

Leo Tolstoy And Writers of World Literature Literary Reflections - Elchin Efendiyev

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Abstract

It is a study of literary interaction questions and the identification of mutual enrichment patterns that currently acquire particular significance. The concept of foreign literary experience becomes ever more profound and diverse and is realized by a creative rethinking (not imitation or adoption) of another literature's achievements. This paper aims to identify the profound influence of world literature on Tolstoy and vice-versa: the influence his creative works had on European literature. The paper shows the need to study the originality of Tolstoy's artistic legacy's foreign reception and, therefore, complement the overall picture of perception and functioning of the writer's creation in the foreign literary context and cultural environment. The study of this theme is very significant from the standpoint of modern globalization, dialogue between cultures. The novelty here lies in the fact that the question of how Tolstoy's works have been received within the context of creative cross-cultural dialogue has not been given sufficient attention within international comparative studies. There is no systematizing and summarizing research in the national science about a writer's perception and peculiarities of appraisal of writer's works involving the Azerbaijani studies material, drawing parallels with the national literature. For this consideration of Tolstoy's work, the conception of Azerbaijani prose writing is taken to represent a World literary context. The outstanding playwright Elchin Efendiyev had due regard for Tolstoy's creative work and his particular creative perception of the world. This work's theoretical purpose is to develop a scientific paper that will expand understanding of the reception of an outstanding writer's creative work by a western creative consciousness and will present a picture of international cultural ties.

Keywords: Tolstoy, reception, national literature, beneficial influence, cross-cultural dialogue

Introduction

This paper's choice of subject arose from international comparative studies aimed at studying inter-literary communication and its forms. It centres on perceptions of, and

spiritual communications with, Tolstoy's artistic world: the great realist's creativity and his search for truth and attitude were familiar to foreign writers. It also demonstrates the writer's beneficial effect and deep impact on the consciousness and world views of contributors to foreign literature and the classics' indisputable value to modern art.

Thus, this research promotes a broadening of ideas concerning literary interaction and cross-cultural dialogue.

When studying literary contacts, it is necessary to consider both the need for the influence itself and the connection of any literary impact with the borrowed sample's social transformation.

The ideas of multiculturalism are reflected in the fundamental works of A. Veselovsky, V.M. Zhirmunski, N.I. Konrad, I.G. Neupokoyeva, D. Dyurishin, Kh. B. Khrapchenko, N.I. Kravtsov and many others.

The task of modern literary criticism is to reveal the general trends of the development of literature. The creation of ideological, artistic values that have international and interethnic significance includes national literature in the process of creative exchange. Mutual enrichment indicates that cultures have achieved the same maturity when the masters of particular national literature create artistic works that arouse other peoples' interest. When speaking of reception, it is necessary to take into account that it is not only about the unilateral influence of one more developed culture on another, perception and processing of ideological and aesthetic values of another culture, namely, the interaction of these cultures.

The issues of literary relationships are reflected in national comparative studies' works: S. Asadullayev, A. Hajiyev, M. Gojayev, G. Abdullabekova, A. Feyzullayeva, R. Geybullayeva, L. Samedova, and many others.

One of the national literary criticism directions is the study of the reception of the creation of the XX century's Russian writers.

Russian classical literature imbued with public pathos and humanism and is represented by the bright names of Pushkin, Lermontov, Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Chekov, starting from the second half of the XIX century began to provide the ever-growing influence on world literature.

Leo Tolstoy was one of the great Russian writers who made an invaluable contribution to world culture's treasury.

The foreign writers found the different aspects and elements in the classic's extensive, complex and contradictory legacy consonant with the modern problems and necessary for certain creative tasks.

