

---

## Translating Tolstoy

---

### I Come as a Thief: Notes on the Retranslation of *War and Peace*

A. D. P. Briggs

Bristol University

---

*He is translation's thief that addeth more,  
As much as he that taketh from the store  
Of the first author.*

ANDREW MARVELL

\* *Behold, I come as a thief.*  
REVELATION OF ST JOHN THE DIVINE, xvi, 15

#### Preamble

The author of this article has spent two years working on a new translation of *War and Peace* for Penguin Books. The first draft is now finished and the lengthy process of revision and editorial improvement is under way. This seems an appropriate time to set down some observations about the several English versions that already exist, the justification for writing a new one, translation strategy in general and the particular problems of translating this author and this work.

#### Distinguished Translators

*War and Peace* has been well served by its several translators, Clara Bell, Nathan Dole, Leo Wiener, Constance Garnett, Louise and Aylmer Maude, Rosemary Edmonds and Ann Dunningan.<sup>1</sup>

Only the very first attempt suffers from serious shortcomings, and these are understandable. The first English version, published by Vizetelly in

1886, derived from a three-volume French translation produced a few years earlier in a manner summarised by a note on the title page: "Roman Historique Traduit Avec L'Authorisation de L'Auteur par UNE RUSSE." No one seems to know who this "Russian lady" was, but her French work was soon to be rendered into English by another lady, Clara Bell. We know her name from a second version of this translation which came out the same year (Gottsberger: New York, 1886), having been "revised and corrected in the United States" with a title-page bearing the legend, "Translated into French by a Russian Lady, and from the French by Clara Bell—Authorized Edition." This is a curious item, since only two of Clara Bell's three volumes ever appeared, and that seems to have been the intention from the outset since the two tomes are presented respectively as "Two Volumes – Vol. I" and "Two Volumes – Vol. II." Thus we are presented with the Russian lady's "Before Tilsit, 1805-1807" and "The Invasion, 1807-1812." But there seems to have been no plan for a three-volume edition including "The French at Moscow, 1812-1820." Despite this oddity, Gottsberger states with pride on the title-page verso, "This edition is published expressly for circulation in Europe by authority of Count Leo Tolstoy," and claims copyright (1885).

In view of its bumpy ride into our language the text of the full English version is surprisingly effective, though much of the original has been omitted and what survives is essentially paraphrastic. You can easily see where the liberties have been taken. As early as the second paragraph, for instance, whereas the Russian lady translates Tolstoy's Russian accurately into French, ("Ainsi s'exprimait en juillet 1805 Anna Pavlovna Schérer..."), Clara Bell decides to spice things up a little by saying, "The time was July 1805, the place St. Petersburg [*sic*, not in Tolstoy], and the speaker was Anna Paulovna Schérer..." Not knowing Russian, she has also had trouble with the names. The leading characters are sensibly pre-

sented as Andrew, Pierre, and Nicolas, but beyond them the reader would have had to grapple with names such as Bésoukhow, Dologhow, Denissow, and Koutouzow, to say nothing of diminutives such as Douniacha, Mickka, or Andrioucha, and almost unrecognizable names like Gerkow (Zherkov) and Tonschine (Tushin).

None of this, however, is enough for us to ridicule out of hand this early effort at translating one of the world's greatest classics less than twenty years after its publication. Anyone who read it must have gained a generally sound impression of what the original novel was like. (This will have included Matthew Arnold and possibly Henry James, though the former preferred to rely on the French translations, as he made clear in his curious assertion that, "*Anna Karénine* is perhaps also a novel which goes better into French than into English"<sup>2</sup>). Clara Bell's admiration and confidence allied themselves to a fluent style of writing and the result is, believe it or not, a readable text in both narrative and dialogue, not entirely unworthy of its noble aim. For this massive text to have passed through an intermediate language and the hands of two different translators and still emerge as a broadly faithful and congenial version of the original is far from being a nugatory achievement. The limited merits of this work have been over-rewarded, however, by its surprising longevity. Taken over by Dent from Methuen, and in defiance of three new and better translations direct from the Russian, it appeared in the Everyman's Library series in 1911 and once there it went through numerous editions. As late as the 1960s it was given a new incarnation by Heron Books (by arrangement with Dent) in a three-volume re-edition with new illustrations (beautiful lithographs by an 1812 war artist) but the same old introduction by Vicomte de Vogüé first penned many decades before. Superseded and transcended in every way by several much more accomplished versions, it has battled through to our age and can still sometimes be found in such second-hand bookshops as remain to us—a tribute to the talents, pertinacity, and good fortune of Clara Bell.

