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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*

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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 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 Schérer'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."[6] 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.

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applied to Tolstoy's work, and possibly to literary art as a whole.

The ubiquitous Mikhail Bakhtin is quoted in Pevear's introductory material as an authority on Tolstoy's "sharp internal dialogism": "Tolstoy is never detached or static in relation to his material, and is "constantly engaged in an internal dispute with the world he is describing and with the reader for whom he is describing it"(P/V, x). Bakhtin's ideas are of course intrinsically interesting, although any connection between this dialogism and the specifics of the translation strategy is left implicit.[1] We are especially intrigued by a statement by the author himself, quoted in the Introduction. Tolstoy claims that in his works:

> [E]ach idea, expressed separately in words, loses its meaning, is enormously impoverished when removed from the network around it. This network itself is not made up of ideas. . . but of something else, and it is absolutely impossible to express the substance of the network directly in words: it can be done only indirectly. . . (P/V, xv-xvi)

Given Pevear's judgment that this statement is Tolstoy's "most perfect definition of his artistic practice," it does beg the question: *does the word-for-word approach serve this particular author, for whom the "essence of things" can be accessed only indirectly?* Readers bolder than I may naturally proceed to a more challenging question: How is Tolstoy different in this respect from any great author? All artists, after all, are "raising essences through indirection."[2]

While it is true, as McLean proves, that Pevear and Volokhonsky's translation falls short of perfect literalism, it does stand out for its conservative approach to the challenges of interpretation. The translators cling to the surface features of the original. This approach has certain advantages. For example, it draws the reader's attention to the author's relentless moralism. Although the descriptive passages can be notoriously prolonged and intricate, when turning to questions of right and wrong, Tolstoy writes simply, repeating key words in such a way that the reader can have no doubt as to his message. McLean presents numerous examples in which by smoothing a rough original wording P/V miss an important emphasis. On the other hand, a reading of a multitude of key, short passages suggests that in many cases they convey the moral force of such passages more closely than the others. Stiva Oblonsky, dreading the upcoming confrontation with his wife, moans, in Pevear-Volokhonsky, "I'm the guilty one in it all—guilty, and yet not guilty" (2). Edmonds opts for "I am to blame ... I am to blame and yet I am not to blame" (14). Garnett: "all my fault—all my fault, though I'm not to blame"(4). Magarshack takes a similar approach. Tolstoy of course wrote *"guilt... guilt ... not guilty"* [*vinoi, . . . vinoi. . . ne vinovat*] (*PSS* 18: 4). Tolstoy is an author who uses plain but powerful words, over and over, when he wants to convey something important: "big," "small," "good," "bad," "did not know," "understood," etc. Most translators avoid the bluntness of this language in English and upgrade it to their own taste, in the interests of fluency.[3] Occasionally P/V's careful scrutiny of the original wording yields an important correction of what might be considered errors in preceding versions.[4] One such improvement comes in the unforgettable steeplechase scene where Vronsky breaks his mare's back. From the ground, where she lay, "breathing heavily and making vain attempts to rise with her slender, sweaty neck, fluttering at his feet like a wounded bird" (P/V, 199), Frou Frou looked *up* at Vronsky "with her lovely eye" (P/V, 200) [*my emphasis*]. It is important to Tolstoy that the reader picture the horse from Vronsky's perspective, and naturally, since her head is positioned sideways to him, he sees only one of her eyes. Garnett, for example ("exquisite eyes" [228]), and Edmonds ("beautiful eyes" [218]—also Magarshack, 210, and Maude, 182) just can't stand the awkwardness of the English singular, and as a result diminish the subtle match between Tolstoy's language and the physical world he is depicting. P/V's literalism also serves them well when dealing with the abstract, particularly the intellectual discussions in which the relation between words and physical objects is not important. Their translations of the conversations between Levin and his older brother Sergei Koznyshev, for example, tend to be meticulous and reliable. A final advantage of P/V's literal approach is the benefit to students of the Russian language.