While learning and synthesizing Tolstoy's experience, they expanded artistic horizons (regarding style, genres, issues) based on their literary traditions. The similarity in the development of plots and characters in Tolstoy's and Western writers' works is not a consequence of one national literature's simple influence on another. It is a creative takeover process. The correlation of national artistic experience with foreign one can be traced in Tolstoy's creation. Due to the creative assimilation of European culture, the great writer, and vice versa, representatives of Western literature adopting the Russian writers' experience, reached a qualitatively new level of ideological- artistic attitude to reality.

It is generally accepted that Tolstoy had a tremendous influence on the world literary process. The great artist had a beneficial impact on the best masters of Western critical realism at the turn of the XIX-XX centuries – Anatole France, Guy de Maupassant, Emile Zola, Bernard Show, John Galsworthy, Theodore Dreiser, Heinrich, and Thomas Mann, Romain Roland and many others.

For foreign writers of the realistic direction, Tolstoy was an example of spiritual greatness and resilience, and his works were a model of artistic truthfulness, patriotism, courage, and uncompromising attitude.

The nature of Tolstoy's perception, his influence on foreign writers, and generally on the whole literary process was connected primarily with the national tradition, historical and artistic development of a particular country.

To one or another extent, Tolstoy himself was influenced by the philosophical and ethical ideas of such enlighteners as Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot, Montesquieu, Vovengue etc., as well as by Stendhal, Hugo, Flaubert, Balzac, Dickens, and other prominent writers.

The foreign influence determined the historical-literary and Tolstoy's own aesthetic preferences and influenced the formation of his artistic method.

The main focus of the impact of the foreign writers' creation on Tolstoy and his influence on them is reflected in the works of B. M. Eichenbaum, M. M. Bakhtin, V. F. Asmus, E. N. Kupriyanova, Y. M. Lotman, P. V. Palievski, G. Y. Galagan, T. L. Motyleva, B. I. Bursov, A. P. Milyukov, V. I. Kravchenko, N. M. Nazarov, Z. T. Grazhdanskaya.

Problems of Tolstoy's relationship with representatives of foreign literature, mutual evaluation of artistic creation are of interest in terms of understanding the creative personality of L.N.Tolstoy, his talent not only as a writer but also as a sensitive critic.

The great writer was an impartial critic. Numerous statements about the writers of world literature in the articles, separate notes, letters, and memories show what a significant place was taken by an artistic word in his consciousness and spiritual outlook. The moral principle was the main criterion of appraisal for the writer. It was this that became the yardstick that determined Tolstoy's attitude to the creation of both contemporaries and predecessors.

Tolstoy against the cult of Shakespeare

Maxim Gorky wrote that "Count Leo Tolstoy is an artistic genius, he may even be our Shakespeare" (Gorky, 1975, p.13). This comparison might have flattered Tolstoy's vanity, but he had ambivalent views about Shakespeare. Efendiyev writes in one of his essays, *Masterpiece of the Russian Critical Mind*: "In his *Analysis of Hamlet and Don Quixote*, the particularity and criteria used in the context of Russian artistic thinking to some extent demonstrate Tolstoy's attitude towards Shakespeare" (Efendiyev, 2009, p.85).

As we know, Tolstoy considered the problem of attitudes towards the classical heritage as being a social issue. He said, "When science and art serve only a few lucky people, classical works are mere 'confectionery cakes among the starving'" (Tolstoy, 1983, pp.77-78). He believed that the decisive feature of true art was its popular accessibility. Tolstoy thought deeply about the reasons for the divisions in art between rich and poor, and he sought ways to overcome the gap between ordinary people and culture; in his time, the enlightenment of art was a matter for only the educated and people of high rank.

His determination saw Shakespeare's plays included in the *Intermediary* collection, designed for ordinary people. Moreover, according to T.N. Selinov, it was he who in 1895 called on theatre folk to stage Shakespeare's works: "You may think that ordinary people will not understand Shakespeare's plays, but have no concern, they will. They are unlikely to understand modern plays about an alien way of life, but not Shakespeare's. People will always understand what is true" (Lomunov, 1956, p.30).

