

but foregrounding John's gospel, for example; or rejecting the violence perpetrated by the God of the Old Testament while welcoming the preaching of moral masochism by Jesus. But Andreev argues that Tolstoy tried to extract what was sensible and relevant from the Bible, a book which in any case is full of inconsistencies because it is the work of many authors over many centuries. In so picking and choosing, Andreev admits, Tolstoy did indeed create a new religion—however much he protested that he was just repeating the gospel message of righteousness, love, and peace.

Some interesting comparisons are made between Tolstoy and other Russian thinkers, especially Berdiaev, Il'in, and Solzhenitsyn. The last of these is especially important for Andreev. As is well known, Tolstoy repeatedly expressed a desire to be thrown into prison for his views, while Solzhenitsyn wrote more authoritatively on this subject, having experienced the Gulag himself. Both authors treasured the essential Christian value of suffering and renunciation of the world. Tolstoy went further than Solzhenitsyn, however, placing the highest possible value on nonresistance to evil as preached by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Solzhenitsyn did not follow Tolstoy in this respect, nor did Ivan Il'in, who even took the trouble of writing an entire book attacking Tolstoyan nonresistance. As for Andreev, he comes down on the side of Tolstoy, allowing however, that the master of *Yasnaya Polyana* was himself inconsistent in his advocacy of nonresistance to evil.

To defend his assertions about Tolstoy, Andreev quotes generously from autobiographical works, religious tracts, personal correspondence, literary works, journalistic pieces, and so on. Curiously, though, very little from the mountain of memoirs about Tolstoy is mentioned, as if to avoid insightful witnesses to the real life of Saint Leo. The absence of any reference to Dushan Makovitskii's rich four-volume memoir is a mystery, given the in-depth conversations about religion Tolstoy conducted with many people in the presence of this devoted stenographer.

It has to be said that German Andreev idealizes Tolstoy's teachings rather than providing a scholarly analysis of them. The bibliography of 182 entries contains only three items written in languages other than Russian. (Within the text Andreev will sometimes discuss or quote a non-Russian source such as Teilhard de Chardin or Hegel or Feuerbach, but without bothering to make a

footnote.) No consideration whatsoever is given to Western scholarship on Tolstoy's religious views, despite the fact that Andreev emigrated from the Soviet Union and has been teaching in German universities since 1975. At a minimum the work of Hugh McLean, Richard Gustafson, Nicolas Weisbein, David Matual, and G. W. Spence should have been taken into consideration. Clearly this is a book written by a Russian exclusively for fellow-Russians. And yet, another drawback is lack of reference even to Russian scholarly research on Tolstoy's religious-philosophical views—for example the work of Iurii Kvitko, Anna Grodetskaia, and K. N. Lomunov.

Andreev's book will be more interesting for scholars of Russian intellectual history than for Tolstoy scholars per se. Andreev participates in an ongoing debate about the validity of Tolstoyanism rather than offering a detached, scholarly investigation.

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**Billington, Josie. *Faithful Realism: Elizabeth Gaskell and Leo Tolstoy: A Comparative Study*. Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 2002. 227 pp.; \$43.50 (hardcover); ISBN 0838754589.**

Josie Billington devotes half of her interesting book, *Faithful Realism: Elizabeth Gaskell and Leo Tolstoy*, to forging readings of both these writers as "religious realists." One of her primary efforts is to place Elizabeth Gaskell within the mainstream of the nineteenth-century novel. She "puts the case that *Wives and Daughters* is the nearest equivalent...in England to...*Anna Karenina*" (9). In her preface she alerts readers that as her argument developed it became clear to her that Tolstoy is crucial ("the great missing figure") not only for Gaskell, but for the Victorian period generally.

In Chapter 4 "Gaskell and Tolstoy: From *The Cossacks* to *Anna Karenina*," Billington offers readings of both novels. At times it is difficult to follow her meaning, as when she writes that in contrast to Berlin, she is arguing "that Tolstoy was a fox, seeing many things, only because he was a hedgehog, looking for one big thing. He could not understand the existence of other things. What is it, he wanted to know, that connects all these 'strands'? What is it that holds all of this together?" At this point, I found myself quite confused. But then, she continues,

“Instead of regretting the truth-seeker in Tolstoy, then, we should marvel at the fact that, for all his need for answers, he did *not* cheat. Rather, he went on, with undiminished earnestness, asking as a novelist the questions he needed answered as a man, and making the novel react against him as well as with him. That is the Tolstoyan dynamic” (120). At this point her argument crystallizes. I cite this passage at length because it is emblematic of the sometimes problematic way in which her own dynamic moves from opacity to clarity. Just when the reader may have lost the author’s logical thread, it suddenly becomes evident again.

Through a close reading of the text (in Russian as well as in English translation), Billington elegantly highlights how Anna, by keeping the thoughts of her happiness separate from the thoughts of her husband’s unhappiness, differs from Levin, who baffled and hurt, finds that he is also happy. “A person did not make sense of it, Levin bewilderedly finds; one just kept going” (121-122). It is commonplace to assert that Anna compartmentalizes aspects of her experience, while Levin swallows things whole, so to speak. But Billington convincingly demonstrates just how these big ideas play out in Tolstoy’s prose at the level of punctuation and grammar and the construction of clauses. These passages are the best in the book.

Billington describes with clarity (though one may disagree, as I do, with her characterization) the many differences between Gaskell and Tolstoy and their respective worlds: Victorian England, described by Arnold as a time when there was “not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve,” and Russia in the same period, when, according to Ware, “Men...fell back once more upon the true spiritual forces of orthodoxy” (132). Yet she nevertheless asserts that there are compelling analogies between the works of these two novelists. “If the Tolstoyan ‘loose and baggy monster’ finds its English equivalent in *Wives and Daughters*, it is because Gaskell and Tolstoy, for all the immense differences between them, both possess, deep and incorrigibly within them, a belief that it is only from inside a version of life, im-

mersed in its content, that one can discover or intuit life’s form” (139).

Billington’s focus on Book VIII of *Anna Karenina* becomes the bridge to the final chapter of her book, “On Life’s Verge: *War and Peace*: Beyond Life and Within Life.” This chapter is constructed more according to the contours of the author’s own associations, and thus its argument is difficult to summarize and even, at times, to follow. Throughout the book, moreover, Billington is almost equally interested in comparing Edgeworth to Gaskell, and George Eliot both to Gaskell and Tolstoy, so that frequently the many terms of comparison become confusing. Billington finds herself making statements like the following: “For Tolstoy is not either George Eliot or Gaskell just because he is both modes.” What does this mean? *Faithful Realism* veers between frequently penetrating insights and shorthand outbursts that exhibit a strong commitment and involvement with the works under discussion but which are hard to understand. Moreover, Billington does not engage with the more recent critical work that has been done on Tolstoy.

I recommend this work, then, not for the sweep of its argument, nor for its discoveries of strong similarities between Gaskell and Tolstoy. Instead the strength of *Faithful Realism: Elizabeth Gaskell and Leo Tolstoy, A Comparative Study* lies in its moments of close readings of passages from the various novels with which it concerns itself. Throughout her book, no matter which author she is writing about, Billington seems to be looking for their answers to that great Tolstoyan question, “How shall I live my life?” And she concludes, “Yet while Gaskell’s greatness might lie in the fact that she *can* be a guide for life in a fallen, relative world, Tolstoy’s own greatness, as William James recognized, was that he could not be a guide to ordinary acceptance. No one holds together as painfully as Tolstoy the need for absolutism and relativism almost at once” (181).

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