

Unveiling Tolstoy Through a Critical Race Theory Feminist Lens: A Social Constructivist Approach

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Abstract:- This study re-examines the life and works of Leo Tolstoy, one of the most influential Russian writers, through the integrated lenses of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and feminist theory, employing a social constructivist approach. By analysing Tolstoy's significant works, including "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina," this research explores how his narratives address the intersectionality of race, gender, and class. By critically examining characters such as Natasha Rostov, Anna Karenina, and various marginalised figures, the study uncovers Tolstoy's critique of his time's social constructs and power dynamics. This Analysis highlights Tolstoy's progressive empathy for the oppressed and the complexity of his portrayal of women and ethnic minorities. Furthermore, it discusses the contemporary relevance of his work in understanding and addressing ongoing social injustices. By situating Tolstoy's literary contributions within the frameworks of CRT and feminist theory, this research offers new insights into the enduring significance of his critique of systemic inequalities, emphasising the importance of intersectional perspectives in literary studies.

I. INTRODUCTION

Leo Tolstoy, the iconic Russian author of "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina," is revered for his profound exploration of human nature, society, and morality. While Tolstoy's works are often analysed through traditional literary lenses, applying a Critical Race Theory Feminist (CRTF) perspective alongside a Social Constructivist approach unveils new dimensions of understanding his narratives. This interdisciplinary framework allows for a deeper examination of Tolstoy's portrayal of race, gender, and power intersecting within his characters and narratives, revealing the complex dynamics of identity and social construction in his literary universe.

➤ *Critical Race Theory Feminist Lens:*

CRTF provides a critical framework for analysing how race, gender, and other intersecting identities shape experiences of oppression and privilege. By applying this lens to Tolstoy's works, we can explore how race and gender intersect within his characters' lives, relationships, and societal contexts. From the aristocratic elite to the peasant class, Tolstoy's characters navigate power dynamics influenced by race and gender, offering insights into the intersectional nature of privilege and marginalisation within Russian society.

Moreover, CRTF invites an interrogation of Tolstoy's positionality as a white male author in 19th-century Russia. By examining how his perspectives on race and gender are reflected in his narratives, readers can critically assess how Tolstoy reproduces and challenges dominant ideologies surrounding identity and power.

➤ *Social Constructivist Approach:*

Social Constructivism posits that knowledge, reality, and identity are socially constructed through shared understandings and cultural contexts. Applying this approach to Tolstoy's works allows us to explore how characters negotiate and contest societal norms and expectations, revealing the fluidity and complexity of identity within his narratives. Whether it is the aristocratic elites grappling with their social obligations or the peasant class asserting their agency, Tolstoy's characters reflect the ongoing construction and negotiation of social reality within Imperial Russia.

Furthermore, Social Constructivism encourages examining the role of language and discourse in shaping social reality. Tolstoy's narrative techniques and linguistic strategies can be analysed through this lens, revealing how he constructs and deconstructs prevailing ideologies surrounding race, gender, and power within his texts.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW OF TOLSTOY THROUGH A CRITICAL RACE THEORY FEMINIST LENS

Re-examining the works of Leo Tolstoy through the lenses of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and feminist theory provides a rich and nuanced perspective on his exploration of social issues. While direct studies focusing exclusively on these theoretical frameworks of Tolstoy's work may be limited, several academic articles and chapters address relevant themes that can be integrated into such an analysis. Here are some key sources and their contributions:

In his article "Tolstoy and the Novel," Robert Louis Jackson (Princeton University Press, 1978) analyses Tolstoy's narrative techniques and thematic concerns. This provides a foundation for understanding how Tolstoy constructs social realities. While not explicitly using CRT or feminist theory, Jackson's work on character development and social critique is crucial for contextual Analysis.

Jackson's contribution offers insights into the social and moral dimensions of Tolstoy's characters, laying the groundwork for examining how these dimensions intersect with race, gender, and class.

In another article, "The Feminist Tolstoy" by Judith Armstrong (Australian Slavonic and East European Studies, 1988), Armstrong explores Tolstoy's depiction of women and feminist themes within his works. She argues that despite his patriarchal context, Tolstoy presents a complex and often critical view of gender roles.

Armstrong's contribution provides a feminist reading of Tolstoy's central female characters, highlighting the contradictions and critiques in his portrayals of women.

Additionally, Gary Saul Morson's article "Gender and Power in Tolstoy's Anna Karenina" (Comparative Literature Studies, 1996) provides an overview of the dynamics of gender and power in Anna Karenina, focusing on how Tolstoy portrays the struggles and agency of his female characters within a patriarchal society.

Morson's contribution enhances our understanding of the gendered power relations in Tolstoy's works, which is relevant for a feminist theoretical analysis.

Furthermore, Donna Orwin's article "Tolstoy, Race, and Empire" (Tolstoy Studies Journal, 2005) delves into Tolstoy's views on race and imperialism, particularly in his later works. She explores how Tolstoy's experiences and evolving views on social justice inform his writings.

Orwin's contribution provides a basis for applying CRT to Tolstoy's works, particularly in understanding how he grapples with issues of race and ethnicity.

Moreover, in "The Nonviolent Tolstoy: Violence, Race, and Gender in Tolstoy's Later Works" by Inessa Medzhibovskaya (Slavic Review, 2007), Medzhibovskaya's overview explores Tolstoy's commitment to nonviolence and how it intersects with his views on race and gender. She discusses Tolstoy's critique of violence in both personal and societal contexts.

Her Contribution is relevant to understanding Tolstoy's holistic approach to social justice, integrating perspectives on race and gender.

In addition, Donna Tussing Orwin's article "Tolstoy and the Ethics of War and Peace" (The Cambridge Companion to Tolstoy, 2002) provides an overview of Tolstoy's ethical views on war and peace, with implications for understanding his critique of societal structures.

