

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE BODY AND SENSORY PERCEPTION IN LEV TOLSTOY'S "ANNA KARENINA".*Сиддикжанова Дурдона***Abstract**

This article explores the primacy of corporeal experience over intellectual discourse in Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. Utilizing a phenomenological framework, the study shifts focus from the novel's moral didacticism to its sophisticated "language of the body." By analyzing the sensory "linkages" (*stsepleniia*)—specifically tactile sensations, olfactory cues, and the intrusive nature of light—the author demonstrates how Tolstoy maps psychological disintegration through somatic distress. The research argues that Anna's tragic trajectory is signaled through a gradual estrangement from her own physical agency, contrasted against Levin's spiritual grounding through manual labor and biological rhythm. Ultimately, the paper concludes that Tolstoy's realism functions as a "phenomenology of the soul," where the body acts as the ultimate arbiter of moral and existential truth, prefiguring modern neuro-aesthetic approaches to literature.

Key words

phenomenology, somatic, sensory perception, dialectic of the soul, corporeality, narratology, tactility, existential truth.

Аннотация

В данной статье исследуется первенство телесного опыта над интеллектуальным дискурсом в романе Льва Толстого «Анна Каренина». Используя феноменологическую модель, исследование смещает акцент с моральной дидактики романа на его сложный «язык тела». Анализируя сенсорные «связи» (стсеплении) — в частности, тактильные ощущения, обонятельные сигналы и навязчивое воздействие света — автор демонстрирует, как Толстой отображает психологическую дезинтеграцию через соматический дистресс. В исследовании утверждается, что трагическая траектория Анны обозначается постепенным отчуждением от собственной физической активности, в отличие от духовного укоренения Левина через физический труд и биологический ритм. В конечном итоге, статья приходит к выводу, что реализм Толстого функционирует как «феноменология души», где тело выступает в качестве высшего арбитра моральной и экзистенциальной истины, предвосхищая современные нейроэстетические подходы к литературе.

Ключевые слова

феноменология, соматика, чувственное восприятие, диалектика души, телесность, нарратология, тактильность, экзистенциальная истина.

INTRADUCTION

The pursuit of truth in the realist novel often bypasses the intellect, manifesting instead through the immediate, unfiltered experience of the flesh. In the vast corpus of Leo Tolstoy's mid-career output, there is perhaps no work that better illustrates the profound intersection between consciousness and corporeality than *Anna Karenina*. While traditional scholarship has long prioritized the moral and social dimensions of the narrative, a more nuanced reading suggests that the protagonist's psychological disintegration is not merely a cognitive or spiritual event, but a deeply sensory one. By foregrounding the "body" as the primary site of existential conflict, this study seeks to re-evaluate the novel through a phenomenological lens, examining how sensory perceptions—touch, sound, and sight—serve as the true harbingers of fate.

Tolstoy's "dialectic of the soul" has frequently been treated as a linguistic or introspective phenomenon. However, a close analysis reveals that the internal movements of the psyche are almost always preceded by somatic markers. From the oppressive heat of the railway carriage to the hyper-lucidity of Anna's final perceptions, the narrative constructs a world where the physical environment acts as a mirror to the fractured self. This investigation moves beyond

thematic symbolism to explore the raw "thermodynamics" of the characters' lived experiences. It contrasts the sensory alienation of Anna's Petersburg life—a world of rigid corsets, cold glances, and artificial light—with the visceral, agrarian grounding of Konstantin Levin's physical labor.

By analyzing these disparate sensory modes, it becomes clear that Tolstoy's realism is not merely descriptive but evidentiary. The body perceives what the mind is not yet ready to admit. Through a detailed examination of specific sensory "linkages," the following analysis will demonstrate how the author utilizes the phenomenology of the body to navigate the treacherous boundary between life and its eventual dissolution.

METHODS.

To establish a rigorous framework for investigating the sensory landscape of *Anna Karenina*, this study employs a multi-dimensional methodology that integrates phenomenological reduction, narratological analysis, and lexical-semantic mapping. The primary objective is to move beyond a metaphorical reading of the text, instead treating the characters' sensory experiences as objective data points that track their psychological and moral trajectories.

The first phase of the research utilizes Husserlian phenomenology, specifically focusing on the concept of "lived-body" (Leib) versus the "physical body" (Körper). By isolating scenes of high emotional intensity—such as the ballroom sequence, the horse races, and the final railway journey—the study identifies how sensory "shocks" (strobe lighting, sudden noises, tactile discomfort) precede the characters' conscious decision-making. This approach allows for the identification of somatic premonitions, where the body's physiological reaction to the environment serves as a more reliable indicator of the "truth" than the character's internal monologue.

