

**REMAINING RELEVANT IN THE DIGITAL AGE: THE ROLE OF THE WRITER IN
CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA (THE CASE OF TAT'IANA TOLSTAIA)**

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**by
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**REMAINING RELEVANT IN THE DIGITAL AGE: THE ROLE OF THE WRITER IN
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ABSTRACT

The present thesis studies Facebook publication activity of a popular contemporary Russian writer, Tat'iana Tolstaia. I argue that her posting contributes to the development of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) among her readers and that she uses certain strategies to build both bridging and bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000). My research demonstrates that for Tolstaia the development of social capital is means of “remaining relevant” (Wachtel, 2006): it is her way to gain authority and social respect and, consequently, to remain popular and commercially successful despite the economic and socio-cultural changes in post-Soviet Russia that have negatively affected the social status of the writer.

Tat'iana Tolstaia is a broadly recognized Russian writer who in recent years has largely turned from print to Internet literature. At present Tolstaia actively develops her Facebook account: she updates her page almost daily and posts texts and media content that concerns a broad range of topics. Her page has over 170 000 followers and is open to comments. As a result, the writer's timeline has become a virtual space for public discussion and, consequently, an instrument for building social capital.

Tolstaia's posts aim to develop both bridging (inclusive) and bonding (exclusive) social capital. In some publications the writer attempts to unify with all of her readers and involve everyone in the discussion, in the others she demonstrates her belonging to a distinguished social group (Russian intellectuals). In the comments to such publications Tolstaia singles out few of her readers whom she considers worthy of belonging to the same group. As a result she creates a community of contemporary Russian intellectuals. In the first case her actions develop bridging social capital, while in the second the representatives of the group share bonding social capital.

INTRODUCTION

Tat'iana Tolstaia is considered one of the main Russian writers of the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. In thirty-five years of her active literary work she has published a few collections of short stories and a novel as well as multiple journalistic articles in both Russian and American journals. She has received several prestigious awards (for example, the TEFI and the Triumph prizes), and her books have been translated into many European languages, including English, German and French. Contemporary critics consider her one of the most serious modern Russian prose writers: her works have been analyzed by Helena Goscilo (1996), Peter Vail, Alexander Genis (Vail & Genis, 1990; Genis, 2009) Alexander Zholkovsky (2005) and others.

Unlike most of her fellow writers, Tolstaia is known not only to the literary community, but also to a broader audience. She is a recognized media persona, who often appears in the press. She frequently publishes in print, both in thick journals such as *Znamia* (The Flag) (Tolstaia, 1998) and popular periodicals like the newspaper *Komsomolskaia Pravda* (Komsomol Truth) (Tolstaia, 2010). She regularly appears on radio (see, for instance, her interviews for the *Ekho Moskvy* [Echo of Moscow] [Tolstaia, 2007] and *Radio Svoboda* [Radio Liberty] [Tolstaia 2017]) and on TV. She appears both on intellectual talk shows—such as her conversation with Vladimir Pozner (2011)—and in mass projects—for example, she was one of the judges in a popular talent show *Minuta Slavy* (Minute of Fame). But she has probably received most mass recognition for hosting in 2002-2014 the talk show *Shkola Zlosloviia* (The School of Scandal) on one of the state channels, *NTV*. Together with her colleague, Avdotia Smirnova, on this show she interviewed the main cultural figures of the time, thus making high art familiar to a mass audience.

Apart from traditional media, in recent years Tolstaia has actively used online publication platforms. The writer manages accounts on Live Journal (2007-present) and on Facebook (2007-present)¹ and, very recently, a Telegram² channel (2018-present). All pages are popular (viz., by April 2018 her Live Journal publications received over 85 000 comments, and her Facebook page has more than 177 thousand followers), and her channel on Telegram during the three months of its existence received over 7500 followers. Her Internet pages are kept up to date, with new content appearing almost daily. Interestingly, at the same time as she created Internet pages, Tolstaia almost abandoned publishing the traditional fiction for which she was famous. Since 2012, when her Facebook account became popular, she has published two collections of journalistic essays (*Devushka v Tsvetu* [Girl in Bloom] and *Voilochnyi vek* [Century of Felt], and a collection of short stories and sketches, based on her Internet publications, *Legkije miry* [Aetherial Worlds]).³

The three factors mentioned above (persistence in publishing in social network services; the absence of traditional fictional prose; the existence of books that are based on Internet publications) suggest that Tolstaia's Internet publication activity is a new realm of her creative work which deserves scholarly attention. Internet-based literature (or, as it is called in the Russian literary community, *seteratura*, net-literature) is produced and perceived by different rules than print literature. As the phenomenon is relatively new, it is still understudied. This said, research on Tat'iana Tolstaia's Internet publications can potentially serve two goals: on the one hand, it

¹ Between 2007 and 2012 Tolstaia mainly used her LiveJournal account. Though her Facebook page was physically created in 2007, the earliest posts belong to 2011. From 2012 she has been steadily posting on Facebook. Simultaneously her activity on LiveJournal has begun to decline.

² Telegram is an online messenger that is believed to be protected from hacking better than others. Telegram is also the only messengers whose developers openly refused to provide Russian Security Service with the encryption codes.

³ Among the listed books only the last one, *Aetherial worlds*, is translated into English (Tolstaia, 2018a). Others are only available in Russian. The translations of their titles are mine and might be inaccurate.

will demonstrate Tolstaia's development as a writer, on the other, it will become a case study of a new phenomenon: social media literature. The following work can be later incorporated into a larger project on new literary formats.

Internet literature is a complex phenomenon, and different aspects may constitute the focus of attention. For instance, a scholar might question the writer's self-representation ([Goffman, 1959], [Miller, 1995], [Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013], etc.) or her target audience ([Ong, 1975], [Marwick and boyd, 2011], [Litt, 2012], [Litt and Hargittai, 2014], [Litt and Hargittai, 2016], etc.). Depending on the chosen focus of attention, different frameworks will prove to be useful. Fully acknowledging the complexity of the subject matter, in the current work I will only focus on the social significance of Tolstaia's activity on Facebook. I will discuss how Tolstaia's posting contributes to building so-called "bridging" and "bonding" social capital (Bourdieu, 1986), (Putnam, 2000) among her followers.

In my thesis I will discuss the functioning of Tolstaia's Facebook page and its social significance. Sections 1 to 3 will provide background and the clarification of key terms that I use in my work. Sections 3 to 6 will concern Tat'iana Tolstaia's Facebook activity. In Section 1 I will discuss the concept of social capital and its application to the Internet communication and, more specifically, to the communication mediated by social network services (SNS). In Section 2 I will highlight the main stages of the development of the Russian-language Internet (*Runet*) and point out its specifics. In Section 3 I will discuss the main distinctive features of Tolstaia as a writer and give a brief description of one of her main themes: the identity of the Russian intelligentsia. Section 4 will discuss the building of "bridging" social capital in Tolstaia's posts. In Sections 5 and 6 I will describe different strategies of constructing "bonding" social capital. Section 5 will show how Tolstaia uses the past

in order to construct a virtual community of the contemporary intelligentsia around her and build social capital within the group. In Section 6 I will demonstrate how Tolstaia reinterprets the image of contemporary intelligentsia, using her own life as an example. In Section 7 I will show how Tolstaia uses the group identity that she has developed among her readers and the bonding social capital that she has created within the group as means to achieve her commercial goals.