Literalism does have its disadvantages, however. For example, it may too easily justify carelessness, haste, or passivity in the translator. It is, after all, easier to transfer the lexical items into the target language, retaining the original grammar and word order, than it is to effect a wholesale transformation of the work of art into the new literary context (the target culture). The latter approach entails an ongoing and *active* process of interpretation; true interpreters (and my ideal translator is an agent of hermeneutics)[5] must attain a deeper awareness of what remains unspoken in the original text, and it is here that the art of a work of literature must lie. The primary danger of the literal approach is its potential to serve the language itself rather than the art. I mean this in the most direct sense. A word-for-word translation may deprive the reader of the opportunity to discover profound meanings underlying the surface of the text—that is, the essence of the art—and may rather direct our attention to curious and exotic features of the Russian language itself. In other words, what might be an advantage to the student of Russian may get in the way of the aesthetics. The P/V translation yields numerous examples. Here we are reminded of the Tolstoy statement with which all four of us—the author, the translators, the translation critic, and you, my patient reader—began: *"it is absolutely impossible to express the substance of this network directly in words. . ."* If Tolstoy is most concerned with what *cannot* be said, why should the translators be so fixated on the verbal *matter*—itself devoid of life?[6] The work of art, after all, gains its life from interpretation: the ongoing process of recovery by successive generations of readers of the hidden impulses that drove its creation.

Whether or not P/V's strategy of literalism succeeds depends on several important factors such as its suitability to the works of this particular author; the translators' ability to sustain the approach in a systematic and convincing way—and McLean has cast this into doubt; and the degree to which the literalism serves the art itself instead of some other master. For clarification, I will demonstrate selected features of Russian language usage that differ from those of English and therefore sound alien or uncomfortable in translation in ways that they do not in Russian, and then illustrate the effects of P/V's decision to translate such features literally. In spite of the occasional monstrous and convoluted sentence, Tolstoy is the supreme master of language that is precise and fluent at the same time. The best way to appreciate this "seer of the flesh" is to turn oneself over to the world of the novel, unimpeded by any illusion that it might not be real (what we in the business used to call the "suspension of disbelief"). For this to work, the language, which is the conduit into this fictional world, must function unnoticed. Thus my criticism of the P/V translation addresses not only its treatment of individual word choices, but also its overall rationale for this *particular* author.

First, then, let's look at some significant differences in language structure:

The *VERB SYSTEM*. English offers more choices of verb tenses than Russian. The situation is complicated when the sentence involves an absent form of the copula ("to be"), required in English but unnecessary in Russian—redundantly so when embedded in a predicative adjective. The English "you're unfair" (P/V, 236) represents a choice that had to be made by the translator, who might have with equal justification elected to say "you're being unfair"—which might have been my decision in context. The former option, though it does better reflect the *grammatical structure* of the original *"Vy nespravedlivy"* (*PSS* 18: 249), cannot be said to exhaust the options even for the literalist, and in fact may distract the reader, by its very awkwardness, from the unspoken psychological drama taking place during this important scene. It is this confrontation between Kitty and Varenka that brings Part II to a close and marks Kitty's recovery from her broken heart.

Similar arguments can be made for translation choices related to tenses in reported speech; to what we call the subjunctive; and to usage of the Russian imperfective or perfective aspect—easily lost between languages, simply because that feature doesn't exist in the English verb system. For example, on P/V 25: "Levin knew that his older brother had little interest in farming and that he asked about it only as a concession to him, and therefore he answered only about the sales of wheat and about money." Here the point is not simply that his answer concerned only wheat and money, but also that he wanted to *get the answer over with* as soon as possible. Compare Rosemary Edmonds: "he just made a mention of money matters" (38). This is most emphatically not a literal translation; she has neglected the wheat, for example, and Tolstoy did write "answered" (*otvetil*; *PSS* 18: 29), but her version nevertheless could be considered equally close to the essence of the matter, the life of the work of art. The Russian perfective verb has a number of potential meanings, based on context, and it is not always easy to choose among them. The wording chosen, however, represents an *interpretation* of the original meaning.