In the second phase, the investigation adopts structural narratology to examine Tolstoy's "linkages" (stseplenii). A systematic survey of the text was conducted to categorize sensory markers into five thematic clusters: thermal, auditory, visual, olfactory, and kinesthetic. Using a comparative method, the research maps these clusters across the parallel arcs of Anna and Levin. This quantitative tracking of sensory density reveals a correlation between Anna's increasing social isolation and her heightened, almost pathological, sensory sensitivity.

Finally, a lexical-semantic analysis of the original Russian text is employed to ensure linguistic accuracy. By examining Tolstoy's specific choice of verbs and adjectives—such as his frequent use of "blistatel'nyy" (brilliant/sparkling) versus "mrachnyy" (gloomy)—the study decodes the "sensory palette" assigned to specific locations. This triangulated methodology ensures that the findings are grounded both in philosophical theory and the precise linguistic fabric of the novel.

RESULTS

The investigation into the sensory fabric of *Anna Karenina* yields a clear, empirical correlation between a character's sensory attunement and their spiritual integrity. The results indicate that Tolstoy does not merely use descriptions of the physical world as a backdrop; rather, he utilizes sensory data as a diagnostic tool for the "health" of the soul.

In the case of Anna, the data shows a progressive sensory fragmentation. In the early chapters, her physical presence is described through a lens of vitality and integrated movement—the "overflowing animation" that Vronsky first perceives at the railway station. However, as her moral crisis deepens, the narrative shifts toward hyper-sensory isolation. The results of our textual mapping show that in the final chapters, Anna's perceptions become detached from their sources. She no longer experiences a unified world; she experiences a barrage of sharp, disconnected stimuli: the "clanging" of the iron, the "blinding" glare of the lamps, and the "suffocating" texture of her own clothing. This transition from integrated vitality to fragmented irritation serves as the somatic evidence of her psychological breakdown.

Conversely, the results concerning Konstantin Levin reveal a trajectory of sensory integration. While Anna's world becomes increasingly artificial and indoor-bound, Levin's sensory experiences move toward the atmospheric and the communal. The "mowing scene"

serves as the apex of this somatic harmony. Here, the research identifies a shift from Levin's "intellectualizing" (which causes him physical awkwardness) to a state of "flow" where his body and the scythe become a single sensory instrument. The results demonstrate that for Tolstoy, the "true life" is one where the body is in rhythmic, physical contact with the earth, contrasting sharply with the "fragmented body" of the urban adulteress.

The core meaning of this inquiry lies in the realization that Tolstoy's realism is fundamentally biological. While the novel is often taught as a social or moral critique, its deeper architecture suggests that morality is not a set of abstract rules, but a physical state of being. The "truth" of one's life is written in the nerves and the senses long before it is articulated by the mind.

The central insight gathered here is that the body cannot lie, even when the intellect attempts to rationalize transgression. Anna spends much of the novel attempting to justify her pursuit of "happiness" through sophisticated internal monologues. However, her body constantly betrays her. The recurring motif of the "little man with the matted beard" is not merely a gothic haunting; it is a somatic manifestation of her repressed guilt. The "coldness" she feels in Karenin's presence and the "feverish heat" she experiences with Vronsky are the body's way of signaling that she has exited the "natural" order. The core meaning of her tragedy is the loss of somatic autonomy—she becomes a slave to her senses rather than their master.

The railway serves as the ultimate "non-place" where sensory perception is distorted by artificial speed and industrial noise. By situating the most pivotal moments of the novel—the meeting, the consummation of the affair (metaphorically), and the death—near the tracks, Tolstoy identifies the machine as a force that severs the connection between the human body and the natural world. The core meaning of the train motif is the "crushing" of the organic by the mechanical. Anna's death is the logical conclusion of a life that has become untethered from the biological rhythms of the earth and the communal traditions of the family.

In contrast, the "meaning of life" that Levin eventually discovers is not found in a book of philosophy, but in the physicality of the moment. When Levin watches the peasant family or works in the fields, he is practicing a form of "radical presence." The core meaning of his arc is that spiritual enlightenment is a sensory achievement. To "live for the soul" means to live in a body that is useful, tired, and connected to the cycles of birth and death. While Anna's senses lead her to a "darkness" where everything is "ugly" and "hateful," Levin's senses lead him to a quietude where the "unanswerable questions" simply cease to exist because the body is at peace with its environment.

Ultimately, the study suggests that for Tolstoy, the "Right Way to Live" is synonymous with the "Right Way to Perceive." Evil is characterized by a "closing in" of the senses—a preoccupation with one's own desires that blurs the reality of others. Goodness is characterized by an "opening out"—the ability to see the "radiance" in a child's face or the "logic" in the growth of grass. The core meaning of *Anna Karenina* is thus found in the ethics of the senses: we are morally responsible for what we choose to see, hear, and feel. Anna's tragedy is that she stopped seeing the world as it was and began seeing it only as a reflection of her own internal agony.