SECTION ONE.

Internet Communication and the Theory of Social Capital

Tat'iana Tolstaia's Facebook page is a space where the author publishes her texts and shares media materials. The page is open for comments: both her friends and followers are allowed to write there. As a result, her page turns into a space for relatively open and reciprocal online communication: most of her posts receive hundreds of comments, and the discussions engage people who are often unfamiliar to each other. As Tolstaia's page is a platform for such online communication, it is helpful to analyze it within the broader discussion of communication in general and Internet-mediated communication in particular.

As with any phenomenon, communication interests scholars in different ways. We can analyze the functioning of the actual process of interaction, the participants' expectations of it and each other or its influence on the broader state of affairs, including social relationships. Depending on the focus of attention, different frameworks are applicable. If we discuss the act of communication itself, Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach to communication (1959) is fruitful. If we focus on the communicants' expectations of each other, we may consider the correlation between imagined (or imaginary) audiences – a problem that was first pointed out by David Elkind in his works on adolescent psychology (1967; Elkind & Bowen, 1979) and later on adapted by media studies. If we analyze the influence of a communicative act on social relationships, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social capital (1986), developed by Robert Putman in (2000), conceptualizes the process best. While in order to fully understand the meaning of Tat'iana Tolstaia's Facebook and its social role, all three aspects should be taken into account, in this work I will focus on the third aspect I mentioned: the influence of Tolstaia's posts on the social life within and

beyond Facebook. In this section I will give a brief overview of the theory of social capital and its specific applications to Internet-mediated communication. A short terminological clarification is required here. The term “Internet-mediated communication” unifies in fact many different phenomena, based on one external criterion: the involvement of digital technology in the process of interaction. However, as David Crystal noted in (2001), online communication, just like face-to-face interaction, includes numerous registers – and rules of behavior depend on the settings. For instance, the etiquette of responding to emails and instant messages is different. Elaborating on this, one could easily apply Dell Hymes’s method of analyzing communication (1964) to the online realm. Thus, as in face-to-face communication, in the digital space we can distinguish public and private communication, we can find monologues, dialogues and polylogues, the participants can be acquainted, potentially acquainted (belong to the same closed group) and unacquainted, the topic of communication can be determined with different levels of restraint and so on. In this work I am talking only about open public discussions, which pose potentially interlocutory public speech, available for a broad audience that is not necessarily interconnected.

Any particular interaction, either face-to-face or Internet-mediated, inevitably affects the relationship between the communicants and can potentially take a quantum leap in and influence social relationships. Using Pierre Bourdieu’s terminology, one can say that any act of communication contributes to the re-distribution of social capital. Social capital, which Bourdieu defines as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247), is the sum of social connections a person can potentially use

to achieve her goals. Depending on the type of the connection, Robert Putnam (2000) offers the contradistinction of bridging (inclusive) and bonding (exclusive) social capital. The former aims to involve people of different social groups and create as many weak social ties as possible. The latter, on the contrary, creates strong social connections within a separate group, but simultaneously weakens external connections, contributing to separation between groups.

The Internet in general and social network services in particular have long been analyzed as factors contributing to the redistribution of social capital. Most researchers agree that the Internet contributes to the development of a wider variety of weak ties at the expense of stronger connections such as family and friends. This conclusion is formulated, for example, in an early work on the sociological consequences of the appearance of the Internet by Robert Kraut and his colleagues: “the use of the Internet was associated with small, but statistically significant declines in social involvement as measured by communication within the family and the size of people’s local social networks” (1998, p. 1028). Using Putnam’s terminology, the use of the Internet was associated with the decline of bonding capital. At the same time, scholars recorded an increase in weak connections: people who received access to the Internet developed new relationships online and reactivated older relationships with those who were physically distanced from them – in other words, they gained more bridging capital.

According to later studies reflecting upon the findings of Kraut and his colleagues, the two tendencies were interconnected and associated with “creating shifts in time allocation” (Franzen, 2000, p. 428): the more time people spend in front of the computer, the less time they have for their family and friends. With the development of the new Internet and the invention of new formats, the situation

became more complicated. Only a few years after their first study, Robert Kraut and his colleagues published a follow-up article, in which they reported a positive influence of the Internet on the relationships of their users outside of the Internet (Kraut et al., 2002). According to the results of the study, the users began to receive more family support and sometimes managed to build online relationships that later moved to the offline space – in other words, the Internet partly contributed to the development of the bonding social capital as well as bridging.

The invention of social networks complicated the situation even further. As shown in Benediktsson (2012), two opposite tendencies coexist: Facebook is frequently used as means of socializing with people of different cultural, social and political backgrounds – in other words, it is used to develop bridging social capital. At the same time, for representatives of social minorities it becomes an instrument for constructing their group identities and developing group solidarity. Such observations are made, for instance, on the material of African American students in American colleges (Lee, 2012).

In my description of Tat'iana Tolstaia's Facebook publications and her interaction with her readers I will try to demonstrate that both types of social capital can be applied simultaneously. Tolstaia at the same time builds ties that connect her with all of her readers in their diversity and uses certain strategies to build bonding social capital within one particular group: the contemporary Russian intelligentsia. In my work I build upon Andrew Wachtel's monograph *Remaining Relevant after Communism: the Role of the Writer in the Eastern Europe* (2006). In this work the author discusses the change in the position of writer in the Eastern European countries after the fall of the communist regimes. He uses Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social capital to demonstrate different strategies that the writers use to preserve their

authority. While Wachtel's work is detailed and convincing, he does not address the digital realm. A study of a writer's attempts to use Internet to maintain relevance seems to be an important addition to his research. In my work I will argue that Tolstaia's Facebook activity represents her attempt to regain the central position that the writer traditionally bore in Russia but that had weakened significantly after Perestroika due to a combination of political and economic factors. I will show how the simultaneous developing of bridging and bonding social capital helps Tolstaia to develop her authority as a writer and, using Andrew Wachtel's terminology, to remain relevant.

SECTION TWO.

The specifics of the Russian-language Internet

Despite expectations caused by the globalizing nature of the Internet, its history is culture-specific. Differences in the socioeconomic contexts that underlie its development have led to its heterogeneity in different countries: on different territories varying platforms or, more broadly, types of social engagement, have become popular. To understand the phenomenon of *seteratura*, which is the subject of the present work, a brief overview of the history of Russian Internet is useful. Largely due to the specifics of the historical development of *Runet* and to the long-term centrality of literature in Russian culture, the Russian literary Internet has received substantial attention. A detailed first-hand history of the development of *Runet* is collected in Eugene Gorny's online project *Letopis' russkogo Interneta* (A Chronicle of the Russian Internet) (2000): the year-by-year timeline lists numerous events relevant to the development of the Russian Internet. The first comprehensive work on the early years of the Internet in Russia also belongs to Gorny: rich material on creativity in the Russian digital space is collected in his PhD dissertation (2006), which was later published as a monograph (2009). Among the most significant works is also a collective monograph edited by Konradova, Teubener and Schmidt (2006), which discusses and, in fact, demonstrates by its very form the rules of functioning of the Russian Internet in the early 2000s. More recent development of the Russian Internet is demonstrated in the edited volume *Digital Russia* (Gorham, Lunde, & Paulsen, 2014).

