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POINT OF VIEW IN JAY PARINI'S BIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL "THE LAST STATION"

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the biographical novel "The Last Station" by the American writer Jay Parini and focuses on reality and unreality in it. The relationship of literary characters to each other is observed from the point of view of each narrator. Also, the article shows some contradictions.

KEYWORDS

Character, point of view, conflict, postmodernism, chronicle.

INTRODUCTION

Jay Parry's first biographical novel "The Last Station" dedicated to the great Russian writer Leo Tolstoy, published in 1990, is unique in its consistency of plot, unconventional narrative style, and richness of lines in the nature of the characters. In it, the last year of Tolstoy's life is fictionalized, and the events related to the life of Leo Nikolayevich are told from the point of

view of eight characters. Jay Parini was inspired by the diary of Valentin Bulgakov, who acted as Tolstoy's secretary during the last months of his life, and Parini quoted directly from the secretary's writings. He also appropriately used written sources about Leo Tolstoy, conversations with his wife and children, descriptions left by friends and his followers. In the novel, which

describes the “screaming” end of Tolstoy’s last days, the bitter struggle between Sofya Andreyevna and Tolstoy’s followers over the will, the dilemma of leaving his great fortune among his thirteen children and followers who lead a modest lifestyle, the dramatic departure of the writer from his home. A series of events is described, such as his arrival, his death from an illness at a small station, hundreds of reporters gathering to cover his death, and the passing of sad days in the Tolstoy family.[23,57]

Jay Parini compiled all the information related to the life of Leo Tolstoy to create this work. He used mainly Valentin Bulgakov’s diary to write this biographical novel, in addition to many people who have information about the writer and his family members made good use of their diaries. In this work, Leo Tolstoy’s last will is met with great opposition and causes conflicts among the characters of the work. The work consists of 42 chapters, in which 7 narrators tell their story. They are: Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy (9 chapters), his wife Sofya Andreyevna (8 chapters), daughter Sasha (5 chapters), Tolstoy’s secretary Valentin Bulgakov (9 chapters), his best friend - Vladimir Chertkov (3 chapters), Leo Tolstoy’s personal physician - Dushan Makovitsky (4 chapters), author - Jay Parini (3 chapters). Each of the characters in the novel expressed their views on Leo Tolstoy’s last will.

According to Jay Parini, “The Last Station” is a work of fiction, even if it has some trappings and influences on literary trends. The author says that the idea to write this work came half a century ago, in a bookstore in Naples. It came from a sudden encounter with Valentin Bulgakov’s diary. Soon, Jay Parini learns that many others have kept similar diaries related to his life. Other members of Tolstoy’s entourage include Vladimir Chertkov, Sofia’s memoirs and diaries, Andreyevna Tolstoy, Ilya and Leo, Sergey, Tanya and read the

diaries of Alexandra (Sasha) Tolstoy, Dushan Makovitsky, and others, which were written significantly by them.

“Reading them in succession was like looking at a constant image through a kaleidoscope. I soon fell in love with the continually changing symmetrical forms of life that came into view” - Jay Parini.[1,23]

It can be seen from this that the writer has given his subjective views on the information of each narrator in his novel.

“A novel is a voyage by sea, a setting out into strange waters, but I have sailed as close as I could to the shoreline of literal events that made up the last year of Tolstoy’s life. Whenever Tolstoy speaks in this novel, I quote his actual words or, less often, I create dialogue based on conversations reported indirectly. Elsewhere, I have freely imagined what might have, could have, or should have been said.”[1,265]

So, the writer lived with this work, every sentence was created by him in his imagination. Jay Parini brought all the views characteristic of postmodernism in his work.

In the work, we will consider whether the views of each narrator are realistic or unrealistic, and Jay Parini’s reaction to them.

Valentin Bulgakov - in the 9 chapters of the work, he recorded his views and Sofya Andreyevna’s displeasure with Leo Tolstoy’s will as a young secretary. Valentin Fedorovich Bulgakov, a 24-year-old student of the history and philology faculty of Moscow University, spent perhaps the most difficult year of his life with Tolstoy. It can be seen as a year of painful experiences, disastrous and sad events, which brought the contradictions that tormented the writer for many years into one knot and led to a tragic rebuke.

