

with reason.) In Sekirin's translation of the Tolstoy it undergoes yet another expansion: "In the scheme of the world, a person is no more than a pine cone, or a weak herb, or a bit of swamp grass, but he is a grass which possesses some intellect" (190).

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated instance of what the Russians call *otsebiatina*, that is, ad-libbing on the part of the translator. It is rampant. For example, the 29 January quotation from Confucius, mentioned above, states that one may attain wisdom in three ways, the second way, being "the way of imitation." "This is the easiest and least satisfying way," reads the English text (41), but there is no "least satisfying" in Tolstoy. In the 21 June quotation from Confucius the analogous passage in Tolstoy reads: "podrazhaniem—eto samyi legkii [put']" (by imitation—this is the easiest way). The English has: "by being influenced by someone or following someone; this is the easiest way." The cumulative effect is to make the translation sound even more wordy, ponderous, and sententious than the original.

But there is another problem: the English text is far from complete. Granted, the work is repetitive, but the reader is entitled to know that whole selections—occasionally quite lengthy selections—are missing from most days. The day containing the Pascal quotation, for instance, contains a quotation from Marcus Aurelius; it is missing in the translation. In fact, two paragraphs of the Pascal translation are missing as well. I suspect that it is the editors who are responsible for the decision to make the cuts. They may have wanted to limit each day to a single page (though selections that would have fit are also cut). In any case, the translator could have used his introduction to mention that the text is abridged. He does after all mention the fact that he has not included the weekly stories Tolstoy wrote or edited for Sunday reading.

1. Sekirin makes consistent use of the word "intellect" to translate Tolstoy's *razum* and *razumenie*, "reason." English readers will thus come away from his epistemologically oriented dicta with a view significantly different from that of Russian readers.

Tolstoy, I still maintain, would have been pleased to see an English-language edition of the *Circle of Reading*: he wanted his words to be available to the people, to all peoples. But it is a pity the translation gives us more words than he wrote when it pads and fewer than he wrote when it cuts.

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Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and Bernard Rose's "Anna Karenina": And Never the Twain Shall Meet?

If you love Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, stay away from Bernard Rose's new lavish film production of the novel. The best thing to be said for the film, billed as the first Western movie to be totally filmed in post-Soviet Russia, is the visual beauty of the setting. An Impressionist-like, swirling, blinding blizzard; the powerful silence of the broad expanses of Russia's countryside; a lone train chugging along between wide-open fields and a horizon painted in patches of twilight pastels and deepening darkness—these are a few of the memorable moments of Bernard Rose's film.

But even here, the film disappoints. It makes a point of emphasizing the historical details of clothing, of interiors, of street life. It inserts the years during which various scenes of the film are supposed to be taking place. These dates are from the early 1880s, although no explanation that might make sense to the film's internal logic is given for Rose's decision. This is puzzling since Tolstoy had finished writing *Anna Karenina* by 1877.

With the exception of Sean Bean, whose interpretation of Vronsky is sensitive, the acting does little justice to Tolstoy's novel. To this viewer, it would be helpful to eliminate the actors altogether, with the exception of Bean, in order to give readers of the novel the cinematic equivalent of the "minus one" recordings for musicians—the

orchestra is recorded so that the pianist can practice with the benefit of an orchestra. Here, the readers of the expanses of the flat Russian landscape, the gorgeous colors of Russian twilight light. Yet readers, with their own imagination, could keep alive the vitality of Tolstoy's characters. In this viewer's opinion, that is the only way to salvage this disastrous film.

Lest readers of this review suspect that a Russian literature purist is merely trashing any film adaptation of a Russian classic, let me assure them that that is not the case. I saw the film with someone who had never read the novel and who said that this was a terrible film as a film. Moreover, I can highly recommend other Western adaptations of Russian literary classics, such as Louis Malle's and Andre Gregory's "Vanya on 42nd Street," which captured the soul and essence of Chekhov's play, "Uncle Vanya."

In contrast to "Anna Karenina," here was a film that had a minimum of props and no period costumes. The bare-bones production was not overwhelmed by things, as is Bernard Rose's "Anna Karenina." It is, indeed, a shame that whether implicitly or explicitly, Bernard Rose's "Anna Karenina" reflects the West's—and Russia's—current obsession with material wealth. It is as if this film, like many of the West's and Russia's present-day values, believes that human beings don't matter, that as long as you get the externals right, everything will fall into place.

The great irony is that the sheer brilliance of Tolstoy's novel, the passionate vitality of his human characters as they move and live and change, is the very thing that is missing in the pale cardboard-like screen versions of Anna, Levin, Kitty, Stiva, and most other characters that inhabit the film. It is Tolstoy's genius alone that accounts for the fact that every time I read the novel, more than is my experience with any other novel that I have ever read, I think, against all laws of logic, that maybe this time, the novel will end differently. I believe that this reaction stems from the fact that Tolstoy created characters whose texture on the page is three-dimensional. The characters in the novel are in constant flux, and we, the readers, sense their constant state of becoming,

moving, and breathing.