The specifics of the Russian political situation determined the initial perception of the Internet. First, unlike in the US, in Russia the Internet initially developed mainly as an informational space and not as an entertainment platform. As

Eugene Gorny (2006, p. 178) points out, the long-term history of censorship and of deep informational hunger characteristic of the Soviet period made the early users of the Russian Internet perceive it as a desired territory of freedom: a space for information exchange and public discussion. From the first media of the early nineties to the period of flourishing of LiveJournal at the beginning of the Putin era, the Russian Internet was perceived as a new form of *samizdat* (*self-published texts*) or as a mediated form of *kukhonnye razgovory* (*kitchen-table talks*).⁴

Second, due to Russia's technological backwardness, the Internet there initially became a privilege of well-educated people (for example, to be able to familiarize themselves with the World Wide Web potential users needed to understand English). Among the first users of the Russian Internet were humanists: scholars, writers and journalists. Consequently, the Russian Internet from the very beginning became, first, professional and second, creative. Such asymmetry of the audience led to the higher level of "consciousness" of the Russian Internet: it was developed as a project with a strict internal structure, and its creators recognized themselves as contributors to a unique phenomenon. They reflected upon their actions, fixating their observations on special "meta" issues, such as the online project *Zhurnal.ru*, a digital mass medium, which was initially dedicated fully to the problems of the Russian Internet.⁵

⁴ The informal intellectual conversations of the Soviet intelligentsia. Due to the strict political censorship, no open social discussion was possible in the USSR. For that reason, all critical analysis of the events was limited to intimate conversations among close friends. Such conversations were always conducted in kitchens while the interlocutors drank tea. For a detailed analysis of the phenomenon, see, for instance, (Vakhtin & Firsov, 2016)

⁵ To demonstrate the level of reflection of the founding fathers of the Russian Internet, it is enough to say that Eugene Gorny, now a leading scholar of the history of the Russian Internet, was one of the first journalists who was invited to work in *Zhurnal.ru*. Thus, he has been in some sense performing auto-ethnography, studying himself. His case is revealing: the Russian Internet has never been spontaneous, it was initially meant to be a research subject.

As a result, the Russian Internet was simultaneously open and closed: it was available for a relatively small community of people, most of whom knew each other offline, and offered maximal freedom for them. Using Putman's (2000) terminology discussed in the previous section, it implied simultaneously bridging and bonding social capital. Fixation on freedom of opinion determined the Russian Internet's communicativity: public discussion became its main structural component. The tendency to involve the readers in the process of writing and into the public discussion is visible already in early digital projects, such as Roman Leibov's resource "Roman", initiated in 1995 – "первый интерактивный литературный проект (если не считать 'Буриме'. Также первый опыт сетевой прозаической литературы (сетературы)" (The first interactive literature project [if you do not count 'Burime']. Also the first experiment with network prose [*seteratura*].)⁶ (Gorny, 2000). On his website (1995) Leibov posted a simple plot and suggested that his readers edit it, adding their own developments to the plotline. Common editing by many Internet users resulted in a text that was constructed as a system of hyperlinks, which connected different parts of the story with each other. The product was collaborative and potentially infinite. Leibov's project foreshadowed further lines of development of the literary Internet: its dialogicality, intertextuality and continuity. LiveJournal, which was introduced in Russia a few years later and became the main publication and communication platform of the Russian intellectuals, inherited these features. As Gorny shows in his article (2006a), LiveJournal was characterized by two features: it represented a closed community of Russian intellectuals and it was first and foremost a platform for creativity: professional writers, philologists and journalists as well as amateurs created and developed fake identities and fictional personae on the platform.

⁶Here and below, if not specified explicitly, the translations of the Russian quotations are mine – M. G.

Despite its specificity, the development of the Russian Internet obeyed some universal patterns. The world tendency towards the deanonymization of the Internet affected Russia, and by 2010 fake identities of LiveJournal were replaced by potentially verifiable personal pages on the social network services Vkontakte, Odnoklassniki and Facebook. The three social network services were soon distributed among different audiences. Vkontakte was most popular among younger generations, Odnoklassniki became the network of the provinces, while Facebook, the only one out of three that belonged to a foreign company and for that reason was believed not to be controlled by Russian government, became the platform used mainly by Russian intellectuals. It largely inherited LiveJournal's audience and, consequently, borrowed some of its features. In the following sections I will show how Tat'iana Tolstaia reinterprets LiveJournal's creativity and adapts it to a new social context and new social conditions.

SECTION THREE.

Tat'iana Tolstaia and the Concept of the Intelligentsia

The circle of themes that interest Tat'iana Tolstaia, her literary approach and devices she uses are to some extent shaped by her background and her conscious attempts to sustain familiar traditions. Tolstaia comes from an old aristocratic family of the counts Tolstoi who, unlike many others noble families, flourished both before and after the 1917 October Revolution. Her grandfather, Alexey Tolstoy, was one of the most popular Soviet writers. He was in the unusual position of being at once beloved by the Soviet ruling elite and recognized by the Soviet creative intelligentsia. Such duality allowed his descendants to preserve the lifestyle of the pre-revolutionary gentry and at the same time put them in touch with most significant cultural figures of the time. For instance, as a child Tolstaja spent much time in Mariia Voloshina's house in Koktebel, and she was friends with Sergey Dovlatov, Joseph Brodsky and others.

In her work Tolstaia turns to the characters she knows best: the protagonists of her short stories are the representatives of the late Soviet intelligentsia: artists, doctors, scholars. Despite differences in their occupations, ages and biographical details, the protagonists of Tolstaia's stories share features that are commonly associated with the intelligentsia: they have a deep inner life and live in their own parallel universes, which are unfamiliar to, and thus disregarded by the people who surround them.

The term *intelligentsia* is a key concept both for Tat'iana Tolstaia and for Russian culture in general and for that reason it requires special clarification. The phenomenon intelligentsia has always been a subject of discussion. What is the intelligentsia? Who should be included in the group? What are the distinctive marks

of the group? Every representative of the group defines the term differently. Thus, two significant works on the topic, Andrei Sinyavskii's *The Russian Intelligentsia* (1997) and Masha Gessen's *Dead Again: The Russian Intelligentsia after Communism* (1997), which came out nearly simultaneously, provide nearly opposite definitions of their central term.

The term's lack of clarity has rendered it largely a question of self-identification. Individuals themselves decide whether or not they belong to the group and create their own narrative. Yury Lotman (1999) was the first to notice the self-creating nature of the intelligentsia. He perceived it as a myth that a group of well-educated people creates. From his point of view, it is their description that is of interest, not the "objective" parameters that can describe the group from the position of the outsider. Based on a study on numerous narratives of the representatives of the intelligentsia he offers a few categories by which the authors most frequently describe themselves. Among the main features that distinguish the *intelligents* are *zhertvennost'* (the capacity and desire to sacrifice everything for the greater good), *bezbytnost'* (lack of interest in the material side of life) and distancing from the so-called "common people" (*narod*). For the purposes of this work I will consider these qualities to form the foundation of the canon of the intelligentsia narrative. In the following sections I will demonstrate how Tat'iana Tolstaia reinterprets the term in her Facebook posts.

SECTION FOUR.