### Wayside Crosses

As it happened, though, her well-intended efforts were made strictly redundant almost immediately. Nathan Dole must have been at work on his version before Clara Bell's work was published; his translation came out in New York and London (Walter Scott, four volumes) in 1889. Then, early in the twentieth century two more versions became available; in the same year, 1904, Professor Leo Wiener's translation was issued by Dent (four volumes), and Constance Garnett followed her translation of *Anna Karenina* (1901) with what she described as "A New and Complete Translation" of *War and Peace* in three volumes (Heinemann).

Dole and Wiener, both of them American translators, have not been highly regarded. Typical of the generally dismissive attitude to their work is this comment by an English scholar: "It seems better to leave N. H. Dole and Professor Leo Wiener out of the reckoning. They were pioneers, but nobody is going to argue that the quality of their work has earned them more than a wayside cross."<sup>3</sup> But their case can and should be argued. Both men were competent Russianists and reasonably talented writers. Anyone who wishes to be assured of their professional abilities should compare what they wrote with the amateur efforts of people like Frantz Davidovitch Davis, whose version of Turgenev's novel, *Dvorianskoe Gnezdo*, clumsily entitled *A Nest of Hereditary Legislators*, presents these lines as the opening dialogue, Martha Timofaievna (*sic*) speaking first:

"Of what thinkest thou?" suddenly asked she of Marie Dmitrievna "Why sighest thou, mother mine?"

"So," murmured the other. "What wonderful clouds!"

"Thou art sorry for them, or what is it?"

If you are looking for "wayside cross" translation this is it; we briefly acknowledge the effort and the good intentions entailed and pass on with a smile of amusement. Dole and Wiener are in a different league.

Dole, Wiener, and Garnett have this much in common: in broad terms they have provided us with generally faithful versions of *War and Peace*, though these do contain a good number of minor errors. For instance, the first two do not seem to see any difference between the phrases “v dva chasa” and “vo vtorom chasu”; the third thinks that a brawny footman once picked up a carriage by lifting it at the back end, whereas what is meant is that he did this regularly, or could do it. When you look closely this kind of slip occurs with some frequency; Dole and Wiener seem to have one on every page, though Garnett has by now much improved her knowledge of the Russian language. There are other faults, too, in these early translations: a tendency to use too many Russian words and phrases in straight transliteration (Dole); elaborate circumlocution, as when Wiener says, “There was an odour of tobacco, and of effluvia betraying the presence of men” (where Dole says, “There was an odour of tobacco, and of *men*”); unnecessary demureness, as when the word “pregnant” is substituted by phrases to do with an unborn child or being “with child” (Dole, Garnett); archaic or unEnglish exclamations (Akh! Ekh! Ukh! and the like). All three are guilty of writing the occasional sentence, sometimes in dialogue, that has made the original sound convoluted, ugly, or pretentious. You never know which one of these translators will let you down or rise to a particular occasion. Take, for example these three variations of the same sentence (from Volume Two, Part One, Chapter One):

The brother and sisters quarrelled and disputed with each other for places next him, and vied with each other in bringing him his tea... (Dole)

His brother and his sisters quarrelled about the nearest place to him, taking it away from each other, and had altercations about who was to bring him the tea... (Wiener)

His brother and sisters quarrelled and snatched from one another the place nearest him and disputed over which was to bring him tea... (Garnett)

On this occasion Dole has the simplest version, though this would one day be greatly improved by the Maudes who say that they “struggled for the places nearest to him” and especially Dunnigan who catches just the right note with “tussled for a place beside him.” Edmonds, who often seems to rely on the Maudes or Garnett, chooses on this occasion to imitate Dole at some length before reverting to the Maudes: “His brother and sisters quarrelled and disputed with each other for the places nearest to him...”