The primary importance of this research lies in its rigorous expansion of the Russian "vocabulary of experience," specifically regarding the transition from abstract moralizing to concrete, somatic description. In traditional 19th-century scholarship, the Russian language was often characterized by its "spirituality" (*dukhovnost*), yet this study demonstrates that the true power of the Tolstoyan idiom is found in its "physicality" (*telesnost*). By isolating the lexical clusters associated with tactile, olfactory, and thermal sensations, we uncover a hidden layer of the Russian language that functions as a sophisticated diagnostic tool. This research forces a re-evaluation of the Russian realist tradition, showing that it possesses a precise, almost clinical terminology for the "dialectic of the soul." This shift is vital for the development of modern Russian linguistics because it proves that the language of the classics is not a static relic of the

past, but a vibrant system capable of interfacing with modern cognitive science and neuro-phenomenology. It provides contemporary scholars with a linguistic roadmap to explore how Russian syntax—with its flexible word order and nuanced aspectual system—can literally simulate the biological rhythm of a panic attack or the rhythmic serenity of physical labor, thereby elevating the study of Russian from mere philology to a complex study of human perception.

Furthermore, this investigation serves as a crucial milestone in the evolution of Russian cognitive narratology by demonstrating how linguistic "linkages" (stsepleniia) function as the connective tissue between the body and the text. The significance of this article for the development of the Russian language is found in its ability to decode the "rhythm of realism." We argue that Tolstoy's prose is not merely descriptive but generative; the very structure of his sentences—the frequent use of gerunds to denote simultaneous action, the repetitive use of sensory adjectives to build atmospheric tension—creates a "physical" reading experience. This research validates the idea that the Russian language is uniquely structured to express "synesthesia," where a sound can be felt as a weight or a color can be experienced as a temperature. By formalizing these observations within an academic framework, the article provides a new methodology for future linguists to study how the Russian language "embodies" meaning. This is particularly relevant in a modern context where digital communication often strips language of its sensory depth; by returning to the "thick" prose of Anna Karenina, we provide a template for preserving the high-sensory density of the Russian literary standard. This work ensures that the study of the Russian language remains an interdisciplinary endeavor, blending literature, philosophy, and biology to reveal the profound ways in which we use words to inhabit our own skin.

Table 1. Comparative somatic profiles

Feature	Анна (Соматическая фрагментация) Karenina	Константин (Соматическая интеграция) Levin
Primary Mode	Гиперсензитивность (Hypersensitivity): Overwhelmed by stimuli.	Ритмический поток (Rhythmic flow): Integrated movement.
Space	Замкнутость (Enclosure): Carriages, boudoirs, "душные комнаты".	Простор (Expanse): Fields, "открытое небо", the estate.
Thermal	Лихорадочный жар (Feverish heat), "горящие щеки".	Прохлада (Coolness), "утренняя роса", fresh air.
Tactile	Искусственность (Artificiality): "Тяжелый шелк", cold metal.	Органичность (Organicity): "Коса" (scythe), "земля" (soil).
Existential Result	Отчуждение (Alienation): The body as a stranger.	Синтез (Synthesis): The body as a vessel for truth.

Table 2. Linguistic and methodological framework

Methodology	Application to the Text	Importance for Russian Language (Значение)
Phenomenology	Analyzing «живое тело» (the lived body) vs. physical matter.	Integrates «телестность» (corporeality) into Slavic studies.
Lexical Mapping	Distinguishing «ощущать» (to sense) from «чувствовать» (to feel).	Refines the «семантическое поле» (semantic field) of Russian realism.
Narrative Linkages	Tracking «сцепления» (linkages) across 8 parts of the	Demonstrates the «архитектоника» (architectonics)

	novel.	of complex syntax.
Synesthesia	Studying «синестезия»: how light is described as "heavy" or "sharp."	Models how Russian grammar simulates «биологический ритм» (biological rhythm).

CONCLUSION.

The conclusion of this research reaffirms that Lev Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* serves as a foundational text for a phenomenology of the soul grounded in the physical reality of the body. By shifting the analytical focus from abstract moralizing to the concrete «телесность» (corporeality) of the characters, we uncover a narrative structure where sensory data acts as the ultimate arbiter of existential truth. The results demonstrate that Anna's tragic trajectory is not merely a social fall, but a profound соматическое отчуждение (somatic alienation), where her senses—once vibrant—become fragmented and hostile instruments of her own destruction. In contrast, Konstantin Levin's journey toward spiritual synthesis is achieved through сенсорная интеграция (sensory integration) and a return to the biological rhythms of the natural world. This study contributes to the development of the Russian language by providing a modern, scientific framework for the classic «диалектика души» (dialectic of the soul), bridging the gap between 19th-century realism and 21st-century cognitive linguistics. Ultimately, Tolstoy proves that the "truth" of human existence is written in the nerves and senses. To ignore the body's warnings is to invite fragmentation; to heed them is to achieve the organic unity of spirit and flesh that remains the novel's enduring moral ideal.

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