Bridging Social Capital in Tostaia's Facebook Posts

Tat'iana Tolstaia, like any Facebook writer with a large audience, uses her Facebook page as a means for establishing and developing social capital. However, unlike the majority of Facebook users, for whom Facebook usually becomes a means of developing bridging social capital, she simultaneously builds both bonding and bridging capital. On the one hand, she, as a recognized media persona, brings together readers of different ages, countries of origin and social and educational backgrounds. On the other hand, as a representative of a distinct group of the Russian intelligentsia, she uses her page to develop stronger bonds within that stratum. Finally, her page becomes a space for representatives of other social groups to recognize each other, unite and thereby strengthen group identity and create and develop bonding social capital among themselves.

Tolstaia achieves these three seemingly diverging goals by creating multiple public personas or, using Erving Goffman's terminology, by playing different social roles. In each of her posts she takes on a role – and, consequently, follows a sets of rules of behavior determined by it. Each of her social roles is associated with its own target imagined audience, and by switching between roles Tolstaia manages to address all her readers in their diversity. We can distinguish four major roles that the author plays on her page: an individual/concerned citizen, a producer, a scholar (an anthropologist) who studies human nature and, finally, a writer. All of the roles project different relationships between Tolstaia and her audience and, consequently, contribute to the development of different kinds of social capital.

As a concerned citizen Tolstaia expresses her personal opinion regarding socially significant events. She usually comments on traumatic episodes that cause

wide public uproar or on governmental actions that displease citizens. The default attitude towards such events is inscribed in the knowledge any Russian is expected to receive as part of enculturation. It is either a norm of morality or a fact of the cultural code and of folklore that is by expectations shared by most Russians (certain governmental services are out-of-date and inefficient that makes them a base for running jokes). The reactions that Tolstaia provides are in line with social expectations and are shared by the majority of her readers. Tolstaia's adaptation to all of her readers in their diversity creates a basis for the development of bridging social capital both between Tolstaia and her readers and between different groups of her followers.

When she comments on traumatic experiences, Tolstaia sounds frightened as an individual and compassionate as a citizen. For instance, immediately after the terrorist attack in Saint Petersburg,⁷ Tolstaia asked her friends there to comment on her post to indicate that they were safe: “Питерцы, пожалуйста, отметьтесь тут!” (People from Saint Petersburg, please, make yourselves heard here!) (2017b).

Not long after, she integrates a civic approach with the personal: she spreads a petition requesting that the government provide more support for the survivors. Similarly, after the recent tragedy in Kemerovo⁸ Tolstaia used her page to invite people to mass meetings in support of the victims. In one of the posts she spreads information for people in St. Petersburg (2018b), and in the next – for those who live in Moscow (2018c). The informational posts are accompanied by her emotional

⁷ On the 3rd of April, 2017 a bomb exploded in a Metro train in St. Petersburg. Eleven people were killed, over sixty were injured (Nechipurenko & MacFarquhar, 2017).

⁸ In the recent (25th of March, 2018) fire in a city mall in Kemerovo, Russia, sixty four people were killed, most of whom were children (Bodner, 2018) . The tragedy caused uncharacteristically strong public reaction: mass meetings and other actions of support were organized all over the country. Public opinion identified the tragedy with the inadequate actions of the emergency and, consequently blamed it on the poor work of the local government officials.

reaction. She writes that due to the severity of her pain, it is hard for her to read her Facebook timeline: “Невозможно сегодня ленту читать. // Сила этого горя какая-то совсем непереносимая, крушит и расплющивает.” (It’s impossible to read my timeline today. The strength of this grief is somehow totally unbearable, it’s crushing and suffocating) (2018d). By spreading the information about the mass meetings and reading multiple publications about the tragedies Tolstaia involves herself in the collective grieving and demonstrates to her readers that she shares their fears and beliefs. Tolstaia’s involvement in the collective experience is intended to develop bridging social capital: as people of different background and views hold a shared attitude towards tragedies such as fires or terrorist attacks, this presents an opportunity for Tolstaia to unify with those of her readers with whom she has little in common and to bring her diverse readers together.

Tolstaia’s posts unite people in two ways. On the one hand, they provide a virtual space for the exchange of opinions and thereby visualize the society: all those who comment on her posts see each other and understand that they are not alone with their fear and suffering. This function is generally recognized by her readers. In many of their comments they proclaim their unity and solidarity with each other. For example, in commenting on the post about the mass meeting after the tragedy in Kemerovo, one reader wishes her fellow mourners to live through the tragedy and points out that they are all together in it: “Боль и слезы душат . Мы вместе ! Надо пережить”⁹ (Pain and tears are choking <me> . We are together in this ! We have to outlive it) (Gavrilova, 2018). On the other hand, her posts serve as an information resource from which Tolstaia’s readers find out about relevant activities in the offline world. By inviting people to join mass meetings Tolstaia potentially increases their

⁹ Here and further in the text I preserve the authors’ orthography and punctuation.

attendance and consequently strengthens social ties between people. Tolstaia's role in the information exchange is recognized and used by her followers: some simply thank her for her solidarity, others use her page to add more information about the events. Thus, commenting on her post about the mass meeting in Saint Petersburg, one of her readers writes "Спасибо, Татьяна Никитична" (Thank you, Tat'iana Nikitichna) and follows her text with an emoticon of a hand raised in a high five, a commonly recognized sign of unification (Plump, 2018), and another user adds information about the mass meeting in Moscow (Roudenko, 2018), which Tolstaia later reposts herself. Thus, a follower successfully uses the author's page to share information.¹⁰

Tolstaia's posts that criticize objects of public reproof and derision are similar to those described above in their mechanisms of developing bridging social capital. Tolstaia chooses themes that cause a predictable negative reaction in her readers and give voice to shared attitudes. Thus, in one of her posts Tolstaia criticizes the actions of *Pochta Rossii* (2017c), the Russian postal service, which is known for its slow and unreliable work, in another – Russian maintenance companies, also known for their poor performance and disrespectful attitude towards their customers (2018e). In a third post of this kind Tolstaia makes fun of the predictable and unnatural plots of American movies (2018f).

A "common enemy" or laughingstock provides her and her readers with some common ground and a basis for unification. Two different reasons for unification

¹⁰ Interestingly, not all of Tolstaia's readers perceive her posts, written from the point of view of a concerned citizen, as an action aimed at sharing the moment with her readers. In the comments to such posts she is frequently accused of being distant from her audience and her nation and of limiting her inclusion to the online world: she joins the public on Facebook, but not in the offline world. Thus, in a comment to her invitation to the mass meeting commemorating victims of the tragedy in Kemerovo, one of her readers asks her whether or not she will actually come to the mass meeting and suggests that she will not, as she is only capable of causing conflicts online: "Сами-то придёте, Татьяна Никитична? Или сил хватает только народ лбами сталкивать?" (How about you yourself, Tatjana Nikitichna, will you come? Or do you only have enough energy to play one person off against another?) (Krutova, 2018). As we can see, Tolstaia's strategies in developing bridging social capital are not always successful.

exist: first, as in the case of collective grieving, the post and comments on it become a space for discussion. As the theme is determined by the post, and the majority agrees on its interpretation, the variety of possible comments and reactions to it is limited, and consequently, there is little chance to write anything inappropriate. As a result, people are offered a low-risk environment for public expression of their opinion and are nearly guaranteed affirmation from strangers. For instance, the above-mentioned post about the unnaturalness of the plots of American movies opens up an in-depth discussion of the structure of works of art. People share their observations, most of which articulate a similar critical and ironic attitude. Numerous sarcastic sketches ([Talanova 2018], [Tshernoshova 2018]) are followed by Tolstaia's interested affirmative comments and receive many likes.