This concise wording resolves the problem, for authorities in art, of how to assess artistic heritage.

What does it mean that these plays have enjoyed great success for more than 100 years?-he asked, referring to Shakespeare's works.

In arguments with the 'custodians' of Shakespeare, with people "who instinctively sensed poetic beauty, such as Turgenev, Afanasy, Fet, and others," Tolstoy ... always "I met the same attitude of glorification of Shakespeare. I was compelled to admit Shakespeare's superiority. Some were proud of talking about Shakespeare, the way King Lear undid the buttons, Falstaff's lies, Lady Macbeth's indelible stain, Hamlet addressing his father's ghost and so on." (Tolstoy,1983, p.302).

Tolstoy's aesthetic beliefs, particularly his discussions about World literature, are exceptionally founded upon an understanding of creativity's main tasks and the public's view of writers.

The famous English playwright George Bernard Shaw wrote in a letter to Vladimir Chertkov in 1905: "I support Tolstoy and... value his mind. He is one of the prophets of our times (I use this word in its direct meaning, as in the Bible)" (Shaw,1948, pp.6-7).

Conflicting with the literary authorities, Tolstoy at the same time regarded himself as a follower of the great playwrights, mentioning the unusual theatrical effectiveness of Shakespeare's works.

Alexander Goldenweiser cites a memory of a characteristic statement by Tolstoy about Shakespeare in 1902: "It's always clear why his characters act as they do. Columns were labelled: moonlight, home... all attention was focused on the essence of the drama, now, however, all is contrary." (Goldenweiser, 2002, p.114).

Tolstoy's profound deliberations, drama, conflict, characters, the processing plays, the play of language in dramatic works confirm his intense interest.

Most researchers accept that the aesthetics and poetry of English and Russian writers have some features in common.

Shakespeare's influence on the tragic drama *Power of Darkness* was also noted by Tolstoy's close friend and celebrated critic, Vladimir Stasov, who said later that he had not seen anything to compare since the time "I'd read Lear, Othello for the first time. Tolstoy's creative work is in no way inferior to that of Shakespeare, he added." (Popovkin, 1955, p.475).

Praising Tolstoy's characters, many people admitted the great Shakespeare a power of his works. Also, this is no coincidence. They were both men of genius. Flaubert

talked to Turgenev about “the soul of Shakespeare” in Tolstoy’s works (Flaubert,1938, p.506).

Galsworthy actually wrote: “I’m inclined to think that Tolstoy will go down to posterity on the same mark as Shakespeare’-letter to Constance Garnett” (10 May 1902) (*Letters from J.Galsworthy 1900-1932, 1934, p.37*).

T. Spencer noted in his book *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man* - that both of them analyse human experience, “Tolstoi's description of man's nature differs, however, from those of Aeschylus, of Dante and Shakespeare. For in the earlier periods of human history, it was much easier than it was in the nineteenth century to a positive attitude toward man's primary relationships; [...] The earlier periods gave the writer a set of beliefs, the nineteenth century gave him a set of questions, and in no respect does Tolstoi more clearly reflect his time than in the way he presents Pierre Bezukhof, his main character, as seeking for answers to the meaning of life” (*Shakespeare And The Nature Of Man. By Theodore Spencer, 1961, pp.214-215*).

Some in literature even declare similarities in Tolstoy and Shakespeare's characters, underlining the connections between the writers.

These comparisons are quite clear and are made to illustrate the scope and characterise the greatness of writers who represent the Renaissance and the Modern era, two stages of the revolution towards realism in world art.

Efendiyev wrote in his essay, *Tolstoy's Jealousy*: “I sense a subliminal jealousy in Tolstoy’s soul towards Shakespeare. A jealousy that is rich in tones and feelings that could have been written in Shakespeare’s or Tolstoy’s ink.” (Efendiyev,2009, p.84).