Some verbs used commonly in English are rare in Russian. The verb "to have" in English, for example, tends not to be used in relation to physical objects in Russian; in expressions of possession, often the thing that appears in the object position in English serves as the subject in Russian. Such expressions almost always appear together with a prepositional phrase indicating location: "in whose head there still remained room enough for. . ." (P/V, 25) can without violation of good style *or* literalism be translated "who still had room in his head for. . ." In English, we "wear" or "have on" clothing. In Russian, the clothing is on the person: "She felt that everything on her must of itself be good and graceful" (P/V, 77) can equally accurately be translated as "everything she wore." Of all our translators, only Rosemary Edmonds dares to be fluent here (91). Kitty goes to bed after rejecting Levin's marriage proposal, and meanwhile, write P/V, "Just then, downstairs in the prince's small study, one of those so often repeated scenes was taking place between the parents over their favorite daughter." The only virtue of this cumbersome phrase is that it literally reproduces the structure and vocabulary of the Russian. It does not, however, reflect the author's intent or his style, which is not at all awkward in the original. Russian readers are quite comfortable with this structure, not to mention such *inserted before the verb verbal adjectives* as this bizarre "so often repeated." The fact is, Kitty's parents *were having a scene*, as they often did, and it concerned their daughter. They were down in the prince's study *having an argument* about their daughter. That's all.

This latter feature of the Russian language—*the dreaded by all students verbal adjective sandwich*—causes P/V and the reader no end of pointless agony: "like a fresh, just received wound" (172); "the arisen circumstance" (144)— echoing the recently arisen "newly arisen circumstance" (142); "the immanent speech" (144); "good, too-long inactive little horse" (156); "a flying bird appeared" (164); "a fresh, just-received wound" (172); and one of my favourites, the "chilled grey on the left" (141) who was being held back with difficulty by the Tartar coachman outside Princess Betsy's salon late on a winter night (149). For comparison, consider Rosemary Edmonds' solution: "the near grey horse, which had grown restive with the cold" (157). Edmonds' wording entailed a wholesale transformation of the original syntax, but it leads the reader unobtrusively into Tolstoy's sensual fictional universe. The physical world in Tolstoy's work, all of it, is morally charged. The horse and the coachmen are cold because they have had to wait for Anna and Vronsky, who, crazed with desire for each other, oblivious to the impression they are making on others outside as well as inside the salon, are hurtling inexorably forward to their eternal damnation. That is one hell of a cold horse; it is not "a chilled grey."

Another verbal challenge is associated with the feature of transitivity, which in Russian is strongly marked lexically or grammatically. In Russian, "Stepan Arkadych started telling" (P/V, 65). In English you simply must say "started telling his story." That's just the way the Russian language works, and insisting on reproducing that in English does violence to the art while drawing the reader's attention elsewhere. This ability of Russian to leave an object implicit applies in other grammatical categories as well. Inflection (declension and conjugation) makes more lexical omissions possible. Referents required in English are quite unambiguously present, though not in so many words, in the

Russian. English usually must use a pronoun placeholder such as "one" or the referent noun after an adjective even where there is no noun present in the Russian. "And how are all yours?" (P/V, 121) does not reflect the original Russian any more accurately than "How are all your children?" or even "how are the children?" (Magarshack, 134). "Just" or "only" [*tol'ko*] might mean "just now," even if the "now" does not appear (P/V, 101). Conversely, some Russian expressions can be left out with impunity.[8] One of these is the ubiquitous "*kakoi-to*" "some kind of," which, if you interpret it as a stand-in for the English indefinite article (which does not exist in Russian), can easily and gracefully shrink down to nothing: "Some unpleasant feeling" (P/V, 104) is not essentially different from "an unpleasant feeling." Russian nouns are used to being alone; English ones are not. The English article attached, by inertia, to the translation of a Russian noun may be also be replaced without sacrificing "literalness" by a possessive pronoun. For example, "get *his* gun ready" can be an acceptable alternative to the literal "prepare a gun" (P/V, 167).

