Her reaction to the novel is the most important characteristic of Anna herself. In the early version of the novel, the scene was supposed to start this way: "The guests gathered in late winter, waiting for the Karenins and talking about them. She came and behaved frivolously with Gagin". According to Eikhenbaum (642-643):

This chapter has been sketched on March 18, 1873. It begins with the words "after the Opera guests were coming to the young princess Vrasskaya's house". Princess Vrasskaya (future Betsy Tverskaya), when talking about Anna, says: "Have you noticed how prettier she has become? She is positively not good, but if I were a man, I would have gone crazy about her". Her guest, a diplomat, answers: "Oh, yes! She has recently flourished. Now or never it is the time for her to be *the heroine of the novel* [my emphasis hereafter]". In the same version of the novel, there is another remark: "I could never understand... what is so wonderful in him [Alexei Alexandrovich]. If I had not been told about it all the time, I would have just taken him for a fool. And with such a husband not to be *the heroine of the novel* is the merit."

These replicas can be understood in a way that it is time for Anna to be a heroine of not so much a love story as of an adulterous romance. Let us note that in the first version of *Anna Karenina* (Tolstoy 2006, Vol.20: 198) the plot of the English novel Anna is reading is not given. If we keep in mind that the final version of this episode has been rewritten, and the 'English novel' is given its place in the narrative, then perhaps we can understand more about Anna, more about what it is "to be the heroine of the novel" for Anna - it is to have "too keen a desire to live herself".

Let us return to our excerpt:

The hero of the novel had at last reached the summit of his English ambition [happiness], a baronetcy and an estate, and she wanted to go with him to that estate. Suddenly she felt that he must feel ashamed and that she herself was ashamed. "But should he be? And why should I be?" she asked herself with astonishment.

Anna is ashamed of her "English happiness" (I use here my own translation, for the word "happiness" is a more exact translation of Tolstoy's "schast'e"), she sees it as artificial. The "English happiness" for her is not just the happy end in the English novel, which she reads. For Anna this concept comprises a mixture of components, starting with her upbringing.

The surname of Anna and Steve Oblonsky refers to the ancient princely family Oblonsky, (among whom there were many famous Anglomaniacs). Reference to the existing ancient aristocratic family is important for understanding the image of Anna. With this reference we can figure out what her education as a girl was like in such a family - a traditional upbringing, where the "English custom, which allows girls absolute freedom" (Tolstoy 1923: 44) was not accepted.

If we keep in mind that at the beginning of the novel Anna is twenty-eight, we can assume that her parents grew up in the first period of Anglomania in Russia, according to the periodization by Predtechenskiy in his work *Anglomania* (45). Anna was brought up in the Russian tradition, but at the same time, she experienced the impact of British fashion and British ideas of education. Compare the argument about the fate of Princess Kitty (

Tolstoy 1923: 44): ““But how are marriages made?” the princess would ask, and no one could give her an answer. The French custom, which allows the parents full liberty to decide the lot of their children, was no longer accepted. The English custom, which allows girls absolute freedom, was impossible in Russian society. The old Russian custom, which arranged marriages through a professional match-maker, was considered obsolete and ridiculed even by the princess herself.”

The clash of English and Russian cultural rootedness displays more deeply and more sharply the internal discord of the heroine. This idea can also be seen in the following analysis of high society that is impregnated by Anglomania.

We see Anna in two high society circles. One is the circle of Lidia Ivanovna, the circle of “pious, virtuous, ugly old women, and clever, learned, ambitious men” (123). The other is the circle of Betsy Tverskaya, who was all about “the world of balls, of dinners, and brilliant toilets. This set kept fast hold on to the court and affected to despise less fashionable people, whose tastes and habits were nevertheless very much the same as their own” (124).

High society and its leader Betsy Tverskaya is, according to the just remark of Eikhenbaum, the society of ‘professional sinners’. This society follows the latest fashion - fashion for everything English. The English word for a conversation – “small-talk” - is the new fashion in Betsy's house, English proverbs are pouring into the conversation, and Betsy herself rides in a fashionable English carriage and plays croquet. With this description of Betsy Tverskaya's circle, Anglomania in the novel begins to acquire a distinct negative coloration as a synonym of a shallow life, as an integral feature of the “high society lowest circle, whose members do not know any moral laws” (Eikhenbaum 671).

However, Lidia Ivanovna's circle - the “conscience of St. Petersburg society”, as it was called by “one of these clever men”, is subject to the same Anglomania, but now it is expressed in the fascination with spiritualism with missionary and spiritual literature. Tolstoy finds this ‘spiritual’ Anglomania no less disgusting: Karenin finds only an “imaginary salvation” in his new doctrine, while Anna feels more at ease in a shallow society of Betsy's.

Consequently, all the fleeting associations as well as more specific discussions of Anglomania in other works by Tolstoy appear in *Anna Karenina*. In this sense, *Anna Karenina* is the assembling point for Tolstoy's reflection of that fashion of his time.

Bibliography

- Eikhenbaum, Boris. *Leo Tolstoy: issledovania. Stat'i*. Ed. I.N. Sukhikh. Sankt-Peterburg: Fakultet filologii i iskusstv, 2009. Print
- Lonnkvist, Barbara. *Putesbestvie vglub' romana. Leo Tolstoy: Anna Karenina*. Moskva: Yaziki slavyanskikh kultur, 2010. Print
- Predtechenskiy, Anatoliy Vasilevich. “Anglomania.” *Iz tvorcheskogo nasledia*. Ed. T.N. Zhukovskaja, L.M. Predtechenskaya. Sankt-Peterburg: Dmitry Bulanin, 1999. Print.
- Sutherland, John. *Who Betrays Elizabeth Bennet? Further Puzzles in Classic Fiction*. Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Tolstoy, Leo. *Anna Karenina: in 2 vols. Vol.1*. New York: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1923.
- . *O literature. Stat'i. Pis'ma. Dnevnik*. Moskva: GIKHL, 1955.

- . *90-tomnoe sobranie sochinenii. T. 20. Anna Karenina. Chernoye redaktsii i varianty.* Moskva: RSL, 2006. Web. 20-12-2014. <<http://tolstoy.ru/creativity/90-volume-collection-of-the-works/696>>
- . *90-tomnoe sobranie sochinenii. T 62. Pis'ma 1873 – 1879.* Moskva: RSL, 2006. Web. 20-12-2014. <<http://tolstoy.ru/creativity/90-volume-collection-of-the-works/1027>>.
- . *90-tomnoe sobranie sochinenii. T 66. Pis'ma 1891(jul'-dekabr')-1893.* Moskva: RSL, 2006. Web. 20-12-2014. <<http://tolstoy.ru/creativity/90-volume-collection-of-the-works/1031>>.