Therefore, the delicate, benevolent intonation with which this wise young man talks about his world and surroundings seems especially valuable: calm, without anguish, at the same time detailed and sincere.[2,140]

After Tolstoy's death, Bulgakov, at the request of Sofya Andreyevna, helped her sort through the writer's manuscripts, and then for several years managed the Tolstoy Museum in Moscow. Bulgakov's diary, in which the entire course of events of the last, most dramatic year in the life of the genius of Russian literature is consistently and objectively recorded, is the most valuable source for understanding the events that took place in Yasnaya at that time.

The chronicle compiled by Bulgakov convinces us that the mental state of Sofya Andreyevna, her hysterical views, inconsistency, made Tolstoy's stay in his house unbearable and forced him to meet a new fate on a dark autumn evening in no way hides his true state, that he is on the verge of mental illness, that he has violent attacks of jealousy, that he organizes hysterical scenes that tire old Tolstoy. He describes how the great Tolstoy gave his whole being to his wife.

Bulgakov's diary helps clarify the role of all voluntary and involuntary participants in the events of Yasnaya Polyana in 1910. Between Tolstoy and his wife, after a fundamental change in his worldview took place, he moved to the side of the working "lower classes", internal alienation appeared and a blank wall of misunderstanding was erected.[2,135] Sofya Andreyevna did not sympathize with her husband's research, did not agree with his conclusions, did not accept his criticism of modern social reality. Until the end of his life, he recognized all the legality and justice of social inequality, the system of exploitation and oppression, and considered his privileged position, ruling life as natural, and remained an owner. This

ultimately determined all his behavior, the desire to save the land and property of the master from the aggression of the peasants, the desire not to let go of the rights to Tolstoy's literary works, to preserve and give them to children and grandchildren. But at the same time, it would be too rude and simplistic to assume that the mother, who is the head of a large family, is only hindered by the psychology and feelings of ownership.

Life's real concerns, the need to decide the fate of growing children revealed to him the inconsistency of Tolstoy's teachings, allowed him to feel his abstract, lifeless character. Sofya Andreyevna can be criticized for not being sympathetic to the main democratic direction in which Tolstoy's ideological development took place, for not having enough attention and courtesy towards him, but he cannot be blamed for not being able to reorganize his life, the life of his family according to Tolstoy's beliefs. Despite the big difference in views, Sofya Andreyevna remained a close and dear person to Tolstoy, he needed her and did not dare to be upset with her departure. In the farewell letter he wrote on the eve of his departure, he confirmed his gratitude and respect for the person who had been his closest person and faithful companion for almost half a century.

Thus, Tolstoy, in the severe nervous state of his wife, made every effort to treat her gently, humiliatingly, lovingly, putting aside everything that disturbed and irritated her. Bulgakov's diary is, in fact, Tolstoy's loneliness, how his friends and followers cruelly drag him into the struggle, how absurdly and rudely they interfere in his life, how they give him an atmosphere of inter-races, senseless stubbornness, false adherence to principles, petty insults and many other things were very unknown to Tolstoy himself. At the end of his life, Leo Nikolayevich remained at the center of a sharp and

uncompromising civil conflict.”Yasnaya Polyana has become a kind of fortress,” notes Bulgakov. His diary helps to determine Chertkov’s behavior and influence on the development of the events of Yasnaya Polyana.

In the work Jay Parini shows that Bulgakov wrote the realities in his diary. Tolstoy’s answer to Bulgakov’s question also has a special spirit in the work.

“You ask if I like the life I am currently leading. I do not. Emphatically, I dislike it because I live with my family in ridiculous luxury, while all around me there is poverty and need, and I seem unable to extricate myself from the luxury or answer the needs of the people. I hate this. But what I do appreciate about my life is that I try to do what is within my power, to the extent of my power, to follow Christ’s precept and love God and my neighbor. To love God means to love what is good and draw near it. To love your neighbor means to love all men equally as our brothers and sisters. It is to this, and this alone, that I aspire. Since I am approaching this ideal, little by little, though imperfectly, I refuse to despair. Indeed, I rejoice.”[1,170]

From this we can see that Lev Tolstoy is embodied as a person who does not like luxurious life in real life, tries to avoid it as much as possible, loves all the people around him, and always strives for silence. Bulgakov’s diary also contains many thoughts about this. And Jay Parini expressed this reality with his beautiful, emotional words. Even from these seemingly simple views, we can see that Jay Parini is far from modernist views and reflects a new postmodernist mentality. The will written by Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy is interpreted differently from the language of each narrator throughout the work. In real life, Tolstoy actually wrote a will 6 times, although the previous wills were for the benefit of family members, he made changes to this will. Because of this will, the old Tolstoy loses his peace,

who dreamed of living the last years of his life in peace, finds the opposite. Various disputes arise between him and his wife Sofya Andereyevna, and he is forced to leave his home.