IMPERSONAL EXPRESSIONS: Of these we will select just one. The expression "*chto delat'*" ["what to do"] is very powerful in Russian history and culture for reasons we will not go into now. Traditionally it is translated "what is to be done," but there are other acceptable alternatives. P/V, logically, choose "what to do" early in the novel, but during its frequent repetitions later in the novel, they occasionally opt for fluency (e.g., "What's to be done?" [137]). This inconsistency nullifies the significance of the more awkward, though initially refreshing, literal version.

Other fruitful areas for comparison, including that of repetition, which is well treated by McLean, include verbal adjectives and adverbs, word order, and verbs of motion. But for now, with some relief, we will turn to the relatively simple question of *VOCABULARY* and *IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS*. Russian fortunately does not have the vast number of "false friends" that can so easily derail the amateur reader of, say, French, but there are some exceptions such as *simpatichna*, for example, which Tolstoy likes and which tends to mean "nice," rather than "sympathetic" (*PSS* 18: 314; see P/V, 297, "sympathetic"). Sometimes the dictionary entry does not cover the real range of possible meanings. Although indeed "*khotela*" means "she wanted," in context it can mean "she tried to" (compare P/V, 77); "*odnako*" means "however," but it might mean signify something like "by the way," or a simple change of subject. Garnett for example simply leaves it out of her translation of what P/V provide as "However, thank God Stiva has spent a long time in Dolly's boudoir" (74), and Magarshack, Maude, and Edmonds signal the change of subject with a simple "well." *Schastlivyi* can mean either happy or lucky. "Much," the grammatically comforting friend of the unfluent foreigner, does indeed correspond to the Russian "*mnogo*," but "took a lot of time" is almost always a better translation than "it took much time" (P/V, 203). Kitty's "*pravdivye glaza*" (*PSS* 18: 292) are not necessarily "truthful" (P/V, 277); they might be guileless, or innocent, or honest; here I think Tolstoy's point is that Kitty has done no wrong. An "*umnaia khoziaika*" (*PSS* 18: 148) may be intelligent (P/V, 140) (the first dictionary meaning), but clever or skilful is an equally valid alternative. The point is that Princess Betsy is a clever hostess who knows how to manage a conversation. Some word choices, driven by zealous literalism, are simply bad: "strengthlessly" (P/V, 82), for example, instead of "weakly" or "listlessly," or, given the theme of the novel, "impotently." "Cheerfulest" is a word that I think does not exist in English (P/V, 159). There are no "beadles" (P/V, 138) in Russia, although there are numerous varieties of lower church officials. *Narod* does mean people (P/V, 64) or folk, but a native speaker of Russian would not bat an eye if it were used, as here, to signify a crowd. And while we're on the subject of people, it is not at all inaccurate, even in gender-sensitive times, given the proper nineteenth-century Russian context, to translate the word *liudi* (the plural of *chelovek*: man or person) as "men." Levin, pondering the marriage proposal he is about to make, ponders whether Kitty could ever love someone like him. He had heard that women often loved plain, ordinary men; "people" (P/V, 26), however accurate in a strictly literal sense, is misleading and distracting in the context. Kitty's ability to love people in general is not in question here, on the eve of the wedding proposal. (I still recall the shock I experienced in graduate school when, earnestly taking my first steps through Tolstoy's Russian, I encountered the phrase "*molodye liudi i zhenshchiny.*")

At this point I suggest we pause to reflect on the question of "error." Like Willis Barnstone, I do not believe that simple mistakes should serve as the sole pretext to condemn a translation, and have delayed this question to its proper place in my analysis of what is a very careful, valuable, and accurate translation. Still, P/V do occasionally make what some people might identify as mistakes. This usually occurs when the dictionary meaning of the word gets in the way of the context. Tolstoy, for example, occasionally will present substandard speech in dialogue. When Levin stops in to rest at the home of a hard-working peasant family, he engages in conversation with the patriarch about the way the household is run.