Second, such posts frequently bear practical consequences: Tolstaia as a recognized persona becomes an agent of power who causes the criticized organizations to change. Some of her readers want to share the benefits of her success. In her critical posts Tolstaia often addresses targeted institutions directly. For instance, when she criticizes *Pochta Rossii* for damaging the package she was sent, Tolstaia begins her post with a reference: “Этот пост - для Почта России.” (This post is for *Pochta Rossii*) (2017c) and tags the official Facebook page of *Pochta Rossii* in her post. Soon a representative of the organization comments on the post and offers help (Markin, 2017a). Some of Tolstaia's readers reply to his comments and ask him for information about their packages as well: “а моя посылка полгода лежит во Внуково. Чё делать-то?” (And my parcel has been left in Vnukovo (an airport in Moscow – M. G.) for the last six months. What am I supposed to do?) (Tokaeв, 2017). The representative of the postal service quickly replies to the question and offers some practical advice (Markin, 2017b). As we can see, here

Tolstaia's page successfully builds bridging social capital by offering her readers access to the authority she has.

SECTION FIVE.

Tradition as a Means of Developing Bonding Social Capital in Tolstaia's Facebook Posts

As we can see, posts in which Tolstaia comments on universally known and potentially traumatic social problems represent a contribution to the development of bridging social capital with – and among – her readers. In most of the other posts the author is more persistent in building bonding social capital. She aims to create strong group identity and trust within a specific group. In most of her posts Tolstaia demonstrates her belonging to the tradition of the Russian intelligentsia and develops the intelligentsia identity among some of her readers. She aims to build strong bonding social capital within the group by opposing select readers to the majority. To establish her connection with the tradition and create community among her readers Tolstaia uses different strategies. First, she uses her noble origin and family background as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Second, she uses the past as a platform and basis for the reunification of isolated representatives of the old Soviet intelligentsia. Next, she uses the remaining representatives of the old intelligentsia as an example for those of her readers who do not possess a similar background. Finally, she uses her own life as a role model to demonstrate to her readers the values of contemporary Russian intellectuals and to single out those of her readers who deserve to belong to the group. In the following passages I will briefly explicate these strategies.

One of the most prominent types of her Facebook posts are memoir texts about intellectuals of the past whom she happened to know personally. Among these posts are texts about Tolstaia's ancestors (primarily the family of her mother, the Lozinskys), her husband's ancestors (the Lebedevs), family friends (for example, Nikolai Gumilev, Maximilian and Mariia Voloshin) and friends of hers who are

known to the general public (such as Joseph Brodsky, Sergey Dovlatov, Pyotr Vail and others). These posts share personal materials from Tolstaia's family archive and stories that are unknown to the general public. For example, she shares pictures of Brodsky's birthday party and of a family party with the Vails, shares a picture of herself with Dovlatov from a conference, recounts a family anecdote about Gumilev. The photos are accompanied by comments that aim to stress the connection between the figures Tolstaia discusses and herself. For instance, in her post dedicated to Gumilev's birthday she mentions that he was her mother's godfather and suggests that his protection helped her to live a happy life (Tolstaia, 2016a). By demonstrating private relationships with well-known intellectuals of the past Tolstaia gains authority as the heir of that tradition. Claiming her heritage in a sense positions her as a gatekeeper who is to decide whether a person belongs to the community or not.

Tolstaia's posts about significant figures of the past often invite readers to join the discussion. She usually offers other eye-witnesses of the events she discusses the opportunity to add their memories to hers. Thus, she posts a photo of the funeral of Maximilian Voloshin's widow, Mariia. She explains that the photo was taken by her sister, Katerina, and provides a list of those who, according to Wikipedia, attended the funeral. The list, however, seems incomplete, and she asks those who were there to give more details:

Википедия пишет: Среди провожавших её в последний путь — М. Н. Изергина, В. П. Купченко, Екатерина Никитична Толстая, С. В. Цигаль, Мирэль Яковлевна Шагинян. А кто еще? Почти никого не осталось, вот Сергей Цигаль жив, а кто еще-то? Может, кто-то увидит этот мой текст, отзовитесь. (Tolstaia, 2017d)

Wikipedia writes: among those who followed her to rest M. N. Izergina, V. P. Kupchenko, Ekaterina Nikitichna Tolstaia, S. V. Tsigal, Mirel Iakovlevna Shaginian. And who else? There is almost no one left <alive>, Sergei Tsigal is still alive, but who

else. Maybe someone will see this post, give me a shout! (Tolstaia, 2017d)

People who were at the funeral respond in comments and share their memories. Thus, Tolstaia's family friend, Milena Vsevolodovna Rozhdestvenskaya, replies to Tolstaia's comment, noting that her sister also was at the funeral. She writes about a common memory the two families share, of Tolstaia's sister giving her sister some photos as a present.

Танечка, отзываюсь! Наша сестра Наташа там была! На похоронах Маруси. И шла в этой процессии. Она предпоследняя на снимке идет. Мы тоже хотели ехать тогда, но что-то не получилось. И Катя твоя как раз подарила тогда Наташе несколько таких фотографий, у меня есть. На них подробнее Наташу можно рассмотреть (Rozhdestvenskaya, 2017a).

Tanechka, here I am, giving you a shout out! Our sister Natasha was there! At Marusia's <an affectionate diminutive for Maria – M. G.> funeral. And walked with that procession. She is walking next to last in that photo. We also wanted to go then, but it didn't work out. And your Katia at that time gave Natasha a few photos, I have them. You can examine Natasha more closely there (Rozhdestvenskaya, 2017a).

Shared remembering reunites representatives of the community of the Soviet intelligentsia that has nearly disappeared since Perestroika. People who have long lived in different cities or, perhaps, countries, are united in a public space again. Memories turn out to be a safe topic that allows people to overcome the time gap and regain a common ground for communication. Later on they can move from discussing the past to other topics. Thus, in the conversation about the funeral cited above, Tolstaia goes on to ask Rozhdestvenskaia to send her old pictures. As a result the two women have a reason for further private interaction. Such reunification helps to reestablish a sense of community and thereby builds social capital within it. The memories turn out to be a convenient topic that allows people who do not know each

other personally to indulge in conversation and thereby to feel personal connection. For instance, the comments on the post about Voloshina's funeral are soon filled with memories of Voloshina's house in Koktebel.¹¹ All of a sudden people who have never met in real life sense that they share a past, which fact strengthens their mutual liking and makes them more open with each other or, in other words, increases bonding social capital. Even more explicitly the idea of the unifying nature of memory is expressed in a comment to Tolstaia's post on Gumilev's birthday (2016a). Boris Yablukov, whom Tolstaia seems not to know personally, tells about a book which was presented to his friend's ancestor by Tolstaia's grandfather, Mikhail Lozinsky. The appeal to the past brings the old interconnections into the present and creates symbolic bonds between members of the community. All those who have read and will read this note are perceived by Yablukov as connected by invisible bonds. Yablukov directly expresses the idea of interconnection between seemingly random people and the role of the past in it, drawing attention to the fact that the note has been circulating between people who have not known each other for very long:

Записка сейчас лежит передо мной. Мне скоро семьдесят и я не знаю, кто прочтет ее после меня. Таким долгим, оказывается, может быть эхо (Yablukov, 2016).