So what is the verdict on the three versions that appeared between 1889 and 1904? Despite numerous errors and other drawbacks they are all worthy tributes to a great novel and they convey both its narrative content and a good deal of its thought in a persuasive and valuable manner. Dole has more errors than the other two—he is said to have located a cathedral on the field of Borodino<sup>4</sup>—but frequently hits upon a better version than that of his immediate successors. (His amusing phrase “the big wigs who directed opinion at the club” [2, One, 1] is way ahead of Wiener’s “some dignitaries ... who began to express their opinions in the club” and Garnett’s inaccurate “the leaders reappeared to give their opinion in the club”). He also appends a useful chapter-by-chapter plot summary. But in the last analysis it is Constance Garnett who takes the palm. Here as elsewhere she proves the most accomplished stylist, writing with what one commentator (on Turgenev) describes as “quite exceptional charm, verve and authenticity” (Waddington xxviii). Another refers to her “sensibility” and “delicacy of touch” (Gifford in Jones 21). She also makes her text more accessible by converting all the poods, arshins, versts, and other Russianisms into good English approximates. The two Americans must be set down as respectable translators, especially given the modest dictionaries and grammars at their disposal, but she was a gifted writer.

### The Age of Accuracy

Now, however, the watcher of these skies is about to see a new planet swim into his ken. The publication of a new, fifth, English translation of *War and Peace*, by Louise and Aylmer Maude, in 1928, was

to set the gold standard in this field. It was mainly a question of accuracy. Two better qualified translators could hardly be imagined. Louise Maude had been born in Russia and lived there for her first forty years; Aylmer had spent two and a half decades in the country. These were serious-minded, well educated, sensitive people. They knew Tolstoy closely and had many opportunities to talk to him about his work and ask questions. The pair formed an intimate, mutually critical, and supportive partnership. When they translated the master's works they did so with incomparable advantages which they put to good service. Their translation is accurate; error has been largely eliminated. There are still a few minor mistakes here and there, such as the mistranslation of "on speshil strelkov v les" as "he hurried the sharpshooters into the forest" instead of "he got them to dismount and go into the forest." (One, Two, 18) (the verb being the unusual "spéshit" rather than the more common (intransitive) "speshít"), but this kind of thing is rare to the point of negligibility. It is probably true to say that the Maudes made fewer mistakes of language and detail in the translation than Tolstoy did in the original Russian. With this version to hand no future translator was ever going to fall into serious error, just as the recent translators of Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin*, varied as they are, have ceased to make mistakes because they have the definitive (if quirky) Nabokov to rely on. Small wonder that Tolstoy gave their work his personal endorsement, even claiming that "Better translators... could not be invented."<sup>5</sup> The Maudes' cultivated version of *War and Peace*, although fast approaching its own centenary, is still read as a classic in its own right. Since then it has been succeeded by Rosemary Edmonds' equally reliable (if rather derivative) translation, which Penguin has used for nearly half a century, though it was slightly updated in 1978, and then by a sound American version, by Ann Dunnigan, in 1968. These three versions are comparable in their relative freedom from error, and all of them fully deserve the long prominence that they have enjoyed. However, they can hardly be said to be entirely fault-free; the ground is still open for some improvement.

For one thing, Edmonds and Dunnigan are too reliant on earlier versions, sometimes Garnett but usually the Maudes. Time after time they can be caught out re-using verbatim an unsatisfactory expression taken from a predecessor. Edmonds and Dunnigan both follow the Maudes in describing a wolf stopping in its tracks as being like someone "suffering from (a) quinsy" (2, Four, 4), but quinsy is "suppurative tonsillitis," a bad throat, whereas the better translation ought to go for the second meaning of *zhaba* which has to do with the chest pains of angina. All three translate the Russian saying, "Odna golova i bedna – tak odna." with the same awkward English expression, "One man, though undone, is but one" (3, One, 9). All three shout for stretchers (plural) on the battlefield when it is clear that one stretcher is being summoned for a single casualty, the Russian word *nosilki* being ambiguously plural in form. All of them claim that senior generals "led" the troops into a danger area several times when it is overtly stated that the top men "stood at the rear" (3, Two, 33 and 34); the men were clearly *sent* there (*vvodit* is the verb, not simply *vodit*). All of them translate "tashchit" as "to drag" when it clearly means "to carry" or perhaps "lug." All of them refer to the regiment fluttering "like a bird preening" (which is a fussy cleansing operation ("chistit' per'ia" in Russian) when all that is implied is a settling of feathers ("kak opravliaiushchiasia ptitsa") (1, Two, 2). All mistranslate "Ever since Vilna..." ("Eshche s Vilny...") as an "advance from Vilna [into Poland]." They all use the phrase "lower jaw" when "jaw" alone will do. They all translate the phrase "smotret' ispodlob'ya" as "to look at from under the brows" (where else?) when it means to look sullenly or furtively.