The great Russian writer Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy often quarreled with his wife Sofya Andreyevna over the rights to his literary heritage in recent years. After the count’s death, Sophia wanted to manage her husband’s affairs herself. In recent months, she had been keeping a watchful eye on her husband. This angered and upset the writer, therefore, Tolstoy made a secret will in which he transferred all rights to his manuscripts to Chertkov, his partner and friend, and to his youngest daughter Alexandra. In addition, Tolstoy had long been thinking about life “on the ground”, with the peasants - it was not for nothing that he plowed the land and harvested grain with them. Thus, the writer had two reasons for leaving Yasnaya Polyana - but he could stay, live another 10 years, see two revolutions and a civil war. So, on the night of October 28, 1910, Tolstoy wrote a letter to his wife:[24]

“My departure will grieve you. I am sorry, but I understand and believe that I cannot do otherwise. My position at home is becoming intolerable. Besides everything else, I can no longer live in this luxury, which old men of my age are want to do the work: they leave the life of the world to live in solitude in the last days of their lives”[1,24]

After that, Lev Nikolayevich put on the most simple clothes: a black shirt, a short white coat, a round hat, and secretly left the family estate with Makovitsky, who had lived in Yasnaya Polyana for a long time and treated the count. According to some researchers, Leo Tolstoy dreamed of going to the southern regions and living there as a farmer, while others said that he did not have a clear plan of action.

The scene of Lev Tolstoy's departure is also described in Jay Pari's work, and in it, Tolstoy is tired of his wife's views, he wants to live a peaceful life, but Sofya will not be upset about it. For Sofya Andreyevna, the followers of Leo Nikolayevich - Chertkov and his comrades are like "Furies". Through this allusion, Sofya Andreyevna shows a very negative attitude towards followers, in the eyes of the hero, they are like poisonous snakes, enemies who can do everything to destroy the forty-eight-year-old family, who spread various rumors and damage the family's reputation.[23] In the example below, Sofya Andreyevna's reasoning is expressed through a monologue.

"I know it for sure now. They'll do anything to come between me and my husband. It would be hard enough, God knows, without them pursuing us like Furies. What's worse is they think I don't know about their plan to write me and my children – Leo Tolstoy's children and grandchildren! – out of his will. I always know what's going on behind my back. I can tell it by their looks, their whispers and winks, even their deference. They somehow imagine I don't notice the secret messages delivered when my back is turned. Only yesterday a servant carried a letter from Sergeyenko to Lyovochka right under my nose, but, of course, I recognized his big, loopy handwriting on the envelope! Do they think I was born yesterday?"[1,120]

As a woman, Sofya Andreyevna cares about the interests of her family members. Against the reconstruction of the will, she confidently exclaims, "I can feel what is happening behind me", "they think I was born yesterday?". Countess Tolstaya's worldview is typical of arrogant people. Her assertiveness, analytical features, self-confidence tells the reader that she can sense the secret things going on behind her back, the glances of her enemies, whispers, winks, false respects, letters secretly brought to her husband

from the back, and not pity for her, but wants to be looked at with respect.

So, it can be seen that Sofya Andreyevna is looked down upon in the work, because of Leo Tolstoy's attitude, even those around her seemed to be humiliated, special dignity, reasonable approach to every issue showed her as a strong woman who does not give priority during the work.

"Only I could read Lyovochka's handwriting. His crablike hieroglyphs filled the margins of his proof sheets, driving the printers wild. Corrections blotted out corrections. Even he could not make out what he had written much of the time. But I could. I read his intentions, and the words came clear."[1,12]

If we analyze the work in depth, we can clearly see the different thoughts, contradictory views and conflicts for a one will from each character's spectrum.

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