The note is now sitting in front of me. I am turning seventy soon, and I do not know who will read it after me. It turns out, the echo can be so long (Yablukov, 2016).

Tolstaia's Facebook page becomes a virtual space for unifying people with similar educational and social backgrounds and a space for building their social capital; and she herself becomes the mediator, collecting and connecting people who

¹¹ A short commentary on the significance of Koktebel is required here. Koktebel' is a resort in the Crimea that was a favorite place of the pre-revolutionary Russian and, later, the Soviet artistic intelligentsia. Many Russian intellectuals had dachas there, others came to visit. The main center of life in Koktebel was the house of the Voloshins, which initially was turned by the poet and artist into his studio and literature club, and later preserved by his widow as a house, open for guests.

seem to have lost each other not only personally, but also as a social group, and thereby gains more authority and social capital.

Together with reinventing the tradition of the Soviet intelligentsia, Tolstaia invents¹² the tradition of the new, post-Soviet intelligentsia: Tolstaia allows people whose predecessors did not belong to the community to become acquainted with it and potentially join it. Tolstaia as a public persona becomes for these people a guide into a world that had long been concealed from them. By reading Tolstaia's Facebook these individuals acquire a sense of personal connection with figures from the past and begin to relate themselves to them. Tolstaia's readers join the conversations with her personal friends, adding their metonymically connected memories. Thus, in the post about the Voloshins (Tolstaia, 2017d) many Facebook users join in the discussion of the nature of Koktebel and add their personal childhood memories of trips there. For example, Inga Snegurova, who seems not to know Tolstaia personally, adds a grateful comment and says that this place is her favorite: "Спасибо! Любимые места." (Thank you! My favorite places) (2017). Temporal and geographical connections replace substantive ones, and "ordinary" people become involved in the larger imagined community of the quasi-intelligentsia. Those who have no connection at all nevertheless try to claim it. Thus, one of the readers of the post about the funeral, writes in a comment: "Я родился через полгода." (I was born half a year later) (Zamkov, 2017). By mentioning the only relation to the described events that is available for him the author of the post tries to inscribe himself into the story.

Familiarity with the values of the Soviet intelligentsia also serves a distinguishing function. It is a way for Tolstaia to separate those who deserve to

¹² Here I use the term in the sense that Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger use it (1983). The "invention of tradition" represents the development of a new tradition or, in the case discussed here, an identity, with deliberate reference to an older tradition that no longer exists. By claiming heritage the inventors provide the newly started tradition with more authority and weight.

belong to the community from those who do not. While people who express interest in the culture that Tolstaia describes receive likes or supportive comments that demonstrate encouragement for them to join the imagined community and share bonding social capital existing within it, those who question it and disagree with its values and beliefs receive dismissive criticism. For example, in the comments to the post about Voloshina's funeral one of the commentators, Alexander Stelmakh (2017), asks Tolstaia why she used the name Koktebel instead of "Planerskoie,"¹³ which was the official name at that time: "а чего Коктебель когда он в те годы был Планерским?" ("But why <do you call it> Koktebel, if it was Planerskoie at that time?"). She answers "А для нас Коктебель." (But for us it's Koktebel.) (2017e), thus demonstrating the independence and unity of the group of the intelligentsia. She follows up with a discussion of the inappropriateness of observing official Soviet tradition: "Планерское - это было официальное название. С чего бы мы стали следовать официозу?" ("Planerskoie – it was an official title. Why would we follow the official narrative?") (2017f). In her comment Tolstaia, first, underscores the special status of the intelligentsia and explicitly separates the group from the rest of the Soviet and Russian population and, second, demonstrates that those who do not share the values of the group are unwelcome. Other people join Tolstaia in this discussion, adding their affirmative comments. Both Tolstaia's personal friends and her followers are united in their criticism of the author of the original question. Thus, Milena Rozhdestvenskaia claims a deep historical connection with the place, which is for her symbolized by her loyalty to the original name:

ну как я могла бы Коктебель называть Планерским, если мой отец еще в 1927 году туда впервые приехал к Волошину, а дед

¹³ The historical name "Koktebel" was replaced by "Planerskoje" in 1945 as a part of the Soviet program of renaming.

Татьяны Толстой вообще в начале 1900-х гг. Они в Коктебель приезжали! у нас в семье Коктебель никто никогда иначе не называл. Просто не слышали ни в детстве, ни позже такого слова (Rozhdestvenskaia, 2017b).

But how could I call Koktebel Planerskoie, if my father first went there to Voloshin for the first time as early as 1927, and Tat'iana Tolstaia's grandfather even at the beginning of the 1900s. They came to Koktebel! No one in our family called it otherwise. We simply never heard such a word either in childhood or later (Rozhdestvenskaia, 2017b).

The connection of the place (Koktebel) to the intelligentsia community and the significance of the name for their self-identification sounds clearly in the comment and for Rozhdestvenskaia explicitly distinguishes those who share this family knowledge from those who do not. She is supported by followers who do not know Tolstaia's family personally but share this family background. Thus, one of Tolstaia's followers Andrei Nemirovskii (2017) claims that his grandmother spent much time in Koktebel, but never used the Soviet name: “Моя бабушка, которая своё детство провела в Крыму, тоже всегда говорила ‘Коктебель’. ‘Планерское’ не прижилось почему-то <...>” (My grandmother, who spent her childhood in Koktebel, also always said ‘Koktebel’. ‘Planerskoie’ did not take root, for some reason <...>”). Those who seem to have no family memories of the place simply claim the significance of the original name: “Как бы ни называли, а Коктебель именно то имя!” (Whatever it's called, Koktebel is the real name!) (Osina, 2017). Such collective action and, more specifically, collective aggression against an outsider unifies the potential members of the community and adds to the existing bonding social capital.

As we can see, Tolstaia's stories of the lives of the representatives of the Russian and Soviet intelligentsia and subsequent discussions and comments contribute in different ways to defining the community of the contemporary

intelligentsia and strengthening the ties within it. In its turn, the reactualization and reinterpretation of the past help construct Tolstaia's status as the "official representative" of the old tradition and of someone with a near monopoly on and the right to transmit that tradition. She actively uses this status in other posts that determine the rules of behavior of the "proper" intellectuals.

SECTION SIX.