In the novel, Tolstoy is almost like a precursor to Carlo de Palma and other modern cinematographers with hand-held cameras, who offer multiple perspectives and angles of vision on scenes and characters. In the novel, we observe the same scene through the thoughts of the character who might be thinking one thing and saying another, through the eyes of several different characters, through the eyes of the narrator, and even through the eyes of a dog. The result is a state of life in constant motion. The result is the quality that perhaps accounted for what is sometimes called the "cinematic" feel of Tolstoy's novels.

It is that much sadder that the new film version of "Anna Karenina" captures little of the vitality of particular human beings in their daily encounters with the complexities of life. It is as if Bernard Rose was so conscious of "doing a classic" that he lost sight of developing the internal psychological motivations of the particular human beings whose fates he is following.

One of Tolstoy's major issues in the novel was that it is not for human beings to judge other human beings' sins. According to Tolstoy, it is for God, not society, to judge Anna's transgression of moral law. In the novel, Tolstoy the moralist, who had to punish Anna, constantly battled with Tolstoy the novelist, whose Anna kept growing more attractive and appealing with every one of the eight drafts that he wrote of *Anna Karenina*. In the film we sense neither the magnificence of the spontaneous beautiful woman, nor do we sense the morality tale aspect of the novel. The Anna Karenina of the novel is not cute; she would never wear bangs, as Sophie Marceau's Anna does in the film. Tolstoy's Anna is noble, larger than life, passionate, and grand.

Anna is, at the beginning of the novel, the attempted reconciler of her brother Stiva's marriage problems. Tolstoy thus structurally contrasts her role of reconciler to her later role of destroyer of a marriage. To give Bernard Rose his due, a several-hundred-page novel cannot be crammed into a two-hour film. Rose chose to cut the reconciler scene in favor of a scene in which Kitty and Levin, the other couple whose fate we follow, see

and speak to one another.

I am sorry that this film does not cohere. On the other hand, perhaps this failed version will inspire a new team to undertake another film version of the novel. As Louis Malle and Andre Gregory demonstrated in "Vanya on 42nd Street," on the stage of a decaying Manhattan theatre in acute disrepair, one does not have to travel thousands of miles to Russia in order to depict the Russian soul. One does not have to spend millions of dollars on creating a Russian look. All one has to do is search within, intensely and intensively, in order to capture the meaning of certain human lives. And this is, after all, what Tolstoy himself, through his mouthpiece Levin, urged the readers of *Anna Karenina* to do—to reject the false external glitz and glamour of society, and to seek meaning in the quiet, simple spiritual truths and values of a deeply examined life.

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A Duet in Passion and Suffering: Shared Experience's Anna Karenina. Adapted from Leo Tolstoy's novel by Helen Edmundson, directed by Nancy Meckler. (World premiere, January 30, 1992.) Performed at the Next Wave Festival, Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, November 11-14, 1998.

For almost 25 years, Shared Experience has used its stage in London's Soho Laundry to turn great novels, such as *Anna Karenina*, *Jane Eyre*, or *Mill on the Floss*, into theatre performances. While the concept of using minimal cast and props has been successfully practiced by other European troops, such as the Shakespeare Company in Germany, the devotion to adapting novels

for the stage by these means appears to be the provenance of Shared Experience, a group committed to "creating theater which goes beyond the everyday, giving form to the hidden world of emotion and imagination." Their work has received international recognition and acclaim with honours such as the Peter Brook Empty Space Award in 1995, and a Prudential Arts Award nomination in 1993 for Director Nancy Meckler's contribution to innovation and creativity in British Theatre. The current production of *Anna Karenina* has been named Best Touring Show at the Martini/TMA Awards in 1993 and Outstanding Theatrical Event, Time Out Awards, 1992.

The production features eight actors, each playing multiple roles, and limited props—a few chairs, suitcases, robes, and capes, in minimalist sets. Teresa Banham and Richard Hope, both experienced and past members of the Royal Shakespeare company, play Anna and Levin, respectively, while Derek Riddell, as a Vronsky with piercing bright eyes, turns in a credible performance.

Helen Edmundson, the author of the stage adaptation, chose to make Anna and Levin the focus of the dramatic action. The two characters also act as narrators and guides to the audience. Edmundson, who also adapted *War and Peace* and *The Mill on the Floss*, explains in the program notes that her choice to invent a relationship between Anna and Levin beyond what is in the novel came about in the process of working through the text: "Without Levin, *Anna Karenina* is a love story, extraordinary and dark, but essentially a love story. With Levin, it becomes something great."

The curtain opens on an almost empty stage. A small wooden box with an icon and a few candle stumps is the only visible object. Two characters, Anna and Levin, each with a suitcase in hand, walk onto the stage, deeply preoccupied, until they notice each other. Their dialogue continues throughout the play. If one of them is participating in the main action, the other sits and quietly observes from a corner. They frequently ask each other, "Where are you now?" or, like a narrator, supply the audience with information