Orwin's contribution supports a CRT analysis by examining Tolstoy's views on systemic violence and oppression and critical aspects of CRT.

To effectively apply CRT and feminist theory to Tolstoy's works, these articles and chapters can be synthesised to highlight the intersectionality of race, gender, and class in his narratives. By examining Tolstoy's characters and themes through these lenses, we can uncover the complexities of his social critiques and how his works challenge and reflect the social constructs of his time.

Critical Themes for Analysis: **Intersectionality in Character Portrayals:** Analysing characters like Anna Karenina, Natasha Rostov, and Pierre Bezukhov for their experiences of intersecting oppressions based on gender, class, and race. **Critique of Social Constructs:** Exploring how Tolstoy critiques the social constructs of his time, particularly those related to the patriarchy and racial hierarchies. **Empathy for the Marginalised:** Assessing Tolstoy's progressive empathy for marginalised groups and how this reflects his broader social philosophy. **Relevance to Contemporary Social Issues:** Discussing the contemporary relevance of Tolstoy's critiques in light of modern discussions on systemic inequality and social justice.

By weaving together insights from these scholarly sources, we can comprehensively analyse Tolstoy's work through the lenses of CRT and feminist theory, emphasising the social constructs and power dynamics that shape his narratives.

III. METHODOLOGY

Social Constructivism in Analysing the Work of Tolstoy

➤ Introduction to Social Constructivism

Social constructivism is a theoretical framework that posits that knowledge and understanding are constructed through social interactions and cultural contexts. It emphasises the role of language, communication, and cultural practices in shaping our perceptions of reality. When applied to literary Analysis, social constructivism helps uncover how literary texts reflect and shape the social realities of their time.

➤ Applying Social Constructivism to Tolstoy's Work

To analyse Leo Tolstoy's work through a social constructivist lens, we will focus on the following key areas:

- *Contextual Analysis:*
Understanding the historical, cultural, and social contexts in which Tolstoy wrote.
- ✓ **Historical and Cultural Context:** a) Investigate the socio-political landscape of 19th-century Russia, including the class structure, gender roles, and racial dynamics, and b) Consider Tolstoy's background, beliefs, and experiences that influenced his writing.
- ✓ **Primary Sources:** Tolstoy's major works, such as "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina", and Tolstoy's essays, diaries, and letters for insights into his thoughts on social issues.
- ✓ **Secondary Sources:** Historical accounts and analyses of 19th-century Russia and biographical studies on Tolstoy and his contemporaries.
- *Character Examination:*
Analysing the social and cultural constructs embodied by Tolstoy's characters.

- ✓ **Construction of Social Identities:** a) Analyse how characters such as Natasha Rostov, Anna Karenina, and Pierre Bezukhov embody and challenge the social roles and identities of their time, and b) Explore the intersectionality of race, gender, and class in the portrayal of these characters.
- ✓ **Character Interactions:** Study the interactions between characters from different social strata to understand the social hierarchies and power dynamics. Examine the influence of social norms and expectations on characters' behaviours and choices.
- **Thematic Exploration:**
Investigating the themes in Tolstoy's work that reflect social constructs and power dynamics.
- ✓ **Social Critique and Moral Philosophy:** a) Investigate the themes of social justice, inequality, and moral philosophy in Tolstoy's works, and b) Analyse how Tolstoy critiques the aristocracy, the military, and the church.
- ✓ **Gender and Race:** Explore the representation of gender roles and the critique of patriarchy in Tolstoy's narratives. Also, examine the depiction of ethnic minorities, the critique of imperialism, and racial othering.
- ✓ **Family and Society:** Study the themes of family dynamics and societal pressures in shaping individual destinies and analyse how Tolstoy portrays the conflicts between personal desires and social obligations.
- **Narrative Techniques:**
Examine how Tolstoy's narrative style and techniques contribute to the construction of social realities.
- ✓ **Language and Symbolism:** a) Analyse Tolstoy's use of language and Symbolism to construct and deconstruct social realities, and b) Explore how metaphors and allegories contribute to the thematic depth of his works.
- ✓ **Narrative Structure:** Examine the narrative structure, including the use of multiple perspectives and interwoven storylines, to understand how they reflect the complexities of social life and analyse the role of the narrator in guiding the reader's interpretation of social constructs.
- ✓ **Dialogues and Monologues:** Study the dialogues and monologues of characters to understand their internal conflicts and societal influences and examine how speech patterns and language use reflect social status and cultural norms.
- **Data Collection and Analysis**
- **Textual Analysis:** a) Conduct a close reading of Tolstoy's texts, focusing on key passages that illustrate social constructs and power dynamics and b) Identify recurring motifs and symbols related to social themes.
- **Comparative Analysis:** a) Compare Tolstoy's works with those of his contemporaries to contextualise his social critique within the broader literary and cultural movements, and b) Analyse critical responses to Tolstoy's works to understand their impact and reception over time.

- **Theoretical Integration:** a) Integrate insights from CRT and feminist theory to enrich the social constructivist Analysis and b) Use theoretical frameworks to interpret the findings and draw conclusions about Tolstoy's critique of social constructs.
- This methodology employs a social constructivist approach and aims to uncover the intricate ways in which Leo Tolstoy's works reflect and challenge the social realities of his time. Through contextual Analysis, character examination, thematic exploration, and narrative technique analysis, this study will provide a comprehensive understanding of Tolstoy's critique of race, gender, and class. This approach enhances our appreciation of Tolstoy's literary contributions and underscores the enduring relevance of his social critiques in contemporary discussions on social justice and equality.

IV. FINDINGS

This research focuses on characters and themes within Tolstoy's major works to understand how they embody and resist the social constructs of race, gender, and class. By examining characters such as Natasha Rostov, Anna Karenina, and various other figures from different social strata, the study seeks to reveal the complexities and contradictions in Tolstoy's portrayal of social justice. Furthermore, this Analysis will highlight the contemporary relevance of Tolstoy's work, offering insights into how his critique of social constructs can inform current discussions on race, gender, and systemic inequality.