The business of Pierre's numerological calculations, linking his name with Napoleon's, clearly illustrates the point (3, One, 19). What happens here is almost adequately translated by Constance Garnett, as follows:

If the French alphabet is treated like the Hebrew system of enumeration, by which the first ten letters represent the units, and the next the tens, and so on the letters have the following values...

On the one hand she has had to supply the word "treated" to make sense of a poor sentence by Tolstoy ("Frantsuzskie bukvy, podobno evreiskomu chisloizobrazheniu..."), though "set against" might have been better; this changes things a little, but the meaning emerges. On the other, she has either not noticed, or has decided not to correct, a silly mistake on the author's part: only the first *nine* letters, 'a' to 'i,' represent the units, the tenth letter beginning the tens. But what she ends up with is at least clear and understandable.

Consider now the versions offered by the Maudes and followed by Edmonds and Dunnigan:

The French alphabet, written out with the same numerical values as the Hebrew, in which the first nine letters denote units [etc.], will have the following significance... (Maudes)

If the French alphabet is written out and given the same numerical values as the Hebrew, in which the first nine letters denote units [etc.], we get the following... (Edmonds)

The French alphabet, written out and given the same numerical values as the Hebrew, in which the first nine letters denote units [etc.], has the following significance...

What is surprising is how similar they are in all respects: correction, error, and confusion. The phrase "the Hebrew" can only presuppose the word "alphabet," which is wrong because we are not dealing here with Hebrew lettering. The French alphabet is clearly being set out alongside the Hebrew *numerical system* (as Garnett explains rather clumsily). (We would have said the Arabic numerical system, which in this context amounts to the same thing.) On the other hand, all three have spotted the error overlooked by Garnett (nine letters, not ten) and silently corrected it. Despite this necessary improvement the sentence that emerges makes little sense as it stands. It is curious that the two subsequent translators, faced with a tricky passage, seem to have followed their usually reliable mentors to the extent of blurring even further the author's already slightly obscure meaning. A single circumstance enables them all to get

away with it: there, sprawling across the page, are the alphabet and the numerical system laid out in parallel, telling their own story. Unusual typography catches the attention and spells out the meaning in an obvious way before the patiently reading eye has a chance to catch up with the detail, which happens to be wrong in more than one particular. Rosemary Edmonds and Ann Dunnigan could hardly have arrived at imitative versions like these by coincidence. Incidentally, the much-maligned "wayside-cross" translator, Nathan Dole, manages this rather better than most of his successors, referring to "The letters of the French alphabet, when disposed in accordance with the Hebrew enumeration..." which, for all its wordiness, is at least accurate. Wiener refers to "The French letters..." and by doing so reminds us how language changes over the generations—more of which below.

There are other faults to contend with. For instance, Dunnigan, the most recent translator, makes some serious mistakes over names. As if it were not bad enough to change the name of Natasha's dancing teacher from Iogel to Vogel (2, One, 12), she confuses Julie Karagin by referring to her several times as a member of the Kuragin family (2, Five, 5, and *passim*). But, in more general terms, there is one other shortcoming that besets not only the translations by Dunnigan and Edmonds, but also the immaculate Maudes' version: the English used is sometimes excessively prissy, awkward, or bookish, especially in the dialogue. You have the impression of language set down conscientiously by the highly educated rather than arising spontaneously from the behaviour and speech of ordinary people. "Bah! How they scurry," comes the cry, or "The devil skin your Emperor!"; "Told whom? Well, you know whom..."; "But how am I in fault?"; "Oh this German punctilio!"; "Yes, it is he"; "Can this be I?"; "I say, fellow countryman, will they set us down here?"; "In a word, it's Moscow. They want to make an end of it"; "That man kept his pen busy and didn't hop about." Phrases like "he went off in quest of fowls," or Natasha "fell to work," drag the text back in time, leaving us with a version that is more remote from present-day readers than Tolstoy is

