

**EXTENDED METAPHOR:
THE POETICS OF TAT'IANA TOLSTAIA**

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Tat'iana Tolstaia said the following about the novels of Vladimir Makanin in the literary magazine *Voprosy literatury*:

Makanin's key metaphor (*kliuchevaia metafora*) 'floods' the text; it can be picked up anywhere.¹

The concept of a key metaphor can also be applied to Tolstaia's own works. The metaphor seems to be the hero in many of her works; indeed, the text is littered with metaphors that provide an important key.

Helena Goscilo, who has written a number of pioneering studies on Tolstaia, also commented:

Several of Tolstaia's most successful efforts to build on what may be called a matrix metaphor, a device favoured in the 1920s by one of the mentors of the Serapion Brother, Evgenii Zamiatin.²

This *matrix metaphor* could be considered the key metaphor, since the central metaphor (mother) appears repeatedly and it gives birth to a related metaphor (child).

Tolstaia's short work "On the Golden Porch" ("Na zolotom kryl'tse sideli...") is about a woman reminiscing over her childhood at a dacha. Right from the beginning of this work we have a key metaphor — the garden represents childhood. The work begins:

¹ Tat'iana Tolstaia, Karen Stepanian, "...Golos, letiashchii v kupol," *Voprosy literatury*, 1988, no.2, 86.

² Helena Goscilo, "Tat'iana Tolstaia's <Dome of Many-Coloured Glass>: The World Refracted through Multiple Perspective," *Slavic Review*, vol.47, no.1 (Spring, 1988), 287.

In the beginning was a garden. Childhood was a garden.³

Following from this there is a description of a bright and colourful garden. The garden metaphorically describes the woman's childhood, one full of happiness and colour. The time frame of childhood is shifted to the space frame of a garden, giving various visual images. The metaphor is not used only once, but many times, becoming an *extended metaphor*.

When childhood is about to end, the garden is expressed thus:

Looking back once, with unbelieving fingers we felt the smoked glass behind which our garden waved a hankie before going down for the last time.⁴

The garden also clearly personifies a childhood that is coming to a close. From the beginning to this point, in about 70% of the whole work — in other words, in the framework of the two previously mentioned two metaphors — Tolstaia is giving a fulsome account of her festive childhood.

For example, in the scene that depicts the neighbour, Uncle Pasha, when he returns from a day's work, Uncle Pasha's garden is described as a 'Paradise'. Here the words, *Sad* (garden), *Rai* (paradise), and *Dom* (house), are capitalised. Tolstaia is emphasising that Garden, Paradise, and Uncle Pasha's House share the same quality.

In the scene where Uncle Pasha is sleeping, various objects are listed swimming above his head, such as the attic, the roof, the chimney, the moon and so on. The passage goes:

[They swam] across the garden, through dreams.⁵

Here garden and dream are the same. Garden, which was used as a metaphor for childhood, is also likened to paradise and a dream; it is sublimated into a festive utopia.

To our heroine, the small girl, Uncle Pasha is an alluring figure, and his house with

³ Tat'iana Tolstaia, *On the Golden Porch*, trans. Antonina W. Bouis (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p.45.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.53.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.49.

its velvet, lace, golden frames, etc. seems to be stocked with fabulous treasures. However, when the heroine visits again over twenty years later, she is surprised to discover that Uncle Pasha is only a shabby old man. What appeared to be treasures to the girl's eyes are nothing but 'dust, ashes, rot.' Childhood is truly over, and the many dreams of that golden time have been lost.

However, childhood did not end suddenly. The carnival-like garden slowly changed in appearance while the girl was not aware of it. In the beginning the garden was without end or fences. Likewise, childhood was a time of limitless freedom. However, the garden came to be enclosed by a wire fence, broken glass is sprinkled in strategic points, and there is the appearance of a scary yellow dog. We have here a metaphoric description of shadows slowly appearing over childhood.