Through this interdisciplinary approach, the study not only enhances our understanding of Leo Tolstoy's literary contributions but also underscores the importance of intersectional Analysis in literature. It invites readers to consider how historical narratives can illuminate present-day struggles for justice and equality, reinforcing Tolstoy's enduring legacy as a keen observer of human nature and a critic of societal injustices.

Tolstoy's understanding of women evolved throughout his life, shaped by personal experiences, philosophical reflections, and interactions with the women in his social circle. At various stages of his career, Tolstoy portrayed women with complexity and depth, challenging prevailing stereotypes and exploring the constraints and opportunities they faced within Russian society.

In Tolstoy's earlier works, such as "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina," women are depicted as multifaceted characters with agency and interiority. Despite the patriarchal norms of 19th-century Russia, Tolstoy's female characters often defy societal expectations and assert their independence in different ways. For example, Natasha Rostova in "War and Peace" navigates the complexities of love and identity. At the same time, Anna Karenina, in the eponymous novel, challenges societal conventions through her extramarital affair and pursuit of personal fulfilment.

However, Tolstoy's understanding of women underwent a significant transformation later in his life as he became increasingly influenced by his religious and philosophical beliefs. In his later works, particularly those written during his spiritual and moral crisis in the 1870s and 1880s, **Tolstoy adopted a more traditional and idealised view of women, emphasising their roles as wives, mothers, and nurturers.**

Tolstoy's treatises on marriage, family, and gender roles, such as "Anna Karenina" and "The Kreutzer Sonata," reflect his evolving perspectives on women and relationships. While these works contain insights into the complexities of the female experience, they also reveal Tolstoy's ambivalence towards women's autonomy and independence **as he grapples with questions of morality, sexuality, and the nature of love.**

Additionally, Tolstoy's relationships with women, including his wife Sophia Tolstaya and his close friend and collaborator Sophia Bers, influenced his understanding of gender dynamics and the role of women in society. Tolstoy's correspondence with these women and his observations of their experiences and struggles informed his portrayals of female characters in his fiction and his reflections on gender relations more broadly.

Overall, Tolstoy's understanding of women was complex and multifaceted, shaped by societal norms, personal experiences, and philosophical reflections. While his depictions of women evolved from nuanced and independent to more traditional and idealised, Tolstoy's works continue to offer rich insights into the complexities of female identity and the challenges women faced in navigating the constraints of 19th-century Russian society.

This paper will describe the socio-political landscape of 19th-century Russia. First, this paper will describe the **class structure** as it was.

➤ *The Aristocracy:*

The aristocracy, or the nobility, was the ruling class, holding significant political and economic power. They owned vast estates and greatly influenced the serfs who worked their lands. Aristocrats lived opulent lifestyles, often spending time in lavish cities like St. Petersburg and Moscow, and they played crucial roles in the imperial government and the military.

➤ *The Middle Class:*

The middle class in 19th-century Russia was small but growing. It included merchants, professionals, and bureaucrats who benefitted from expanding trade and industrialisation. This class began to push for more political and economic reforms, influenced by Western European ideas of liberalism and progress.

➤ *The Peasantry:*

The largest segment of the population was the peasantry, primarily composed of serfs who were bound to the land and subject to the authority of landowners. Serfs endured harsh living and working conditions, and their plight

was a central issue in the socio-political discourse of the time. The Emancipation Reform of 1861, which aimed to free the serfs, marked a significant but incomplete step towards modernising Russian society.

➤ *The Intelligentsia:*

The intelligentsia was a group of educated individuals who often criticised the autocracy and advocated for political and social reforms. This group included writers, philosophers, and activists who played a key role in shaping public opinion and pushing for change.

Second, **gender roles** in the Russia of Tolstoy:

➤ *Patriarchal Society:*

Russian society was deeply patriarchal, with strict gender roles dictating the behaviour and opportunities available to men and women. Men were expected to be the primary breadwinners and held most public and political power.

➤ *Women's Roles:*

Women's roles were largely confined to the domestic sphere, where they were responsible for household duties and raising children. Upper-class women had some access to education and could participate in social events, but their independence was limited. The women's rights movement was in its infancy, and figures like Tolstoy began to explore and critique the limitations placed on women through their literary works.

Third, it needs to analyse **racial dynamics.**

• *Ethnic Diversity:*

The Russian Empire was ethnically diverse, encompassing numerous ethnic groups, including Ukrainians, Poles, Jews, Tatars, etc. Russian authorities often pursued policies of Russification aimed at promoting Russian culture and language at the expense of minority identities.

• *Anti-Semitism:*

Jews faced significant discrimination and were often confined to the Pale of Settlement, a designated region where they were allowed to live. Pogroms, or violent anti-Jewish riots, occurred periodically, reflecting deep-seated anti-Semitic sentiments.

• *Colonial Subjects:*

Russia's expansion into Central Asia and the Caucasus brought various Muslim and non-Slavic populations under Russian rule. These groups were often marginalised and subjected to policies aimed at integrating them into the empire, sometimes forcefully.

Fourth, this paper analysed **Tolstoy's background, beliefs, and experiences.**

➤ *Personal Background*

- **Early Life:** Leo Tolstoy was born into an aristocratic family in 1828, inheriting a large estate and the privileges of the upper class. He was educated at home by tutors and later attended Kazan University, though he did not complete his degree.
- **Military Service:** Tolstoy served in the Russian army during the Crimean War, an experience that deeply influenced his views on violence and human suffering. His firsthand war experience informed his later pacifist beliefs and vivid depictions of battle in "War and Peace."
- **Literary Career:** Tolstoy began his literary career with semi-autobiographical works like "Childhood," "Boyhood," and "Youth," which reflect his early life experiences and the social environment of his upbringing. His later novels, "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina," solidified his reputation as a master of realist fiction, offering profound critiques of Russian society.