Tat'iana Tolstaia as a Role Model: He Who Is Not with Us Is against Us

The values of the contemporary intellectuals are most clearly explicated in Tolstaia's posts about the present. She presents her life as an example. The facts of her life become a certain form of *zhiznetvorchestvo* (*life-creation*, a term that was used by Russian modernists to describe their attitude towards life as creative process): by sharing what she does, reads, eats and drinks, enjoys and finds disgusting, Tolstaia offers her readers a role model and a framework through which they can evaluate each other, and subsequently she receives a chance to evaluate them. The formation of the group and building of the bonding social capital within it happens in the comments to her posts. This is the space where Tolstaia's readers recognize and assess each other. This is also the space where Tat'iana Tolstaia evaluates them, setting forth her verdict on whether or not individuals belong to the community. The main criterion of belonging to the group is whether or not the readers understand the meaning, the significance of what she shows. People who share Tolstaia's perception of what she posts receive a positive affirmation: in her replies to their comments she writes words of agreement and in-depth, engaged answers. Such recognition by the author serves as a confirmation of their belonging to the group and becomes a means of building bonding social capital: people who leave affirmative comments beneath Tolstaia posts and receive her replies frequently join an in-depth, informative discussion of the subject, whether on an object of elite consumption, an intellectual product or a historical fact. Such discussions help to keep the community together. Let us take a look at a few different examples that demonstrate Tolstaia's role in establishing a community and determining its values.

I will briefly enumerate the main themes that Tolstaia touches on in her posts and the main criteria she offers to distinguish potential group members. On her page Tolstaia actively shares materials from her own life and asks her readers for advice based on their experience and preferences. Texts significantly differ in theme, intonation and message. Thus, she can post a picture of the cheese she just bought, talk about the hotel she lived in, discuss an exhibit she attended or mock a poorly made advertisement that she saw or an uninteresting person who tried to add her as a Facebook friend. Two main types of posts can be noticed: those where the author demonstrates her own lifestyle and shares her values and those where she criticizes others who do not share her views. For instance, in many of her posts Tolstaia publishes pictures of the expensive blue cheese she buys. In one of them she is pictured leaning upon a pile of cheese heads (Tolstaia, 2018g). The photo has a comment: “Сыр. Труд. Март.” (Cheese. Labor. March.) – a phonetic alternation of the Soviet slogan “Мир. Труд. Май.” (“Peace. Labor. May.”) which was used at the International Workers’ Day and embodied the main values of the Soviet state. Such a composition together with an affirmative slogan clearly states (if ironically) that eating good cheese is good. Conversely, in one of her other posts Tolstaia discusses people who send her friend requests and then explicitly tells them not to bother her. The text turns into a categorization of the boring, ignorant people who surround Tolstaia and her potential readers:

Простятся в друзья: - девушки в бусах, с упреком и несложной тайной во взорах, типа “меня никто не понимает и молча гибнуть я должна”; общих друзей нет, подписчиков - 38; - мужчины, присевшие на камень, раздвинув ноги, в шортах; фото обложки - романтический пейзаж; общих друзей нет, подписчиков - 47; <...> Идите нахуй, друзья мои. Все - нахуй. Там, собственно, ничего страшного, так что идите себе. Не оглядываясь (Tolstaia, 2017g).

They ask me to add them as friends: -girls in strings of beads, with reproach and a mystery that is easy to solve in their gaze, as though to say “no one understands me and, silent, I must perish” <the second part of the saying is a quotation from a Eugene Onegin, a novel in verse by Alexander Pushkin (Book 3, Tat’iana’s Letter), I use the translation of Vladimir Nabokov here (Pushkin, 1975) – M. G.>, no common friends, number of followers – 38; men sitting on rocks with their legs spread, wearing shorts; cover picture is a romantic landscape; no common friends, number of followers – 47; <...>. Go fuck yourselves, my dear friends. All of you – go fuck yourselves <literally: go to dick – M. G.>. There is, actually, nothing scary there, so just go. And don’t turn back” (Tolstaia, 2017g).

Here Tolstaia clearly describes features of inappropriate behavior that she considers unworthy of her respect: poorly educated people who shape their lives in accordance to few well-known stereotypes do not deserve Tolstaia’s attention. As a result, the reader receives two role models: a positive one (how to behave in order to be considered a Russian intellectual) and a negative one (what to avoid).

Despite the differences in the themes, attitudes and material used, all of the posts represent a clear system of beliefs – Tat’iana Tolstaia’s credo. Her posts concern different spheres of life: from physical consumption to intellectual life. Conspicuous consumption is important for Tolstaia: she demonstrates interest in expensive, high quality goods. This tendency demonstrates to her readers the limits of the intelligentsia group: to belong to it, one should sustain a certain income level. Such limitation separates Tolstaia from the traditional intelligentsia canon as it is described in (Lotman, 1999), which praises “noble poverty.” Intellectual life is not limited to any standards. Tolstaia sets the criteria herself. Intellectual life and material consumption are for Tolstaia strongly interconnected. All of her posts are rich with cultural references, and to detect them and fully understand the meaning of a text a reader needs to possess a certain level of education. For instance, in another post where Tolstaia praises the expensive blue cheese that she just bought, she offers to

draw a poster in the stylistics of the Окна РОСТА, warning people about the smelly cheese: “Надо бы нарисовать плакат, в стилистике Окон РОСТА: // Это что за амбре?! // Это сыр Сент-Альбре. // Распугала им всю семью” (“One should draw a sketch in the stylistics of the “Окна РОСТА” group: what smell is this? // This is the Saint-Albray cheese”. // I’ve scared away my whole family with it.” (2018h). To understand the joke in the post a reader must know to what the Окна РОСТА refers.¹⁴

The variety of Tolstaia’s posts is echoed in the comments and, consequently, in her responses to them. People who comment on the posts are clearly divided into groups: some understand Tolstaia’s intentions and values, while others do not; some agree with her beliefs, while others criticize them. For instance, in the above-cited post about cheese (Tolstaia, 2018g) some people recognize the products on the picture and engage in deep discussion of them, while others blame her for paying too much attention to material consumption or simply complain about the bad taste of the blue cheese. Thus, some of the followers notice that on the picture Tolstaia holds a plastic bag with an emblem of a well-known tea-shop, and they start discussing various kinds of tea that are offered there: “Это прекрасный парижский чай. Чайный дом основан русским купцом в 1917. Там есть и Russian morning и Санкт-Петербург и English breakfast” (This is wonderful Paris tea. The tea house was founded by a Russian merchant in 1917. There is Russian morning, and *Sankt-Peterburg*, and English breakfast) (Loseva, 2018). Others, at the same time, explicitly disregard Tolstaia’s interest in cheese. For instance, one of her readers accuses her of paying too much attention to it: “Сколько можно хвастаться доступом к сырам. Вам вроде

¹⁴ Окна РОСТА is a series of Soviet propaganda posters of the time of the Civil War that was created by the artists and poets who worked for Rossiiskoie Telegrafnoie Agenstvo (Russian Telegraph Agency). The posters reflected the news and intended to make fun of and criticize the enemies of the Soviet State. As they were addressed, first and foremost, for the semi-literate soldiers of the Red Army, they were easy to understand and emotionally engaging.

есть чем похвастаться ещё” (How long can you boast about having access to cheeses? It seems to me that you have other reasons to boast) (Zyryanov, 2018).

Tolstaia’s reaction depends on the feedback she receives: while affirmative comments receive her approval along with engaged discussion of flavors, the critical comments are mocked. Tolstaia’s positive evaluation becomes for her readers a sign of acknowledgement, of belonging to the group. Her comments serve as glue that brings the group together and catalyzes further discussion. Thus, Tolstaia’s rules of being an intellectual become a way to define the group and to develop bonding social capital.

SECTION SEVEN.