> "*Chego zhe babenkam delat'? Vynesut kuchki na dorogu, a telega pod'edet. . . .*"
> [and] "*Nashe delo muzhitskoe. My do vssego sami. Plokh—i von; i svoimi upravimsia.*" (*PSS* 18: 343-344)
> P/V: "Don't the womenfolk need work? They carry the piles to the road, and the cart drives up." . . . "That's between muzhiks. We can make do on our own. Bad—work—out you go! We'll manage." (325)

This jumble of earnest literalisms leaves the reader bewildered. All well and good, but what is this fellow actually *saying*? The point is not that the women need work, but that the work is not hard for the women. All they have to do is carry the piles out to the road. . . . And as for those "muzhiks," the point is that we're muzhiks here, or, as Edmonds puts it, "we're all peasants together" (348) and therefore can manage just fine.

At times the translators add a nuance based on the root meaning of a vocabulary item and before they know it their reader is down a garden path. For example, in some languages, tears and sweat can be oily (a perfectly acceptable Japanese expression, for example, is "oily sweat" [*abura ase*]). Stiva's "*maslenye*" (*PSS* 18: 181) (oily) eyes are simply moist, not "unctuous" (P/V, 172). The devious connotations of this English adjective are inappropriate for Stiva's open, guileless character. A more run-of-the mill problem involves the need to choose from two valid meanings of the original word: "The conversation, disrupted by [Anna's] arrival, began to waver again like a flame being blown out" (*Razgovor, perebityi priezdom, opiat' zamotalsia, kak ogon' zaduvaemoi lampy* [*PSS* 18: 145]). Quite the contrary: the conversation flickered again into life (compare Edmonds and the others). Given the obsessive flame metaphors associated with Anna, this is a key image. P/V have chosen the first dictionary meaning of this word, but, in endearing Russian fashion, it can also mean its opposite.[9] In a case like this, the tie-breaker is the context, especially the "*opiat'*" (again).

Each new translation rejuvenates a great work of art. The P/V translation may be of most value to readers interested in the grammatical and lexical features of the Russian language. For the student of Russian, theirs will probably offer the most value as a "pony." I concur with McLean's judgment in including Garnett and Edmonds in the list of finalists for best translation. Of these three, my own preference is for Edmonds' fine work of English literature, and I sincerely hope that Penguin—the publisher of the P/V version—will keep it in print.

Notes

*Sincere thanks to Edna Andrews, Jehanne Gheith, and Amey Miller, for their valuable comments.

1. The length of the novel made a complete analysis impractical, but I was able to examine about half the text of the novel in the original and four translations, using readily available editions: Maude/Gibian (Norton, 1970), Garnett (Modern Library, 1993), Edmonds

(Penguin, 1954), and Magarshack (Signet, 1961). The editions I consulted are slightly, but for our purposes not significantly different from those cited in McLean's review. [Sincere apologies to Richard Sheldon that I was unable to obtain a copy of his review in time to cite it in this essay.]

2. By the way, two excellent studies demonstrate the rich potential of a Bakhtinian analysis of translation practice: May's *The Translator in the Text* and Robinson's brilliant *The Translator's Turn.*

3. I am indebted to Jehanne Gheith for raising this question, in this deft wording.

4. "Fluency" is the villain for such iconoclastic and stimulating writers as Venuti and Robinson.

5. For a really insightful discussion of the problem of translation "error," see Barnstone. In Barnstone's view, simple (and infrequent) mistakes, even what Nabokov calls "howlers," may not necessarily be sufficient to condemn a translation. What is important is the translation's function as art in the new context.