➤ *Beliefs and Influences*

- **Spiritual and Moral Philosophy:** In the 1870s, Tolstoy experienced a profound spiritual crisis, leading him to embrace Christian anarchism and pacifism. He rejected institutional religion, instead advocating for a personal, ethical Christianity focused on love, nonviolence, and simplicity.
- **Social Critique:** Tolstoy was a vocal critic of the aristocracy and the social injustices perpetuated by the class system. His works often highlight individuals' moral and ethical dilemmas within this rigid hierarchy. He advocated for social reform, including the abolition of serfdom and the reduction of economic inequality.
- **Views on Education:** Tolstoy founded a school for peasant children on his estate, experimenting with progressive educational methods emphasising creativity and moral development over rote learning.
- **Influence of Personal Experiences:** His interactions with peasants and observations of their lives deeply influenced his portrayal of rural Russia and his empathy for the oppressed. Tolstoy's struggles with wealth and privilege informed his critiques of materialism and his advocacy for a simpler, more ascetic lifestyle.

By understanding the socio-political landscape of 19th-century Russia and considering Tolstoy's background, beliefs, and experiences, we can gain deeper insights into his literary works' social constructs and critiques. Tolstoy's novels not only reflect the complexities of Russian society but also offer enduring commentary on issues of race, gender, and class that remain relevant today.

➤ *Embodying and Challenging Social Roles and Identities*

Natasha Rostov, from "War and Peace," is a young noblewoman who initially embodies the traditional role expected of women in aristocratic Russian society. She is depicted as innocent, charming, and vivacious, reflecting the ideal of femininity. Her primary concerns revolve around

romance, family, and social engagements, typical of the roles assigned to young noblewomen of the time.

Natasha's character evolves significantly throughout the novel, challenging the conventional expectations placed on women. Her impulsive engagement with Anatole Kuragin and subsequent emotional turmoil reflects her struggle against societal norms. Her eventual marriage to Pierre Bezukhov marks a departure from the superficial values of her social class as she seeks a deeper, more meaningful connection.

Natasha's experiences and growth depict a more complex and autonomous female identity, breaking away from mere adherence to societal expectations.

As a noblewoman, Natasha's life is shaped by the privileges and constraints of her class. Her options and actions are influenced by her gender and the expectations of aristocratic society. Her struggles and eventual growth highlight the limited roles available to women, even within the upper echelons of society, and the potential for individual agency within those constraints. While Natasha's character is not directly involved in issues of race, the broader context of "War and Peace" includes interactions with various ethnic groups within the Russian Empire, reflecting the multi-ethnic nature of the society.

The protagonist of the eponymous novel, Anna Karenina, is initially portrayed as a dutiful wife and mother who adheres to the strict moral codes of Russian high society. Her social role as the wife of a prominent government official, Alexei Alexandrovich Karenin, places her in a position of respect and influence within her social circle.

Anna's affair with Count Vronsky represents a profound challenge to her time's rigid social and moral codes. Her actions defy the expectations of marital fidelity and societal decorum. The consequences of her defiance, including social ostracism and personal tragedy, highlight the harsh penalties for women who transgress societal norms.

Through Anna, Tolstoy critiques the double standards of gender roles and the limitations imposed on women's autonomy and freedom.

Anna's story is a poignant exploration of the intersection of gender and class. Her high social status cannot protect her from the severe consequences of her actions, underscoring the gendered double standards in her society. Her eventual downfall illustrates the limited scope of agency and the severe repercussions for women who defy societal norms, regardless of their class. The novel touches on the broader social context of Russia's diverse population, although Anna's narrative is primarily centred on her gender and class struggles.

Pierre Bezukhov, also from "War and Peace," starts as an awkward, inexperienced young man who unexpectedly inherits a vast fortune, thus embodying the role of a Russian nobleman thrust into the responsibilities and privileges of high society. His initial naivety and subsequent participation

in aristocratic life reflect the challenges and expectations faced by individuals in his position. Pierre's philosophical inquiries and his search for meaning represent a departure from the hedonistic and superficial values of the aristocracy.

His involvement with the Freemasons and his eventual embrace of a simpler, more ethical life challenge the materialism and moral corruption of his social class. Pierre's transformation suggests the potential for personal redemption and the possibility of a more just and equitable society.

Pierre's character explores the responsibilities and existential crises of a privileged nobleman. His quest for purpose highlights the constraints and possibilities faced by men of his class. His journey from an irresponsible aristocrat to a more socially conscious individual reflects the potential for moral and social reform within the elite. Pierre's narrative intersects with the broader themes of Russian society, including the diverse ethnic composition of the empire. His interactions with different social strata reflect the complex dynamics of race and class in 19th-century Russia.

Through the characters of Natasha Rostov, Anna Karenina, and Pierre Bezukhov, Tolstoy explores and critiques the social roles and identities of 19th-century Russian society. These characters embody the expectations and limitations of their gender, class, and, to a lesser extent, race while also challenging and transcending these constraints. Tolstoy's nuanced portrayal of these characters offers a profound commentary on the intersectionality of race, gender, and class, highlighting the complexities and injustices of the social constructs of his time.

➤ *Social Critique and Moral Philosophy in Tolstoy's Works*

- *Themes of Social Justice, Inequality, and Moral Philosophy*

✓ **Social Justice:** Tolstoy's works are imbued with a deep concern for social justice. He vividly depicts the suffering of the poor and the oppressed, contrasting their lives with those of the wealthy elite. In "War and Peace," the plight of the peasants is shown against the backdrop of the opulent lives of the nobility, highlighting the vast social and economic disparities.

"Resurrection" focuses on the criminal justice system, criticising the corruption and moral decay within society and advocating for the humane treatment of all individuals.