Moreover, from notes by Ilyas Efendiyev, “Cervantes, Shakespeare, Tolstoy: as time passes, writers of this calibre become something of a distinct aesthetic category” (Efendiyev, 2009, p.100).

There are continuities within foreign writers' works from those of the great pillars of literature, Tolstoy in particular. In fact, Tolstoy not being subject to fashion offers something to learn from, even today.

Theodore Dreiser, in his autobiographical book “Dawn,” shared his impressions which Tolstoy’s books made on him in his youth. He liked “The Death of Ivan Ilych” and “The Kreutzer sonata” most of all. He was so delighted and shocked by the vitality of the pictures opened to him that he desired to be a writer too, write like Tolstoy and make the whole world heed (*Tolstoy is the whole world (M. Gorky). 190th anniversary of the birth of L. N. Tolstoy (1828-1910) (M. Gorky)*).

In the English writer John Galsworthy's opinion, "War and Peace" is the greatest novel in the world (*Statement of a number of moral problems in the work of Tolstoy*).

The French writer and critic Anatole France highly appreciated Tolstoy in his article dedicated to the great Russian writer. He considered Tolstoy to be an epic writer and ordinary teacher. According to France, Tolstoy teaches to observe a person in external manifestations expressing human nature and the soul's latent movements. Tolstoy exposed crimes of society, all its injustices, arbitrariness, and in this, Tolstoy is the best among the best (*L. Tolstoy in world literature*).

In the words of France, Tolstoy is a great lesson. Tolstoy teaches with his creation that beauty arises from the truth of the living and completely perfect, like Aphrodite emerges from the depth of the sea (*Tolstoy and the foreign world*).

This fact was also noted by the playwright Ilyas Efendiyev; "As a writer of genius, Tolstoy was always in fashion. However, he was never a slave to its influence. He knew that all things must pass along the way of pure art" (*Genius for All Time*, 1978, p.3).

Tolstoy's influence on American prose

American writers like Faulkner and Hemingway also display elements from Tolstoy in their works. In his article *Tolstoy and Faulkner* T.L.Morozova wrote: "The more we read and think about Faulkner's works, the more familiar we become with his characters, the more we adapt to his artistic manoeuvres, the clearer it becomes for a reader... that to some extent the realism of Faulkner is surprisingly close to Tolstoy's realism. In his speeches, letters, performances, and interviews, Faulkner often mentions Gogol, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Chekhov, and other Russian writers. He mentioned Tolstoy as one of those whom he would re-read. Tolstoy's books were in the American writer's library. Faulkner particularly liked *Anna Karenina*- he held three editions of the book. Faulkner considered Tolstoy to be the greatest representative of World literature, who had created immortal works. For Faulkner, the principal goal was that achieved by the literary greats: "To create something special that could make people feel the same 100, 200, 500 years later, as when they read Homer, Dickens, Balzac, Tolstoy." (Morozova, 1978. P.225).

As Yuri Sokhryakov wrote, Hemingway was one of the 20th century American writers displaying the most interest in Tolstoy's works, indeed in Russian literature at all.

What helped Hemingway? Reading Tolstoy, writes D. Urnov, allowed the American writer to "see the limited creative perspectives opened by his direct masters, he had the opportunity to see how much Tolstoy or Chekhov was different and better than what Stein and Joyce tried to teach him" (Urnov, 1965, p.318).

Hemingway did not learn particular methods of writing a masterpiece from Tolstoy; instead, he took on the principal tool- the ability to display and resolve the most dramatic social-physiological issues of his time. "Tolstoy helped Hemingway to understand society's basic immorality..." Efendiyev wrote in his essay, *Faulkner and Hemingway*:

'Faulkner- is a mountain whose contours are clear and distinct; he is as immovable as eternity. Hemingway, too, is like a mountain, but to what height exactly? Today the contours are clear, but will they be so tomorrow?- this is unknowable, as this mountain is dynamic, changeable; his poems, stories, and sketches are not static, there is no flat plane for them, I might say they are stereometric, they breathe, they tremble...' (Efendiyev, 2009, p.4).