Fantasy and reality are in conflict, and fantasy is, unfortunately, betrayed by reality. This melody, one of the imaginary world at variance with reality, appears not only in "On the Golden Porch", but in Tolstaia's other works in a slightly altered forms. It is the common bass register of the Tolstaia Suite.

Natal'ia Ivanova discusses Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque, taking the short work "The Fakir" ("Fakir"), as an example. A man appears as an alluring king when he is in a high-rise apartment. But when the king is amid the reality of a crowded subway, he loses his crown and has been downgraded to a small and fidgety, ordinary man. To quote from Ivanova:

Later we see him in a completely different guise, fallen from the false heights to the underground of Moscow subway, where he 'walked as an ordinary man'..... The hero is directly subjected to the divestment-decrowning characteristic of the grotesque.⁶

We see how a woman has beautified a man, but when she sees him for real, she is made aware of and astounded by the gap between fantasy and reality.

However, the characters in Tolstaia's works don't completely let go of their fantasy worlds. At the close of "On the Golden Porch", the speaker touches once more on the

⁶ Natal'ia Ivanova, "Bakhtin's Concept of the Grotesque and the Art of Petrushevskaja and Tolstaia," in Helena Goscilo ed. *Fruits of Her Plume: Essays on Contemporary Russian Women's Culture* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp.26.

garden:

Bent in half by the years, her face turned to the ground, Margarita wanders through the chilled, drafty garden, as if seeking lost footsteps on the silent paths.⁷

We see Margarita, the second wife of Uncle Pasha, walking in the garden after he is dead and gone. This figure could also be the speaker, desperately seeking the reverberations of her carnival-like childhood, even though she is well aware that it is over. The 'lost footsteps' might be the imagination, the ability to dream, which is most inherent in children.

I should also like to touch on one other of Tolstaia's short works "Okkervil' River" ("Reka Okkervil"). It is the story of a solitary hero, Simeonov, who holds a romance for a former singer. He is disillusioned when he meets with the singer and sees her as her actual self. The beautiful imaginary world created by the hero is shattered by the shabby reality. You could say it is composed in exactly the same way as previous work "On the Golden Pond".

In this work, the exotic sounding Okkervil' River is the utopia for Simeonov. The voice of Vera Vasil'evna coming from the old records lulls him into fantasy and the scene of a utopian river unfolds. Here the most important metaphor is song likened to river. To give an example, there is a long, polyphonic sentence where the vigorous singing voice flows in complete harmony with the river. Here is an excerpt of this long sentence:

[T]he hiss creak and spin formed a black tunnel that widened into the gramophone horn, and triumphant in her victory over Simeonov, speeding out of the festooned orchid of her voice, divine, low, dark, lacy and dusty at first and then throbbing with underwater pressure, rising up from the depths, transforming, trembling on the water like flames – *pshsts-pshsts-pshsts, pshsts-pshsts-pshsts* – filling like a sail, getting louder, breaking hawsers, speeding unrestrained *pshsts-pshsts-pshsts* a caravel over the nocturnal waters splashing flames – ...⁸

⁷ Tolstaia, *op.cit.*, p54.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.22.

The voice is initially small, but gradually becomes big and rich. It is described as rising up from the depths of a river, vigorously tracing the river's course, and climbing, eventually, into the sky. *Shipia*, *shipienie* are the words used to describe the static coming from the old record, and a little before that *shipiashchii* is used to describe the sound of the water in the river. The use of similar words, of course, is no coincidence. The static from the record is conspicuously likened to the sound of water. The obvious intent of the author is to clarify the metaphor.

The interesting thing about this long sentence, which together forms one metaphor, is that it also contains metonymy, simile, and onomatopoeia. This dense style, which contains a rising voice and vigorously flowing river, also increases the sense of tension. The metaphor of the singing voice and flowing river continues further from here, but gradually the river, which is used figuratively for the singing voice, becomes detached from this denotation and creates its own independent world. The denoted object is left behind and the metaphor becomes extended. In other words, the river becomes the hero's place of fantasy, and just as the garden in "On the Golden Porch" was given various colouring, the river too is given all and every manner of details, colours, and fragrances.