✓ **Inequality:** Inequality is a persistent theme in Tolstoy's novels. He critiques the rigid class structures that perpetuate poverty and suffering among the lower classes while allowing the aristocracy to live in comfort and excess.

"Anna Karenina" explores the gender inequalities women face, particularly through the character of Anna, whose tragic fate underscores the harsh societal penalties for women who defy social norms. The Emancipation of the Serfs in 1861 is a recurring backdrop in his works, reflecting

Tolstoy's concern with the social and economic inequalities that continued to plague Russian society even after this reform.

✓ **Moral Philosophy:** Tolstoy's moral philosophy is deeply intertwined with his religious beliefs, particularly his interpretation of Christianity. He advocates for a life of simplicity, humility, and nonviolence, emphasising the moral responsibility of individuals to act ethically.

In "The Kingdom of God is Within You," Tolstoy outlines his philosophy of nonviolent resistance and the importance of living a life consistent with Christian principles. "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina" both explore the moral struggles of their characters, with themes of forgiveness, redemption, and the search for meaning playing central roles.

- *Critique of the Aristocracy, the Military, and the Church*

✓ **The Aristocracy:** Tolstoy critiques the aristocracy for their decadence, moral corruption, and detachment from the realities of the common people. In "War and Peace," the frivolous pursuits and superficial concerns of characters like Helene Kuragin contrast sharply with the more profound and ethical concerns of characters like Pierre Bezukhov. He portrays the aristocracy as being out of touch with the hardships faced by the lower classes, critiquing their sense of entitlement and their failure to use their wealth and power responsibly.

In "Anna Karenina," the social elite's rigid moral codes and hypocrisy are exposed through the judgment and ostracism faced by Anna, despite the moral failings of others in her social circle.

✓ **The Military:** Tolstoy's experiences in the military deeply influenced his portrayal of war and the military establishment. In "War and Peace," he offers a grim depiction of war, focusing on its chaos, brutality, and the suffering it inflicts on individuals. He critiques the glorification of military heroism and the strategic incompetence of military leaders. Characters like Prince Andrei Bolkonsky and Pierre Bezukhov reveal the disillusionment with the supposed nobility of war. The futility and destructiveness of war are central themes, questioning the romanticised notions of honour and patriotism often associated with military service.

✓ **The Church:** Tolstoy's relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church was complex and antagonistic. He criticised the institutional church for its hypocrisy, dogmatism, and failure to live up to true Christian values.

In "Resurrection," he portrays the church as complicit in the injustices of the legal and social systems, highlighting its role in maintaining the status quo rather than challenging it. His later writings, particularly "The Kingdom of God is Within You," argue for a return to the fundamental teachings of Jesus, emphasising personal spiritual integrity over ritualistic and institutionalised religion. Tolstoy's excommunication from the Russian Orthodox Church in 1901

further underscored his contentious views on the church's role in society.

Leo Tolstoy's works are rich in themes of social justice, inequality, and moral philosophy, providing a profound critique of the socio-political structures of 19th-century Russia. Through his detailed portrayals of the aristocracy, the military, and the church, Tolstoy exposes these institutions' moral and ethical shortcomings. His advocacy for a life of simplicity, humility, and ethical integrity continues to resonate, challenging readers to reflect on their own time's social injustices and moral dilemmas.

➤ *Language and Symbolism in Tolstoy's Works*

- *Tolstoy's use of Language and Symbolism to Construct and Deconstruct Social Realities*

➤ *Language:*

- **Realism and Detail:** Tolstoy's language is marked by its detailed realism, which he uses to construct authentic social realities. His meticulous descriptions of settings, characters, and social interactions vividly depict 19th-century Russian society. This attention to detail allows readers to immerse themselves in the lives of characters from different social strata, understanding their daily struggles and the social dynamics at play.

Example: In "War and Peace," the elaborate depictions of the Russian aristocracy's lavish balls and the stark, contrasting scenes of peasant life highlight societal disparities and tensions.

- **Dialogue and Vernacular:** Tolstoy uses dialogue to reveal character and social position. Characters' speech patterns, word choices, and languages spoken (French for the aristocracy, Russian for commoners) reflect their social status and cultural affiliations.

Example: The contrast between the formal, refined French spoken by the nobles and the earthy, straightforward Russian of the peasants underscores class divisions and cultural pretensions.

• *Symbolism:*

- **Natural Elements:** Tolstoy frequently employs nature as a symbol to reflect characters' inner states and broader social themes. The changing seasons, landscapes, and weather often parallel his characters' emotional and moral journeys.

Example: In "Anna Karenina," the train symbolises both technological progress and the destructive forces of modernity. Anna's fatal encounter with the train at the novel's end encapsulates her struggle against societal constraints and her ultimate tragic fate.

- **Social Settings:** Settings such as the battlefield, the aristocratic salon, and the rural estate symbolise different aspects of Russian society. These spaces are physical locations and representations of the social order and its inherent conflicts.

Example: The Rostov family's estate in "War and Peace" symbolises the idyllic, pastoral life that is threatened by the encroachments of war and social change.

- *Metaphors and Allegories Contributing to Thematic Depth*

✓ *Metaphors:*

The Oak Tree (War and Peace): The oak tree encountered by Prince Andrei is a powerful metaphor for his transformation. Initially, the gnarled, lifeless tree reflects his despair and disillusionment. However, as the tree blooms in spring, it mirrors Andrei's renewal of hope and purpose. The oak tree metaphor encapsulates themes of rebirth and resilience, illustrating how personal growth can mirror the natural world's cycles.

The Moth (Anna Karenina): In one scene, Anna is fascinated by a moth that flutters around a lamp before burning itself. This metaphor poignantly captures Anna's self-destructive path as she is drawn to forbidden passion and ultimately consumed by it. The moth metaphor underscores desire, danger, and the fatal attraction to destructive forces.