In another sketch, *Prose of the 20th Century*: he says, "My father had his own system. For Ilyas Efendiyev the voice of the 20th century was American prose: Faulkner, Hemingway..." (Efendiyev, 2009, p.38).

Tolstoy, a Nobel nominee

Both William Cuthbert Faulkner and Ernest Miller Hemingway became Nobel Prize laureates in Literature. They were awarded for their significant contributions to and development of American prose. Faulkner received the prize in 1949 and Hemingway in 1954.

In his sketch, *The Distress and Torture of Nobel Prize Aspirants*, Efendiyev wrote, "The best solace for those who aspire to a Nobel Prize but are not able to achieve it, maybe the example of Tolstoy. However, the example is not entirely successful, as there is no Tolstoy among them." (Efendiyev, 2009, p.4).

We know that L.N. Tolstoy was a 'disclaimer,' that is, he voluntarily rejected the idea of a Nobel Prize and asked politely not to be nominated. However, that was later, in 1906. From 1902 Tolstoy was nominated annually, but the Swedish Academy presented the prize to other candidates.

His final nomination for the prize was by the Russian Science Academy for his *Great Sin*, which is critical of private ownership. However, when the writer learned of the

nomination he immediately wrote to the Finnish writer and translator Arvid Jarnfelt: "If it happens that I will be nominated for the Nobel Prize, it will be unpleasant for me to refuse it, therefore I ask them politely not to nominate me." (*Why Leo Tolstoy was not awarded the Nobel Prize*).

So, what was the real reason for his rejection of a Nobel Prize? Was it because he was aggrieved at not being nominated for earlier works, or did he really not want the monetary prize? "I was very pleased that I was not given the Nobel Prize. It released me from a great difficulty, that is, how to deal with the money, that I am sure would bring only harm." (*Why Leo Tolstoy was not awarded the Nobel Prize*).

Stories by L. Tolstoy and a short story by O. Henry

As an outstanding American novelist, O. Henry (William Sydney Porter), like Tolstoy, was also not destined to receive the Nobel Prize. A master of the short story, O. Henry, the author of more than 600 works, worked at a time of 'wild capitalism', when some became richer at the expense of others falling into poverty.

His characters are from different society levels: judges, generals, priests, actors, painters, shopkeepers, cowboys, hoboes. The writer presented an accurate picture of modern American life. His stories had excitement combined with deep, sarcastic humour.

Efendiyev, in his essay *O. Henry's Novels*, notes Tolstoy's and Balzac's superiority:

'There were much greater writers before O. Henry, who wrote in the same genre, the short story; it suffices to recall Tolstoy's *Sevastopol Stories* or Balzac's stories. However, it should be noted that while both Tolstoy and Balzac are listed in the ranks of great novelists, it was Maupassant who set the course for the short story in the mid-19th century and it was O. Henry who completed the process in the 20th century. Most writers of those days could afford to include plenty of emotionality, as Chekhov did in his novels' (Efendiyev, 2009, p.47).

Throughout the centuries, many writers, such as Leonid Andreyev, Stefan Zweig, Ivan Bunin, Mark Twain, Edgar Allan Poe, and others, were writing stories. Even though, as mentioned by Efendiyev, Tolstoy and Balzac also wrote stories, they gained international popularity as novelists. However, O. Henry wrote exclusively in the short story form, and his single novel *Cabbages and Kings* is, in fact, a series of separate stories in a common setting.

Tolstoy and Georges Simenon. Lessons in truth

The celebrated Belgian writer Georges Simenon also authored numerous stories and novels. He was famous for his detective stories about Inspector Jules Maigret.