Here the river is filled with clear grey water, the balconies which face the embankment contain nasturtiums, and Vera Vasil'evna walks short dainty steps like a 'languorous naiad'. From herein the river ceases to merely denote a singing voice, but becomes a stage for an independent utopia which has the exotic name of Okkervil'.

However, as in the case of other works of Tolstaia, the fantasies of the hero are destroyed when they come into contact with reality, and this is expressed by the warping and changing of the beautiful scenes of the utopia. After Simeonov finds out by chance that Vera Vasil'evna is still living, he can no longer listen to the records and indulge in fantasy as he used to; his heart is unsettled and he can no longer paint the same scene.

The wind ruffled and wrinkled, agitated the broad grey smoothness of the Okkervil River.⁹

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.27.

Simeonov finds out the address of Vera Vasil'evna, and after some wavering, decides to call on her. In the scene where he makes the decision, the banks of the river in his dreams are disturbed.

The Okkervil rushed noisily in a narrow stream, slapping the granite shores, and the shores crumbled like sand and crept into the water.¹⁰

When Simeonov sees the uncouth Vera Vasil'evna in the living flesh, he is greatly disillusioned, and he tramples and destroys the banks of his imaginary Okkervil' River. This dream realm is eroded and destroyed by reality.

In the final part of the work, Vera Vasil'evna comes to borrow Simeonov's tub. Simeonov pricks his ears to sounds of Vera Vasil'evna in the bathroom.

[He listened] how the water drained with a suckling gurgle.¹¹

Here we can say that the water takes the place of the river, and that the gurgle takes the place of the singing voice; the utopian river — as well as the signing voice likened to a river — have both gone down the drain. I think what we have here is a variant of the original metaphor. In the bathroom, the most everyday and prosaic of places, water is the agent for Simeonov's many romantic fantasies to finally disappear. We can feel the author's cruel irony.

However, this doesn't mean the hero has been utterly crushed by the weight of reality. We can see right at the end there is the scene where Simeonov listens once more to a record of Vera Vasil'evna. The scene is described as thus:

the divine stormy voice rose in a crescendo from the depths, spread its wings, soared above the world.¹²

The singing voice, which should have been swept away and forgotten, still has its strength and appeal like before; it again heads for the sky and soars above everything.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.29.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.32.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.33.

It points to a dream realm high in the heavens against us mortals crawling on the earth's surface, bound to the shackles of reality. In fact, in Tolstaia's works, many of the scenes painted amid fantasy are associated with height.

In "The Fakir" we have an alluring person living in a high-rise apartment which is depicted as a tower. And in another work "Peters" ("Peters") the beautiful women drawn to the hero all seem to be floating in the air like the figures in the Marc Chagall pictures. Okkervil' River closes with the soaring voice of Vera Vasil'evna; the voice seems to imply a bridge spanning the earth's surface of vulgar reality to the heavens of the dream world.

In another work "Rendezvous with a Bird" ("Svidanie s ptitsej"), we have exactly the same dual composition of dreams and reality. The hero Petia is a very imaginative boy who loves to listen to the strange tales told by the mysterious woman Tamila; his fantasies also stretch forth by way of metaphor. When he sits down to the dinner table,

Petia was given a large bowl of rice porridge; a melting island of butter floated in a sticky Sargasso Sea. Go under, buttery Atlantis.¹³

Petia first sees the butter floating in the rice porridge and he associates it with Atlantis, the continent said to have sunk into the ocean. While he fantasises about this fabled land, the association with the meal is lost. Here, Atlantis, which is used figuratively for the butter in the rice porridge, becomes detached from this denotation, and extends so that Atlantis becomes the object of the boy's yearning, the utopia which stirs his adventurous spirit. The strange birds of which Tamila spoke become an important motif that decorate this dream world.