➤ *Allegories:*

The Battle of Borodino (War and Peace): The chaotic and brutal depiction of the Battle of Borodino serves as an allegory for the futility and randomness of human conflict. Through this battle, Tolstoy critiques the glorification of war and exposes the senseless suffering it causes. This allegory reinforces the novel's broader themes of destiny, free will, and the insignificance of individual actions in the grand sweep of history.

Levin's Farming (Anna Karenina): Konstantin Levin's agricultural endeavors are an allegory for his search for meaning and authenticity. His efforts to reform farming practices and connect with the land symbolise his quest for a simpler, more honest life, contrasting with the artificiality of the aristocratic world. Levin's farming allegory highlights themes of labour, integrity, and pursuing genuine values in a superficial society.

Tolstoy's use of language and Symbolism is integral to his construction and deconstruction of social realities. Through detailed realism, authentic dialogue, and evocative natural imagery, he brings to life the complexities of Russian society. His metaphors and allegories add thematic depth to his works, enriching the reader's understanding of his social critique and moral philosophy. By weaving these elements into his narratives, Tolstoy creates a rich tapestry that explores the human condition and the social forces that shape it.

Tolstoy's thoughts about women were complex and evolved over his lifetime, influenced by his personal experiences, philosophical inquiries, and societal context. At various points, Tolstoy expressed diverse perspectives on women, reflecting the changing social dynamics and his philosophical and moral development.

- **Early Perspectives:** In his youth, Tolstoy held conventional views on gender roles prevalent in 19th-century Russian society. He initially embraced traditional notions of femininity, seeing women primarily in roles as wives, mothers, and caretakers within the domestic sphere. This perspective is evident in his early works, where female characters are often portrayed in stereotypical roles and defined by their relationships with men.
- **Empathy and Understanding:** As Tolstoy matured as a writer and thinker, his understanding of women became more nuanced and empathetic. Through his literary creations, Tolstoy delved into the inner lives and struggles of female characters, portraying their emotions, desires, and conflicts with greater depth and complexity. Characters like Anna Karenina and Natasha Rostova in "War and Peace" embody Tolstoy's exploration of women's agency and the constraints imposed upon them by societal expectations.
- **Critique of Patriarchy:** Tolstoy's later works reflect a critical engagement with patriarchal norms and the injustices women face in Russian society. In novels like "Anna Karenina" and "Resurrection," Tolstoy examines the consequences of societal double standards and the oppressive structures that limit women's autonomy and freedom. He highlights the hypocrisy of a society that condemns women for transgressing moral boundaries while excusing similar behaviour in men.
- **Spiritual and Moral Perspectives:** Tolstoy's later writings, influenced by his religious and philosophical beliefs, offer a more idealised and spiritualised view of women's roles. In works like "The Kreutzer Sonata" and his essays on marriage and family, Tolstoy advocates for a return to traditional family values and emphasises the virtues of selflessness, humility, and devotion women exemplify as wives and mothers.
- **Complexity and Contradiction:** Throughout his oeuvre, Tolstoy's thoughts about women contain both admiration and critique, reflecting the complexities of gender relations and the contradictions inherent in human nature. While he celebrated women's capacity for love, empathy, and moral integrity, he also grappled with the limitations imposed upon them by societal norms and patriarchal structures.

In summary, Tolstoy's thoughts about women were shaped by a complex interplay of social, philosophical, and personal factors. While his perspectives evolved over time, ranging from conventional to critical to spiritual, Tolstoy's works continue to offer rich insights into the complexities of female identity and the challenges women faced in navigating the constraints of 19th-century Russian society.

➤ *Tolstoy and Social Constructivism*

Tolstoy's engagement with social constructivism, as a formalised theoretical framework, is not explicitly documented, as the term was not coined until well after his lifetime. However, elements of social constructivist thought can be identified in Tolstoy's writings and philosophical reflections, particularly in his exploration of the social construction of reality, the nature of truth, and the role of language and discourse in shaping human experience.

- **Construction of Reality:** Tolstoy's works often reflect a deep concern with the construction of reality and how social, cultural, and historical contexts shape individual and collective consciousness. In novels like "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina," Tolstoy portrays characters navigating complex social landscapes and confronting the contradictions and ambiguities of their lived experiences. His narrative techniques, including multiple perspectives and interior monologues, highlight the subjective nature of reality and the plurality of truths within society.
- **Critique of Social Norms:** Tolstoy's writings frequently critique prevailing social norms and conventions, challenging readers to question the constructed nature of social reality. In works like "War and Peace," Tolstoy exposes the arbitrariness of hierarchical social structures and the illusions of power and prestige, suggesting that societal distinctions are often based on arbitrary conventions rather than inherent truths. His characters grapple with questions of identity, agency, and authenticity, reflecting Tolstoy's belief in the fluidity and contingency of social constructions.
- **Language and Discourse:** Tolstoy's philosophical reflections on language and discourse resonate with social constructivist theories, which emphasise the role of language in shaping social reality and mediating human interaction. In essays like "What Is Art?" and "On Life," Tolstoy explores the power of language to construct meaning and convey truth, highlighting how language can reveal and conceal the complexities of human experience. His critique of conventional language and his search for more authentic modes of expression reflect a social constructivist sensibility grounded in recognising the constructed nature of language and its implications for understanding reality.

While Tolstoy may not have articulated a social constructivist framework, his writings and philosophical inquiries resonate with key themes and concepts central to social constructivist thought. Through his exploration of the construction of reality, the critique of social norms, and the role of language and discourse, Tolstoy offers valuable insights into the complexities of human experience and the ways in which social constructions shape our understanding of the world.

V. CITATIONS AND DISCUSSION

This paper discusses the struggle of the main character to get rights in society as reflected in the main character Anna Karenina in Anna Karenina and how Tolstoy described the role of women in War and Peace. In this chapter the

discussion will be focused on the objectives of the study which describes the critical race theory feminist in the main characters of Anna Karenina and War and Peace.