6. Eco's recent book is a useful, though not indispensable, reference here. The term "true interpreter" sidled into my text from the title of Louis Kelly's classic *linguistic* treatment of translation theory (now sadly out of print).

7. Not to mention Tolstoy's master theme: the separation of spirit from flesh that is caused by immoral action. From here we can move laterally to Nabokov, who famously describes translation as an act of murder: "What is translation? On a platter / A poet's pale and glaring head, / A parrot's screech, a monkey's chatter/ And profanation of the dead" (1981, 9). In the "Problems of Translation" essay, Nabokov likens translation to the process of dissection (as a lepidopterist, he knows very well that the object of such a process must be dead).

8. This is a sufficiently significant phenomenon to have inspired an earnest 157-page book which consists of an alphabetical listing of Russian words that can be left out of English sentences (Geld).

9. Ozhegov 199: zadut' [zaduvat']. 1. *chto*: Dunuv, pogasit'. . . . 2. *chto*. razzech, privesti v dejstvie. The key issue here, however, is not the lexical oddities of the Russian language, but meaning of the phrase *in context.*

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More Problems in English Translations of Tolstoy

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In 1982, Professor Edgar H. Lehrman published an article in which he analyzed the four English translations of *War and Peace* which were then in print (Lehrman 1982). The translators were Constance Garnett (1904), Aylmer and Louise Maude (1922-1923), Rosemary Edmonds (1957) and Ann Dunnigan (1968). In the course of his analysis, Professor Lehrman points out that all four translators have a tendency not to retain the repetitions, which are a hallmark of Tolstoy's style. On the whole, however, he concludes that all four, despite various mistakes, are quite serviceable. He expresses the hope that someone will pick one of them and go over it line by line to produce a translation free of mistakes.

It is certainly true that the Maudes' translation of *War and Peace* is superb. It is to be regretted, however, that the new version of that translation, supposedly adapted to American usage, still says of Natasha: "She valued the company of those to whom she could come striding disheveled from the nursery in her dressing gown, and with joyful face show a yellow instead of a green stain on baby's napkin. . ." (1022).

The retention of the English term "napkin" blunts the emotional impact of this scene—a scene which carries a symbolic force vital to the novel as a whole. Not only does the word "diaper" evoke birth and family life, but it also suggests the transformation of Natasha from vivacious, intuitive young woman to mother and dowdy matron.

In 1997, I published a comparison of seven English translations of *Anna Karenina*. The original Russian version of the novel first appeared in serial form between 1873 and 1877. The first English translations of it were evidently made from French versions, with questionable results. One of the earliest translators was N. H. Dole (New York, 1886), whose version I have not been able to find. Aylmer Maude has written a scathing analysis of the numerous mistakes in Dole's translation of *War and Peace* (1929, 456-67).

In my article, I chose to conduct the examination by studying four focal points in *Anna Karenina*: the opening sentence, the ball, the seduction and the suicide. Since that article appeared, Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (P/V) have published a new translation of *Anna Karenina.* I would like to examine how those four focal points are treated by them, comparing their renditions to the Bantam translation as rendered by Joel Carmichael, whose translation struck me as the best of the seven.

THE OPENING SENTENCE:
Part One, Chapter 1

The P/V translation differs from the C translation in two respects: the placement of "all" in the sentence and the choice of "each" or "every." P/V follow the Russian syntax and put "all" at the beginning of the sentence; C moves the word into what would seem to be its more idiomatic location—right in front of "alike." As for "each/every," P/V prefer "each"; C prefers "every."

THE BALL: Part One, Chapter 23

Both translations observe the powerful rhetorical effect of Tolstoy's Russian: the use of anaphora building relentlessly to a crescendo with each occurrence of the six identical adjectives, followed by the noun, which provides the climax as it is suddenly shifted to the end of the sentence. The double shift—from adjective to noun and from the beginning to the end of the last phrase—matches the semantic shift. The word "but" admits into the sentence the negative adjectives "terrifying" and "cruel," which seriously qualify the noun "enchantment" as it concludes the series.

