

Introduction

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For reasons accessible only to soothsayers and shamans, until the 1980s anglophone monographs on *Anna Karenina* were rarer than Hawaiian blizzards. Standard surveys of Tolstoy's oeuvre (for example, by John Bayley, Ernest Simmons, Edward Wasiolek) observed the generalizing conventions of the overview by allotting a chapter to the novel, inevitably, as a "stage" in Tolstoy's "development"—that is, as a halfway house between the ebullience of *War and Peace* and the punitively moralistic strictures of what followed in the 1880s. Unaccountably, one of the most frequently taught novels in the entire repertory of academic-friendly texts lacked detailed book-length analyses by scholars capable of reading primary and secondary materials in the original Russian. In this critical desert, Elisabeth Stenbock-Fermor's *Architecture of Anna Karenina* (1975) languished as a solitary visitor awaiting delayed fellow travelers (*poputchiki*).

Not unlike numerous contemporary women, Anna Karenina finally came into her own in the eighties. During that decade and the next, monographs focused exclusively on the novel included Sydney Schultze's clear-headed Formalist *Structure of Anna Karenina* (1982), and, in sufficient numbers to imply a trend, several feminist readings: Judith Armstrong's opinionated, Lacan-driven *The Unsaid Anna Karenina* (1988), Mary Evans's startlingly rudimentary *Reflecting on Anna Karenina* (1989), and Amy Mandelker's theoretically sophisticated *Framing Anna Karenina: Tolstoy, the Woman Question, and the Victorian Novel* (1993). In the meantime, the American-based *Tolstoy Studies Journal*, a valuable but awkwardly formatted publication inaugurated in 1988, devoted the entire critical segment of its fourth issue (1991) to Tolstoy's second big novel. Less happily, immaculate ignorance not only of the Russian language, but also of Slavic scholarship and the traditions of Russian culture did not deter Evans, Gary Adelman (*The Bitterness of Ecstasy* [1990]) and David Holbrook (*Tolstoy, Woman, and Death: A Study of War and Peace and Anna Karenina* [1997]) from authoring extensive commentaries that kindled provocative questions—

less, however, about *Anna Karenina* than about the politics of producing volumes manifestly better left unwritten and unread.

If the ultimate stamp of official academic approval is the MLA series titled *Approaches to Teaching World Literature*, then the new century has brought *Anna Karenina* belated but unassailable legitimation. Co-editors Liza Knapp and Amy Mandelker are currently assembling the collection of series-specific brief essays charting pedagogical approaches most likely to stimulate ideas and generate classroom discussion of Tolstoy's text. The omission of *Anna Karenina* from the series until now, of course, reflects the automatic marginalization of anything Slavic in the broader sphere of literary and cultural studies within American intellectual institutions. The laudable efforts of Northwestern University Press to counter this stubborn tendency through its line of *AATSEEL Critical Companions to Russian Literature* have yielded "companions" to *Oblomov*, *The Golovlyovs*, *The Idiot*, "The Death of Ivan Ilych," *Red Cavalry*, *Master and Margarita*, *Invitation to a Beheading*, *Doctor Zhivago*, and *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, but, inexplicably, have bypassed *Anna Karenina*. Slavists, it seems, resemble Aleksei Karenin, inasmuch as they no more than he can cope with all of Anna's complexities and contradictions.

On celluloid, however, *Anna Karenina* has fared better than most Russian novels, both in Russia and abroad, although appraisals of the various films have followed rather idiosyncratic patterns, partly determined by the star status of the actresses assaying the central role. Among the almost twenty documented screen versions, the Russian production by Aleksandr Zarkhi (1967), with Tat'iana Samoilova as Anna, stands supreme, though Samoilova's triumph as the unfaithful Veronika in Mikhail Kalatozov's *Cranes Are Flying* (1957), which certified her screen credentials as a woman of questionable virtue, has attracted incomparably more attention and accolades. Greta Garbo fans cherish her signature garboization of Anna in the lavish black-and-white American rendition of 1935, with Frederic March as a wooden, poetry-reciting Vronskii and Basil Rathbone as the appropriately ascetic, fleshless Karenin. Critical consensus has consigned the Vivien Leigh/Kieron Moore/Ralph Richardson 1947 foray, notable for its stylish Cecil Beaton costumes, to near-oblivion, primarily on account of Leigh's perceived inadequacy, while the 1985 British TV production, with Jacqueline Bisset and Christopher Reeves, has garnered unanimous praise for Paul Scofield's long-suffering Karenin but widespread dismissal of Bisset's interpretation of the heroine, deemed in-

coherently neurotic. The most recent screen *Anna Karenina*, directed by Bernard Rose (1997), suffers from universally recognized miscasting (Sophie Marceau/Sean Bean/James Fox) and maladroit attempts to emphasize parallels between Levin and Anna that inadvertently result in comic effects. One of the most dramatic and conceptually integrated visual enactments of the novel remains the Bolshoi's filmed ballet (1974), with Maia Plisekaia (Zarkhi's excellent Betsy Tverskaia) in the title role, partnered by Alexander Godunov as Vronskii—a bravura performance virtually unknown in the West.

This motley panorama leaves ample leeway for any Slavist with insights into *Anna Karenina* on page or screen. Such, at least, was the collective impression during a seminar on the novel taught last year at the University of Pittsburgh—the impetus behind the topic of this issue and one accounting for the latter's preliminary makeup. Inevitably, the issue's contents vary in their relationship to existent scholarship on *Anna Karenina*. Polemicizing with embalmed verities about Tolstoy's techniques of physical representation, Petre Petrov's nuanced reading pinpoints one of the major stylistic differences between *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. Irina Makoveeva's essay on cinematic adaptations breaks new critical ground by positing genre-affiliations for four films based on the latter novel, while also gauging their success in recasting Tolstoy's text into visual form. Not Tolstoy's renowned enmity toward the medical profession, but methods of diagnosing "love sickness," is the topic of Valeria Sobol's contribution, which contextualizes the novel's treatment of symptomatology and recovery in medical debates of the period. While many scholars have addressed Tolstoy's tendency to moralize food consumption, Saera Yoon redirects that topic to encompass food production and theatricality as decisive factors in Tolstoy's depiction of group scenes in the novel. Elizabeth Blake tackles the volatile issue of gender, arguing that Levin's often discomfiting but ultimately integrative uniqueness stems from his fundamental alliance with, and respect for, the female domain instead of the homosocial sphere of masculine privilege and competition that dominates the upper-class world of *Anna Karenina*. Although countless critics have acknowledged Tolstoy's insistence on the categorical imperative of family life, none has examined the specifics of what constitutes "family happiness"—the subject of Olga Karpushina's ambitious article. In short, the entries in the issue range from revision and extension to polemic and novelty. All ground their arguments in close textual readings.

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The topic of *SISC*'s third issue is the body in Slavic culture. The editors welcome submissions investigating any aspect of bodily representation in art, film, literature, and social ritual during any period within a Slavic culture from earliest recorded history until today.