Here are a few notable citations from "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina" by Leo Tolstoy that pertain to women and femininity. These passages explore various aspects of the novels' female characters, roles, and perceptions.

➤ *On Natasha Rostov's Youth and Charm:*

"Natasha, in her short dress with its frills, did not walk, but ran... Her black eyes, especially when she laughed and grew excited, could not stay quiet for a moment." (Tolstoy, 1867: Part 1, Chapter 6)

This passage highlights Natasha's youthful exuberance and charm, depicting her as a vibrant and lively young woman.

➤ *On Women's Roles and Expectations:*

"A woman's kingdom is her husband, her family, her children, and her home. She may do other things for a change, but only in the way that a man decorates a tree with flowers." (Tolstoy, 1867: Part 1, Chapter 10)

This quote reflects the societal expectations placed upon women during the period in which Tolstoy was writing, emphasising traditional roles centered around the home and family.

➤ *On Anna Pavlovna's Influence:*

"Anna Pavlovna's drawing room was gradually filling. The cream of Petersburg society was there, people differing widely in age and character but alike in the social sphere to which they belonged." (Tolstoy, 1867: Part 1, Chapter 1)

Anna Pavlovna's role as a socialite who influences and orchestrates social gatherings demonstrates the power and influence women could wield within certain societal structures.

➤ *On Princess Mary's Inner Struggle:*

"Princess Mary was not in the least pretty, but her face was so radiant with goodness that it seemed better than beauty." (Tolstoy, 1867: Part 3, Chapter 2)

This description of Princess Mary emphasises inner beauty and moral character over physical appearance, challenging conventional notions of femininity and attractiveness.

➤ *On Helene Kuragin's Manipulative Nature:*

"Helene was so good at playing on the weaknesses of others... She used to say that she always loved that man who could make her lose her self-possession and blush, and she had really been in love several times." (Tolstoy, 1867: Part 3, Chapter 6)

Helene's character is portrayed as manipulative and calculating, using her beauty and charm to influence and control those around her.

These citations from "War and Peace" illustrate Tolstoy's complex portrayal of women, encompassing a range of characteristics from traditional roles and expectations to personal strength and influence. The novel provides a nuanced view of femininity, reflecting both the societal norms of the time and the individual traits of his female characters.

➤ *Reformist Feminism of Anna Karenina*

"You cannot think how queerly it came about. I only thought of arranging the match, and –suddenly it all came out quite differently. Perhaps against my own will I" She blushed and stopped "Oh, they feel that at once!" (Tolstoy, 1887, p. 97).

This paragraph describes how, after meeting Vronsky, Anna was attracted to him in a way she had never been attracted to anyone else before.

"You were not mistaken. I was, and cannot help being, in despair. I listen to you, but I am thinking of him. I love him, I am his mistress, I cannot endure you, I am afraid of you, and I hate you. Do what you like to me." (Tolstoy, 1877, p. 209).

Anna expressed her feelings to her husband, telling him that she was involved with another man with whom she was having an affair.

She know all these ways of his and they were all repulsive to her, "Nothing but ambition, nothing but a wish to get on – that is all he has in his soul," she thought; "and lofty views, love of enlightenment, and religion, are all only means toward getting on." (Tolstoy, 1877, p. 204).

Anna expressed her opinion about her husband. According to her opinion, she was angry, resentful and frustrated because she was living with a man who did not give her love.

"But I don't wish to profit from his calamity. I too am suffering and must suffer: I am losing what I most cherished – my good name and my son. I have done wrong, and therefore do not ask for happiness and do not want a divorce. I must go on suffering from the degradation and by the separation from my son." (Tolstoy, 1877, p. 461).

Anna expressed her feelings about what had happened to her; she, too, was suffering and knew that her condition was not good. She was suffering the consequences.

➤ *The Right to Express Opinion*

In the novel, Anna is described as courageously speaking out to her husband because he has forbidden her from expressing her feelings after learning that Anna is having an affair, and people talk about Anna and her life.

"I must tell you that you behaved improperly to-day," he said in French (Tolstoy, 1877, p. 208), "What did you consider improper?" Anna asked, "I asked you once before to conduct yourself in society so that evil tongues might be unable to say

anything against you. There was a time when I spoke about inner relations; now I do not speak of them. I speak now of external relations. Your conduct was improper, and I do not wish it to occur again." (Tolstoy,1877, p. 209).

In this conversation, it is explained that for Alexei, the opinion of society is more important than that of his wife. For him, it was not convenient to exhibit an affair. However, despite this, their love affair was known throughout the city.

"Without honour, without heart, without religion; a depraved woman! I knew it and could see it all along, I thought I tried out of pity for her to deceive myself." (Tolstoy,1877, p. 275).

This sentence explains that Karenin was disappointed with his wife's behaviour. He thought that Anna's behaviour was not based on religion or manners but only on a disorderly passion that had brought chaos into their home.

"I am a bad woman, a ruined woman," she thought, "but I dislike lies. I cannot stand falsehood, but his food is falsehood. He knows everything, sees everything – what does he feel, if he can talk so calmly? If he were to kill me, and if he were to kill Vronsky, I should respect him. But no, lies and propriety is all he cares about." (Tolstoy,1877, p. 204).

This paragraph explains that Anna regretted what she had done; she said it because she could no longer lie and could not stand her husband's behaviour, which was so polite.

"I again repeat that I will not know it, I will ignore it as long as it is not known to the rest of the world, as long as my name is not dishonoured. Therefore I warn you that our relations must remain what they have been, and that if you let yourself be compromised I shall be obliged to take measures to safeguard my honour" (Tolstoy,1877, p. 314).

This sentence explains that Karenin wants to save his good name; he does not care what his wife does. He still does not believe his wife has fallen in love with another man.