P/V say that Anna's smile "passed over" to him, while C says that her smile "passed on" to him. The verb "passed" in both renditions is ungainly. Smiles don't really pass from one person to another. The more serious problem in both translations is that neither verb conveys the fact that the Russian verb is intransitive. It might be better to say: "Whenever she smiled, he responded with a smile. Whenever she grew thoughtful, he became serious."

P/V use the adjective "firm" to describe Anna's neck. C uses "strong." "Firm" is clearly the better choice. "Strong" interferes with the impression of her gracefulness that Tolstoy is carefult to suggest in this paragraph and elsewhere.

THE SEDUCTION: Part Two, Chapter 11

To determine which of the English translations of *Anna Karenina* is best, one need only compare the various renditions of the seduction scene. Using this scene as a touchstone makes sense, because it is highly stylized—dense with Tolstoy's favourite literary devices—and because it contributes significantly to the ideological framework of the novel. In fact, in a letter to M. N. Katkov, written in the middle of February 1875, Tolstoy himself indicated how fundamental this scene is to the novel:

> I can't touch anything in the latest chapter. *Vivid realism*, as you say, is the only tool, since I can't use either pathos or argument. And this is one of the pages on which the whole novel stands. If it is false, everything is false. I tried to do the correcting so as to avoid setting up new type; I don't know if I've succeeded, but all the corrections are necessary. (Christian, *Tolstoy's Letters*)

Both translators respect the careful use of metaphor that Tolstoy has created as the foundation for this crucial moment of the novel. In the course of slightly more than one paragraph, he equates Vronsky with a murderer (6 times) and Anna with a dead body (5 times). Once established, the metaphors are set into motion. The murderer must cut the body into pieces. Each blow of the knife is equated with one of Vronsky's kisses.

C has a problem with the line: "There was something horrifyimg and repulsive in the recollection of what had been paid for this dreadful price of shame." You can't pay for a price. P/V solve the problem by inserting "with" between "for" and "this."

P/V say, "Looking at him, she physically felt her humiliation…," while C says, "As she looked at him, she felt her own humiliation physically." C's version is definitely better. It's better to lead up to the verb "look" and it's better to have "physically" in a stronger position—after the word "humiliation."

Some differences seem too close to call. C prefers the adjectives "horrifying and repulsive," while P/V like "horrible and loathsome." Elsewhere, though, C's choices seem stronger: "crushed," rather than "weighed on"; "in a fury," rather than "with animosity"; "flings himself upon," rather than "falls upon."

The first part of the second paragraph seems weak in both versions—probably because the two prepositional phrases found in the original are retained in the translation. The two forceful nouns would have more impact if they were attached to the sentence not by prepositions but by by verbal forms, i. e., "infuriated, as though overcome by passion."

THE SUICIDE: Part Seven, Chapter

The problems in this scene are negligible. "Hindered" is more forceful than "delayed"; "gloom" is more forceful than "darkness" and "flung" is more forceful than "threw." "Flickered" is more poetic than "sputtered." On the other hand, "go for a swim" is better than "bathing" and "horror-stricken" is better than "horror-struck."

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P/V	C
carriage	freight car
midpoint	middle
red bag	red handbag
delayed	hindered
go for a swim	bathing
habitual	familiar
darkness	gloom
threw	flung
horrified	horror-struck
dragged over her	dragged her down
muzhik	peasant
iron	rails
anxieties, deceptions, grief and evil	anxiety, deceit, sorrow and evil
sputtered	flickered

Despite the excellence of the P/V translation, the Carmichael can hold its own. Perhaps the excellent introduction and notes in the P/V rendition give it the edge.