However, once again a beautiful dream is betrayed by ugly reality. The coarse and vulgar Uncle Boria invades and shatters the dream world. This Tolstaia contrast is also clearly shown in the scene where the boy sees two sets of words on a ruble note.

On the ruble, written in tiny letters, were incomprehensible words, left over from Atlantis: Bir sum. Bir Som. Bir manat. And beneath that, a warning:

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.120.

‘ Forging state treasury bills is punishable by law.’ Boring, adult words.¹⁴

We have mystical words of Atlantis and a set of logical, boring words. The conflict between these two parallels the conflict between child and adult, and dream and reality. Dreams are full of strange and wonderful things; they are a children’s world where fairies and golden things soar in the air. In contrast, reality is full of commonplace, boring things, the world of adults symbolized by the rocks and dust of the earth’s surface.

Since dream and reality do not converge on the same plane, but are completely separate, belonging to different dimensions, it is only natural that Tolstaia’s works favour metaphors of similarity rather than metonymy of contiguity. The author’s world view is the soil that gives rise to metaphors.

At the end of “Rendezvous with a Bird”, Petia is aware of reality and seems to be plunged into ‘sour sorrow’, but he finds in his pocket an egg of the magical bird – the magical egg, pink glass, tightly stuffed with golden sparkles. It is the mythical egg that everybody wants – whoever finds it will feel a sense of longing all their life. But they still look for it, they still want it.

This affirms that dreams really do exist, and that they link the dream world and reality. The sparkles of the egg symbolize the beauty of our dreams. Tolstaia leaves a faint glimmer of hope to the dreamers who are about to be crushed by cruel reality. In the work “Sweet Shura” (“Milaia Shura”), we see the words, ‘as real as a mirage’. Tolstaia’s metaphors affirms that dreams and reality are the same, or perhaps that dreams are more real.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.129.

拡張するメタファー：トルスタヤの詩学

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タチヤーナ・トルスタヤの作品には、たいてい、作者の世界観と密接な関係のある重要なメタファーがあり、そのメタファー自体が拡張して独自の世界をつくりあげている。

短編「金色の玄関に…」では、「子供時代＝庭」が重要なメタファーで、さまざまなヴァリエーションで何度も用いられている。「庭」が擬人化されたり、ユートピア世界に昇華されることによって、祝祭的な子供時代が描き出される。最後に子供時代という夢の時空間は、現実裏切られるが、この想像世界と現実の齟齬というテーマは、「トルスタヤ組曲」に一貫して流れる通奏低音と言っている。

別の短編「オッケルヴィル川」でも、主人公の想像がユートピアの風景を作り上げていくさまが、「歌声＝川」というメタファーを介してみごとに表されている。たとえるものである「川」が、たとえられるものである「歌声」から遊離し、あらゆるデテールを与えられて次第に拡張し、独自の世界を築いていくのである。しかし、やがて主人公が醜い現実と直面すると、美しかった風景は歪み、ついには壊されてしまう。

もうひとつの短編「鳥に会ったとき」でも、この二元的な構図は変わらない。主人公の少年が、米粥に浮いているバターを「アトランティス大陸」のようだと感じたことから発して、「アトランティス」は、少年の冒険心をかきたてる憧れの対象となる。子供の夢と大人の現実とは、それぞれ「神秘的なアトランティスの言葉」と「合理的で退屈な言葉」で対比されるが、やがて大人の現実が少年の夢を打ち砕いてしまうのだ。

トルスタヤのこうした二元的な世界観こそ、隣接を特徴とするメトニミーではなく、相似を特徴とするメタファーを生み出す土壌であると同時に、トルスタヤのメタファーは、夢もまた現実と同じく「リアル」であることを、雄弁に物語っている。