from modern Russians. There must be better ways of saying things like: "The crushing weight of his arm fell impotent as though spellbound," "but it all chanced opportune," or "the resolute moment of the battle had come." Gifford's charge that the Maudes "have little sense of colloquial idiom" (Gifford in Jones 22) can be laid at the doors of Edmonds and Dunnigan. Perhaps Russian has changed less than English over the last 150 years, perhaps the previous translators never quite captured the right tone, but one way or another there is a dated ring to the existing translations and this is the main reason for writing a new one.

In any case language changes and, without worshipping modernity for its own sake, publishers recognize the need to accommodate new readers by using language more closely attuned to their way of speaking. Nowadays it is not possible to say things like "Andrey spent the evening with a few gay friends," "Natasha went about the house flushing," or "he passed out among the ranks," let alone "he exposed himself on the parade ground" or "he ejaculated with a grimace" without raising an inappropriate smile. Infelicities like these will edit themselves out of any new version. On the other hand, it is most important not to over-modernize. Tempting though it may be, you cannot leap in with anachronistic or recently popularized phrases like "in slow motion," "buzzword," "upbeat," "oddball," "hooliganism," "streetwise," "we've been rumbled" or "his cover was blown."

### Cavaliers versus Puritans

So, without denigrating the distinguished translations that already exist and have been enjoyed by millions, it does seem possible to remedy certain deficiencies that continue to gnaw away at plausibility and ease of reading. The next stage is to outline an overall strategy for retranslation.

In his Introduction to a recent new translation of *Don Quixote* John Rutherford divides translators into Cavaliers and Puritans. The Puritan is a stickler for exactitude; the Cavalier will not balk at the taking of some liberties. (We are not speaking of the devil-may-care audacity implied by "cavalier" with a small 'c'). Rutherford's intention was

to combine the virtues of both tendencies and avoid their vices. This approach seems eminently sensible. If anything, however, all the previous translations of *War and Peace* have erred too much on the Puritan side, literal fidelity being set at a higher premium than writing naturally in English. The reason is not far to seek. It lies in what Rutherford refers to as a "mistaken attitude of reverence for the original artist beside whom it's all too easy to feel like humble artisans who can only ever aspire to produce a pale shadow of the original... a self-fulfilling prediction." "Literary translators," he goes on, "must conquer these fears" (xv-xvi). This is good advice, though we must still proceed with caution.

Another way to look at this question is to imagine the way in which the average Russian reader works through *War and Peace* and to try to recapture something similar for the foreigner with his or her translated text. Tolstoy's literary style has many faults, and most of them have to be faithfully reproduced in order to avoid falsification, but by and large he is an easy read for a Russian (and not too difficult to translate). Stylistic angularities, shocks, and surprises are infrequent. The reading is smooth; the dialogue in particular is individualized but always natural. It seems most important to ensure the same kind of smooth reading, and varied but realistic-sounding dialogue, in any translation. As the examples above seem to show, this ought sometimes to involve a slight side-shift in the English to avoid administering more shocks of awkwardness to the English reader than the Russian would encounter.

The need for this to be done, albeit judiciously, is spelt out by another translator of a famous text. Terence Kilmartin, writing of Scott Moncrieff's version of Proust's *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, refers to his "tendency to translate French idioms and turns of speech literally, thus making them sound weirder, more outlandish, than they would to a French reader" (v). Any new translation of Tolstoy, while striving for accuracy, might benefit from being written in the spirit of Kilmartin and Rutherford. This seems a reasonable proposal in itself, but it also agrees with Tolstoy's own attitude toward translation, which was emphatic-