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Reply

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I have been asked to "reply" to two new essays concerning English translations of *Anna Karenina*, presumably responses to my article on this topic in the 2001 issue. Such "replies" are usually defensive operations, aggrieved reassertions of the author's original points, which have been maliciously misunderstood by reviewers, with perhaps some grudging admission of minor errors. However, I find myself in the fortunate position of essentially having nothing to defend. Professor Sheldon makes no reference to my article at all, and Professor Flath, though she may have used my article as a springboard for her own, treats it with indulgence and goes far beyond it in scope. I therefore feel no need to squeal or growl and will simply comment rather than "reply."

Sheldon leads off with some remarks about *War and Peace* rather than *Anna Karenina*. He does not intend any general study of translations of that novel, but simply illustrates a point of difference between British and American vocabulary which George Gibian failed to correct in his revision of the Maude translation. I wholly concur with Sheldon's observation; indeed, I had made a similar point in relation to the British idiom "to have known one in petticoats," for which Kent and Berberova, in their revision of the Garnett *Anna,* had substituted the very word, *diapers,* which Sheldon considers so vital to the *War and Peace* passage. Lowly rags may serve high purposes after all.

The rest of Sheldon's article is essentially a supplement to his earlier excellent one on *Anna* translations, published in 1997, now subjecting the new Pevear/Volokhovsky version to the same analysis he had given the seven then existing translations. Sheldon's previous study had concluded that the translation by Joel Carmichael was the best. His present purpose, therefore, is to compare Pevear/Volokhovsky with the Carmichael one only. Sheldon has a keen ear for style, and I found myself agreeing with all his comments about particular passages. Pevear/Volokhovsky come out better in some cases, Carmichael in others, and some are a draw. One could also agree with Sheldon's conclusion that if the two are adjudged equal in style and accuracy, Pevear/Volokhovsky should be preferred because they have notes, whereas Carmichael has none. I would disagree only to the extent that in the examples I analyzed, I did not rate Carmichael consistently better than Rosemary Edmonds or the Kent/Berberova revision of Garnett; so I cannot concur in Sheldon's exclusion of them from the final contest.

Flath has written a very interesting and thoughtful article, focusing on the most crucial general problems of translation. How literal should a translation be? Where does the border lie between spirit and form? How much should sentences be recast to conform to stylistic preferences of the new language? Where should we draw the line between pure translating and translation plus editing (or even rewriting)? How can translators avoid being so dominated by patterns peculiar to one language that they cannot break free to find natural equivalents in the other?

I was at first a little surprised to find Flath placing the Pevear/Volokhovsky translation in the ultra-literalist camp, the supreme model of which is the Nabokov translation of *Evgenii Onegin.* Nabokov virtually admitted that his translation is unreadable, usable mainly as a trot for students struggling with the original, whereas the Pevear/Volokhovsky *Anna* is clearly intended to be read, even read with pleasure. However, I take Flath's point. It is a matter of degree, and Pevear/Volokhovksy do set themselves the aim of following Tolstoy as closely as they can, including even his "robust awkwardnesses."

It remains extremely hard, if not impossible, to devise a perfect method for determining translators' success in rendering any particular passage. Sometimes relative literalism works well, sometimes extensive recasting seems necessary. Every sentence is a case unto itself. Flath's examples are all telling and well chosen. I was especially struck by the one about Frou-Frou's eye, and Flath is absolutely right. I of course had never noticed the difference or thought why Vronsky could see only one of the poor mare's eyes. However, I do not see why a singular eye is any more awkward in English than it is in Russian.

Flath also vividly illustrates some of the disadvantages of excessive literalism. Her examples hit the target every time, with the "chilled grey on the left" a fitting climax. How could Pevear/Volokhovsky ever write such a silly phrase? Her other examples are all well chosen, and her witty comments delightful. I cannot concur only with Flath's high assessment of the Rosemary Edmonds translation. It is not only its lack of notes, a topic Flath does not address, but what seems to me excessive "prettification" in the Edmonds version. Edmonds just cannot abide Tolstoy's "robust awkwardness" and creates in its place a beautifully smooth, graceful English prose that would surely rate an A+ in any Reading and Composition class. But is it Tolstoy?