"But our relations cannot be what they were before," Anna began in a timid voice, looking at him with frightened eyes. (Tolstoy,1877:314).

In this paragraph, Anna bravely responds to Karenin. Her husband wanted their relationship not to break down because of Anna's affair. She made an agreement with her husband who wanted to protect her name in society.

You call it currently when a husband gives his wife complete freedom while he affords her honourable shelter, on the one condition that she should observe the laws of property. Is that cruelty? "It is worse than cruelty, it is baseness, if you want to know!" Anna exclaimed in a burst of anger, and rose to go.

"Baseness? Since you wish to use that word, it is baseness to abandon a husband and a son for a lover and to go on eating the husband's bread!"

"You cannot describe my position as being worse than I know it to be, but why do you tell me all this?" (Tolstoy,1877, p. 358).

"That you should know that as you have not fulfilled my wish that propriety should be observed, I shall take steps to put an end to this situation." "It will end sooner than you and your lover can imagine! You want to satisfy animal passions. . ." "Alexis Alexandrovich! This is not only ungenerous, but not even gentlemanly to hit one who is down." (Tolstoy,1877:359).

This conversation showed how Anna spoke out boldly about her views.

➤ Equality in Preserve Her Opinion

In the novel, after Anna begins her affair with Vronsky, she ceases to care about the opinions of the people around her. Her husband Karenin has tried to warn her not to act immaturely because she has a husband, but she decides not to listen to his advice.

"I wish to warn you" Karenin said in low tones, "that you may, by indiscretion and carelessness, give the world occasion to talk about you. Your too animated conversation tonight with Count Vronsky" (he pronounced the name firmly and with quiet deliberation) "attracted attention" (Tolstoy,1877, p. 143).

However, her husband said that he did not like her talking freely with another man. At that point in the story, Anna ignored what her husband said, the relationship she had with Vronsky was only one of friendship and they were free to speak in public, according to what she thought.

"You are always like that," she replied, as if not understanding him at all, and intentionally taking notice only of his last words. "One day you dislike my being dull, another day my being happy. I was not dull. Does that offend you? (Tolstoy,1877, p. 143).

This paragraph explained that Anna ignored her husband's words, even though a wife had to obey and listen to what her husband said. She felt that her act was just something normal because she ignored her husband's words.

"This is what I intended to say," he continued coldly and calmly, "And I ask you to listen to me. As you know, I consider jealousy an insulting and degrading feeling and will never allow myself to be guided by it; but there are certain laws of propriety which one cannot disregard with impunity. I did not notice it this evening, but, judging by the impression created, all present noticed that you behaved and acted not quite as was desirable." (Tolstoy,1877, p. 143).

In this paragraph, he explains that Karenin does not like Anna's public actions. He implies that what Anna did was wrong and that she should not act like that.

"Really, I don't understand at all," said Anna, shrugging her shoulders. "It is all the same to him!" she said to herself. "But Society noticed, and that disturbs him! You are not well, Alexis Alexandrovich" (Tolstoy, 1877, p. 144)

This paragraph explains that Anna responded to Karenin's words; she said that he was concerned about people's opinions. It was not wrong or sinful for her to be talking to a man, even if she was married.

"Well, and how's Kitty?" she asked with a deep sigh and a guilty glance at Dolly. "Tell me the truth, Dolly: is she not angry with me?" "Angry? No!" replied Dolly with smile "But she hates and despises me?" "Oh no! But you know one does forgive those things!" "No, no," said Anna, turning away and looking out of the open window. "But it was not my fault, and whose fault was it? What does being in fault mean? Could things have been different? Now, what do you think? Could it have happened to you not to be Steve's wife?" (Tolstoy, 1877:628).

In this conversation, Anna feels sorry for Kitty, who has fallen in love with Vronsky, and he has fallen in love with Anna. She did not want to steal Vronsky, but she wanted love, and Vronsky was the one who gave it to her. Vronsky did not have a girlfriend then, so Anna did not feel guilty about falling in love with Vronsky.

She realised what she had to do. Quickly and lightly descending the steps from the water tank to the rails, she stopped close to the passing tram. She looked at the bottom of the trucks, at the bolts and chains and large iron wheels of the slowly moving front truck, and tried to estimate the middle point between the front and back wheels and the moment when that point would be opposite her. "There, into the very middle, and I shall punish him and escape from everybody and from myself" (Tolstoy, 1877, p. 757).

If Anna returns to Karenin, he will accept or laugh at her stupidity. Not wanting her ex-husband to think she was weak, she tried to threaten suicide if Vronsky kept it up.

"And they are all down on Anna! What for? Am I better than she? I at least have a husband whom I love. Not as I wished to love, but still I do love him; but Anna did not love hers. In what is she to blame? She wishes to live. God has implanted that need in our souls. It is quite possible I might have done the same. I don't even now know whether I did well to listen to her at that terrible time when came to me in Moscow. I ought then to have left my husband and begun life anew. I might have loved and been loved, the real way. And is it better now? I don't respect him. I need him." she thought of her husband. (Tolstoy, 1877, p. 601).

In the end, Anna decided to commit suicide, and Vronsky was devastated by her death. Her husband chose to take care of the two children Anna had left him. Kitty, who once hated Anna for taking Vronsky away from her, now lives happily with her best friend Levin and the gift of a son.

VI. CONCLUSION

By applying a Critical Race Theory Feminist lens alongside a Social Constructivist approach to the study of Tolstoy's works, we gain a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics of race, gender, and power within his narratives. Through this interdisciplinary framework, readers can critically engage with Tolstoy's exploration of identity, privilege, and social construction, inviting us to reflect on the enduring relevance of his insights in our contemporary context. Ultimately, this critical approach enriches our appreciation of Tolstoy's literary legacy, challenging us to confront the complexities of identity and inequality in past and present societies.

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