In his paper *Why is Simenon Afraid of Uttering Tolstoy's Name?* Efendiyev writes that "For me, Maigret is a Tolstoyan by nature and, as far as I can see, he is a faithful reader of Tolstoy's works. Simenon often spoke of Russian literature and confessed that Gogol, Dostoevsky, and Chekhov greatly influenced him. I can just see Maigret grabbing Simenon by his jacket lapels and asking: 'What about Tolstoy!?'” (Efendiyev, 2009, p.57).

In his *Mémoires intimes*, the writer confessed that he had always loved Russian literature, which opened up for him an "inexhaustible source of humanism"; Lev Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Chekhov, and Gorky taught him much about human psychology. He particularly appreciated Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (Starodubets, 2015, pp.2-3).

In the “Family novel,” Tolstoy and his foreign counterparts

Let us turn from Simenon's purely masculine prose to a more female form.

Efendiyev's essay *Psychological Female Prose or Female Psychology in Prose* discusses the 'female novel':

‘Many researchers, including N. Segal, believe that novels that constitute a strand of French literature known as the "psychological female novel" originated with Marie-Madeleine de la Fayette's *La Princesse de Cleves*. However, for me, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* reflects *La Princesse de Cleves*'s ideas more clearly than does the prose of Françoise Sagan. Thus, through *Madame Bovary*, a substantial thread in French literature traces its origins to that novel. At first sight, *Madame Bovary* is similar to *Anna Karenina*, but this is so only superficial; in detail, the plot's differences are clear. In Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, feelings are veiled, and the style is quite severe and reserved. However, *Madame Bovary* is openly expressive and demonstrative’ (Efendiyev, 2009, p.41).

Efendiyev remarks upon a comparison with *Anna Karenina* in another essay, *The Mission of Great Universal Books*:

‘Finally, I read *Manon Lescaut* and have just laid the book down.... Clearly,

the 'courtesan' motif in world literature has come down to us from this work. Detailed and careful attention traces the genetic and typological roots of both Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Tolstoy's *Anna* back to *Manon Lescaut*' (Efendiyev, 2009, p.28).

Literary parallels with Tolstoy's creativity

There are further literary comparisons with works by Tolstoy in Efendiyev's (2009) *The Fame and Standing of Some Literary Works within World Literature*:

"*The Man with the Golden Touch*, a novel by the Hungarian writer Mor Jokai, moves along similar lines to Tolstoy's *Father Sergius*; it continues a literary tradition of psychological enquiry into the depths of human temperament. The character of Mihály Timár- Mor Jokai's hero - is revealed in layers that can only be achieved by those with what is known as a gift from above" (p.39).

Efendiyev maintains:

'*The Man with the Golden Touch* merits recognition as World literature; if this novel had been published in France, I am sure that his name would be spoken of in the same breath as Balzac, Flaubert, Zola, and Maupassant, and his work would be the subject of research and distinct treatment in literary textbooks...And what is the case? Today, outside Hungary, *The Man with the Golden Touch* is known only to experts in Hungarian literature.' (Ibid, p.39)

Conclusion

Unlike many unrecognised geniuses, Tolstoy's fame spread beyond Russia's borders during his lifetime. Jafar Khandan wrote: "Tolstoy is immortal. He always presented living works to the fund of world literature, his hero was the truth, and this carried humanitarian ideals to the world." (Khandan, 1960, p.3).

"This man is like a God," claimed Gorky. It may be a reason why Elchin Efendiyev kneels before Tolstoy's creative works, as well as experiencing a subconscious fear. He was going to write a book called *The Reason I like Tolstoy's Works*. However, he has not been able to bring it to life. It seems that all the materials are assembled, all the notes and sketches are completed, the structure and sequence are clearly planned.

Nevertheless, it is not written. "It is likely the book will never be written. I have a

subconscious fear of starting it. Whenever I try to start the book, the gravity of Tolstoy (Tolstoy's weight!) bears down on me (falls on my shoulders!)" (Efendiyev, 2009, p.6).

Finally, it remains only to note that the power of the writer's talent conquers all who address the works he created.

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