(Social) Capital: the Commercialization of the Group Identity

In his monograph Andrew Wachtel (2006) demonstrates that one of the reasons that urges writers to “remain relevant” is their commercial success: while under Communism writers were funded by the government, in capitalist societies to maintain commercial success they need to be popular. In the previous sections we saw that Tat’iana Tolstaia uses her authority as a writer and as an heir to the tradition of the Soviet intelligentsia to reconstruct the community of the intelligentsia and to develop social capital within it. In its turn, the bonding social capital that Tolstaia develops strengthens her position as a public persona as well. In this section I will show how she uses the community that she has created to her own benefit, to solve numerous pragmatic goals. The pragmatic nature of social capital becomes most obvious in posts where Tolstaia uses her Facebook page to promote her work or the work of the others. For example, she invites people to her lectures or presentations (2017f); informs the audience of the publication of an English translation of her book (2018i); advertises a novel that was published by a group of her former students (2018j). In many such posts she clearly distinguishes her potential audience: these are the people who can potentially understand the significance of this event. The limitations are often set explicitly: she uses phrases such as “for those who” and then describes people of certain mental capacities. For instance, sharing a recording from a concert of one of her favorite writers, John Shemyakin, she writes: “Для тех, кто любит, ценит и понимает” (For those who love, appreciate, understand) (2018k). Here Tolstaia clearly sets group limitations constituting the imagined “us” (those readers of her page who potentially understand high-quality creative work and thereby

deserve to attend the same meeting as Tolstaia) from the imagined “them” (the majority, who are incapable of perceiving profound art).

Tolstaia refers to the imagined community of the intellectuals that she has created. While the group she clearly demonstrates that she refers to a distinct group, in her advertisements Tolstaia provides no explicit objective criteria that might determine its potential members: unlike other posts where she explicitly tests her readers’ education, here she administers no quizzes and asks no questions. The only criterion that exists is the readers’ internal sense of belonging: they themselves must decide whether they deserve to join the group or not. The desire to belong to a group lies at the base of human psychology and everyone aims to associate herself with a certain group and to build bonding social capital, as it provides psychological comfort. By establishing such a closed group of “us” and demonstrating that its members are connected via bonding social capital, Tolstaia makes joining the group very desirable for many of her readers and, consequently, encourages them to attend her meetings or in various other ways consume the cultural products that she offers.

The author uses a similar strategy in other posts that have practical meaning for her. Unlike most of her posts, where she does not address her readers at all or calls them with a distancing term *podpischiki* (*followers*) or impersonal *vy* (collective *you*) in those posts where Tolstaia asks for help she addresses her readers with an informal word *druzia* (*friends*¹⁵). For instance, in one of her posts (2016b) she asks her followers to donate money for her acquaintance who was injured in an accident. She starts her message with an address “Druzia!” and then follows with her request:

¹⁵ Russian, unlike English, distinguishes between offline and online friends. While for real-life friends in Russian is used the word *drug*, for online friends Russians more frequently use the English borrowing, *freindy*. The differentiation raises the status of the word *drug*: it typically means something more intimate than the English *friend*. As the significant difference between online- and offline friends is lost in English translation, here and further I will leave the Russian *druzia* without translation.

Друзья!
Я знаю эту чудесную семью.
Прочитайте, пожалуйста, пост, вникните, по мере своей
деликатности, в детали ситуации, прикиньте, чем бы вы могли
(если хотите), помочь. Деньгами, переводчиком, врачебными
связями? <...> (2016b)

Druzia!
I know this wonderful family. // Please, read the post, catch on, as
delicately as you can, in the details of the situation, think how you
could help (if you want to). With money, with a translator, with
some connections with doctors? <...> (2016b)

The drastic contrast between the respectful and engaging address to her readers in this post and dismissive description of people who try to add her to their friend lists on Facebook (2017g) suggests that the overall politeness and the engaging address are used as a device. It seems to me that by using the word *druzia* here Tolstaia strengthens the bonds between herself and her readers consequently presses upon the bonding social capital that exists in the imagined community of her and her readers. As in the previous example, she distinguishes a certain group of her readers and demonstrates her personal connection with them. Only if in the case with the advertisements she invites people to join the group that she explicitly and positively distinguishes in other posts, here she uses herself as a magnet. Her involvement makes joining the group very desirable for the majority of her readers: everyone wants to be informally connected with a popular writer and share bonding social capital with her. At the same time, as in the case with advertisements Tolstaia does not explicitly limit her target audience in the post: it addresses everyone who will consider helping her friends. In other words, the post suggests that the only condition of becoming friends with Tolstaia is fulfilling her request. Such presupposition makes helping more desirable for Tolstaia's readers and thereby helps her to achieve her goal.

As we can see, in some cases Tolstaia tries to commercialize the sense of belonging to the imagined community she develops. The feeling of being distinguished and separated from the majority as well as the possibility to share bonding social capital with a popular writer makes joining Tolstaia's inner circle (the group of intelligentsia or her personal friends) desirable. She uses different strategies to show her readers that if they fulfill her requests they can gain access to the bonding social capital that exists within her closed communities. In other words, in full accordance with Wachtel's theory, Tolstaia uses her authority of a writer to achieve her pragmatic goals, and partly – to be commercially successful and to make commercially successful people she finds worthy of it.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Tolstaia's Facebook activity within the framework of social capital reveals an interesting tendency. Tat'iana Tolstaia uses her page to invent a tradition of the new post-Soviet intelligentsia. She achieves her goal by claiming the legacy of the traditions of both the pre-revolutionary gentry and the Soviet artistic intelligentsia. The status as heir to these traditions grants Tolstaia authority among her readers and allows her to make claims regarding the norms of behavior of intellectuals. She nominates herself as a role-model who can demonstrate the right and wrong behavior for the intelligentsia. As Tolstaia is often the only representative of the intelligentsia her readers meet, they consider the rules she sets as the ultimate laws of the intelligentsia community. As a result, Tolstaia becomes the judge who receives the right to evaluate her readers and decide whether or not they deserve to be called *intelligentsia*.

Based on the criteria Tolstaia herself sets, she chooses those of her readers whom she considers worthy of being a part of the group. She demonstrates her approval through positive comments and likes. People whose actions she approves become a part of the imagined virtual community of the contemporary intelligentsia. Through in-depth, engaged discussions that demonstrate the unity of history, cultural background and values, selected followers of Tolstaia develop group identity and build bonding social capital. As Tolstaia is the center of the community, the strengthening of ties within the group increases her recognition as a writer and, consequently, helps her to "remain relevant" (Wachtel, 2006).

As with others who identify themselves with the community, Tolstaia reinterprets the concept of intelligentsia. Some of the features that Tolstaia claims as distinctive qualities of the intelligentsia are very different from the recognized canon.

Thus, Tolstaia demonstrates that wealth and physical well-being are necessary qualities of the intelligentsia, while, as Yurii Lotman showed in (1999), one of the main distinctive features of the identity of the intelligentsia is “noble poverty” and a lack of attention to material culture. As we can see, Tolstaia preserves the form of the concept of the Soviet intelligentsia and uses the social capital that her association with that tradition can provide her. At the same time, she reinterprets the meaning of the term. It seems to me that a change in the perception of the distinctive features of the intelligentsia is associated with the change in the economic formation: Tolstaia is trying to reinvent an identity that flourished in a socialist context within the context of the new capitalist reality and to make the social capital that she has developed commercially successful.

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