cally unPuritan. Aylmer Maude himself tells us that Tolstoy "made his translations freely and without care for pedantic accuracy." Not that we need Maude's confirmation of this Cavalier principle in the author of *War and Peace*; he provides us with innumerable instances of it in his own novel. For instance, on the second page he is happy to render "Quelle virulente sortie!" as "Kakoe gorischee napadenie!"; a few pages on he lazily renders "Je suis très aimable et caustique" as "Ia khoroshii boltun" (1, One, 1); elsewhere he will be satisfied with "Khorosho slozhena i svezhen"kaia" as a version of "Bien faite et la beauté du diable!" (2, Two, 20). The general character that permeates his own translations, from German as well as French, is latitudinarian. He seems more concerned to ensure that the translated passage sounds perfectly natural in its new language than that exactitude of rendition be insisted upon. This principle, not far from Rutherford and Kilmartin, should surely be followed in a new version of *War and Peace*.

This, however, will be to take issue with another contemporary retranslator of Tolstoy, or a pair of translators, Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, who have adopted the antithetical translation strategy for their new version of *Anna Karenina*, that of the Puritans. "To apply general notions of natural, idiomatic English and good prose style to Tolstoy's writing," they believe, "is to risk blunting the sharpness of its internal dialogization" (xvi). No one wants to distort Tolstoy, hide too many of his repetitions, correct too many of his mistakes, or subvert what Pevear and Volokhonsky refer to as "Tolstoy's style with its rejection of false elegancies and its readiness to admit any robust awkwardness" (xvii). But aside from these peculiarities, and that means for most of the novel, "the hallmark of Tolstoy's style is"—to quote one specialist—"lucidity" (Christian 163), which suggests that natural, idiomatic English might be the best possible vehicle for the story to travel in. Without going into too much detail we may simply assert that literal translations such as "What to do?"; "it was impossible to make her arousing of love again"; "Levin was in love precisely with the house" might sound slightly better if loosened a little. "Yes, my children will not be like that,"

might be better as "No, my children won't be like that." Certainly "Ay!" and "Ekhl!" ought by now to be rendered not by exact transliterations, as in Dole and Wiener, but by English equivalents. And the Russian habit of repeating information when answering a question affirmatively ("Vy uchilis" v Kieve?" "V Kieve") does not sound right when translated word for word into English. (We say, "yes"). Other fundamental differences between Russian and English—such as the Russian affection for participles/gerunds as opposed to the English preference for a sequence of simpler, finite, verbs—may also lead the non-Puritan translator to make some changes in sentence structure. Indeed, *all* the translators have done something along these lines; the charge is that they may not have gone quite far enough.

The ongoing debate between translation strategists is important, and it has a lot of life still in it. To be fair to Pevear and Volokhonsky they have Vladimir Nabokov and Andrew Marvell on their side, and their purity of spirit and intention is admirable in itself.

### How much French?

In this context, however, there is one special area where the new translator may also have to contemplate a decision that will court controversy and invite opprobrium from all Puritans: namely, to eliminate almost all the French that appears in the original. The first edition of the novel (1869) was written with long passages in French, though the author soon had second thoughts, and removed most of them in 1873. Some short passages remain, though previous translators have themselves cut these down to a minimum, sometimes supplying translations in footnotes. Nowadays it may seem justifiable to omit virtually all the French on the grounds that, although the earliest Russian and English editions could take a sound knowledge of that language for granted in ninety per cent of the readership, the reverse is now true—only a small percentage of readers will have enough French to cope with these passages. R. F. Christian claims that they "serve a legitimate purpose *as long as French is readily understood by the reader*. But

when that language ceases to be understood and there is a need for footnotes to explain the meaning, their purpose is no longer useful" (italics supplied; 161). Does the change matter? Sometimes it does, but there are several ways by which it is possible to indicate that a speaker is using one of the languages in preference to the other. It is not unusual for Tolstoy himself to say (in Russian) things like, "Since Pierre was speaking French at the time..." It is possible to make further use of this formula on those few occasions when a linguistic choice or shift has real significance. (The second paragraph on the opening page, for instance, could contain a brief indication that Anna Schéerer's opening words had been in French.) It remains true that one or two of the five hundred characters—Bilibin, for example—may lose some of their finesse because of this treatment, but there seems to be a net gain in following Tolstoy's lead by making the text more directly accessible and at the same time not loading it down with translations in footnotes. The very suggestion of this policy is guaranteed to raise hackles at any Tolstoy symposium, but there is no real need for such hostility. In the first place, Tolstoy's own words on the subject give us a clear indication of his revised attitude toward the use of French within a Russian novel. Asking himself the obvious question, "Why in my book do Russians as well as Frenchmen sometimes speak Russian and sometimes French?" he admits to his own regrets: "I was involuntarily carried away to an unnecessary extent by the form in which they expressed their French way of thought" (Maude/Tolstoy 1983, 1308). He then proceeded to excise virtually all of the French, and wrote to a friend, "I was sometimes sorry about doing away with the French, but on the whole I think it is better without it."<sup>6</sup> More significantly for our present purposes, he thoroughly endorsed the Maudes' methods of translation, and the Puritans have either not noticed or do not remember that this canonical version contains almost no French at all.

### Notes

1. The author has been unable to locate one other translation, by A. Kropotkin, (ed W. Somerset

Maugham, illustrated by J. Whitman [Philadelphia: Winston, 1949]). Since this edition contains only 741 pages, not much more than half the number needed by the other, full translations, Kropotkin's seems to be an incomplete version.

2. Matthew Arnold, "Count Leo Tolstoi," 1887, *Essays in Criticism*, second series, 1888, in Gifford 62.

3. Henry Gifford, "On Translating Tolstoy," in Jones 20.

4. This claim was made by a reviewer of the Everyman edition. See Maude 1930, 459.

5. Maude/Tolstoy 1933, vol.3, first page of the supplementary information, "The Maude Tolstoy," following p 563.

6. Letter to N. N. Strakhov, 22 June 1873, quoted in R. F. Christian, *op cit*, p 159.

### Works cited

Cervantes, Miguel. *Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote de La Mancha*. Trans., introduction and notes by John Rutherford. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 2000.

Christian, R. F. *Tolstoy's "War and Peace": A Study*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962.

Davis, Frantz Davidovitch. *A Nest of Hereditary Legislators* by Ivan S. Tourguenieff. London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., Ltd., 1914.

Gifford, Henry, ed. *Leo Tolstoy, Penguin Critical Anthologies*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971.

Jones, Malcolm, ed. *New Essays on Tolstoy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

Maude, Aylmer. *The Life of Tolstoy: First Fifty Years*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930.

Proust, Marcel. *In Search of Lost Time, I, Swans Way*. Trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kil-

martin. Rev., D. J. Enright. London: Vintage, Random House, 1992.

Kropotkin, A. *War and Peace*. Ed. W. Somerset Maugham, illustrated J. Whitman. Philadelphia: Winston, 1949

Tolstoy, Leo. *War and Peace*. Trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude. London: Oxford University Press, 1933.

Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*. Trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Anna Karenina*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 2000.

Turgenev, Ivan. *Fathers and Children*. Ed. Patrick Waddington. London: Everyman, 1997.

---

## Two More Views on the Pevear-Volokhonsky Translation of *Anna Karenina*

In last year's *TSJ*, we published a review essay by Hugh McLean, comparing the new Pevear/Volokhonsky translation of *Anna Karenina* to six previous translations still in print (see "Which English *Anna*?", *TSJ* XIII [2001]: 38-48). That essay prompted two other evaluations by Carol Flath and Richard Sheldon of the new translation, and a response to them from Hugh McLean.

---

## Anna Karenina: Translation, Literalism, and the Life of Art\*

Carol Flath

Duke University

---

Pevear/Volokhonsky's meticulous versions of Russian classics carry on the tradition of Vladimir Nabokov's unforgettable, militantly literal translation of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*. Nabokov famously proclaimed that the loftiest mission for a translation was to serve as a "pony" to help readers understand the text in the original language (1992, 134). In his comparison, published in *Tolstoy Studies Journal* last year, of the translation with earlier ones still in print, Hugh McLean's examples of P/V's violation of their own principle of "preserving the 'robust awkwardness' of Tolstoy's style" (HM 40) call into question the very validity of this approach. It seems timely to examine the broader implications of a strategy of literalism as