

How and why did you first become interested in, and attracted to, *Anna Karenina*?

As a schoolgirl I watched a screen adaptation of *Anna Karenina* directed by Alexander Zarkhi (1967). It was an emotionally powerful and aesthetically striking version of the novel. Unlike the majority of directors, who focus exclusively on the Anna-Vronsky affair and ignore or minimize all other plotlines of the work (for instance, that of Levin and Kitty), Zarkhi tried to draw together various threads and branches of the novel, but it was a lot to fit into a two-hour screen version of the book. The film moves quickly, including the main dialogues from each part and making swift and frequent transitions—a series of scenes from *Anna Karenina*. One can describe it as a thought-provoking modernistic interpretation, which outlines the important moments, while relying heavily on the viewer's imagination.

I was left with a whole set of intriguing questions. What was missing in Anna's life? Was it really necessary to create such an ostentatious scandal of her love-affair, as she was certainly not the first who was guilty of adultery in the high-society world? Was it worth risking her marriage, her husband's career, and her son in pursuit of a romance as self-destructive as it was passionate? Did she have the moral right to do this, as she was cruelly destroying the hopes of Kitty, who expected Vronsky to propose to her? What exactly was the reason for her suicide, and was Vronsky to be blamed for that?

Another striking feature of the film was the memorable and masterfully convincing acting, which in a way was hardly surprising, because the cast comprised all the Russian star performers of the

day. Their characters were presented with a remarkable degree of psychological persuasiveness, so that the audience was left with a puzzling feeling that there were no, so to speak, “negative” figures in the story—each of them seemed to be completely justifiable from their own personal perspective. Stiva Oblonsky—a passionate *bon vivant* and a defiant optimist, who dispels any turbulence and disorder. Vronsky—a darling of the world, who made a rash move and is now forced to play an unfamiliar and risky game without losing his self-esteem. His cousin Betsy Tverskaya—an embodiment of high-society gloss, style, and lightness of being. Levin—a villager, a philosopher, and a model of moral purity. Kitty, who in her *éducation sentimentale* goes from the naivety of an offended child to the empathy of a Madonna. And finally, Anna’s husband, Count Karenin—a cold and pragmatic statesman, who, curiously as it may seem, came across as a man of dignity and pride, deeply tormented and infinitely forgiving.

I was interested in finding out more about these characters and their stories. I turned to the novel, and I was captivated by its astonishing complexity. And here I do not mean a high degree of discursive and stylistic sophistication (these qualities are certainly germane to the novel—hence the high volume of scholarly research that it continues to attract), but its deep insights into the psychology of human relations, to which every reader, contemporary and modern, would be able to relate.

What do you find most interesting and/or appealing about this book?

As mentioned, one of the most appealing features of the novel is its extraordinary complexity. This complexity manifests itself in the philosophical and aesthetic platform of the work, in its semiotics, its structure, and its literary techniques. Moreover, it defeats, at least partly, an established and almost canonical perception of Tolstoy as a didactic author, who imposes his authoritative narrative voice on the reader. Yes, moral education was inherent in Tolstoy’s aesthetic practice, but it is worth looking into how he manages to persuade us

of the reality of his characters; and what makes us feel that neither of them is strictly speaking “black” or “white.”

There is an unsurpassed polyphony of voices in the novel. His figures are entirely uninterested in the truths of the others; everyone is solving their own dilemma, trapped in the world of their own mistakes, which are condemned and excused all at the same time. In this respect, Tolstoy can be seen as one of the first “perspectivists,” much ahead of his day. All the characters seem to be drawn by the stream of life, which almost shapes itself around them without anyone realizing quite why, or how; and there is an infinite number of reasons and justifications for almost every action and every word.

For instance, coming back to Count Karenin, who appears to be one of the most unattractive figures in the story, who often resembles a well-oiled machine. Karenin, nonetheless, is happy to forgive Anna and accept her daughter, thus sealing their relationship in kindness and compassion. The question arises of whether this forgiveness is compelled rationally by his sense of Christian morality rather than emotionally by authentic empathy with her grief. Numerous commentaries and study guides to the novel typically place emphasis on the former: though Karenin forgives Anna when she appears to be on her deathbed, his compassion does not extend towards granting her the divorce she desires. What escapes the proponents of such an opinion (as well as the majority of modern-day readers) is the particularities of the Russian nineteenth-century legal system. One has to bear in mind that if divorce had been granted on the basis of Anna’s adultery, she would have suffered seven years of penance and been banned from marrying a second time for the rest of her life (the latter clause was abolished only in 1904). The only way to avoid this outcome and to facilitate Anna’s happiness was for Karenin to take the blame for their divorce. In these circumstances his reluctance and hesitation are not entirely surprising.

In *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy is not merely telling a story, he is speaking to the reader, reflecting and thinking aloud, attempting, as far as he could, to penetrate into the reasons for all human actions, and at the same time admitting the impossibility of this undertaking and the inability of the human mind to conceive and to make sense

of a limitless number of infinitesimally small causes. He therefore resorts to the role of a truthful and impartial chronicler: “I will not judge people,” he writes in one of his notes (Tolstoy 1928, 17:229). The same claim is implied in the epigraph to *Anna Karenina*: “Vengeance is mine, and I will repay”—a biblical saying, found in the Old and New Testament (*Deuteronomy* 32:35, and *Romans* 12:19). Among numerous connotations of this saying, extensively discussed and examined by critics (the notion of responsibility, the awareness of consequences of every action, etc.), I shall single out the one that encapsulates the existential intention of the novel. Moral wisdom, as well as the supreme value judgment, is the prerogative of the divine; while mortals are not in a position either to know, or to judge, or to condemn. From the very beginning, the novel, therefore, rejects the validity of, so to speak, accepted ethical schemes and conventions.

It is known that the first half of the 1870s was marked by Tolstoy’s fascination with Arthur Schopenhauer’s ideas,¹ which emphasized the uncontrolled power of the “will,” as well as transcendental idealism—the idea that the entire world exists simply in relation to a subject, and that everything, therefore, is essentially subject-dependent. Schopenhauer’s theories are noticeable in *Anna Karenina* and in everything Tolstoy wrote during these years; but his ability to embody these ideas and to manipulate readers into internalizing them and accepting them as their own is hardly paralleled by any of the most persuasive philosophical tracts.

Philosophy is not the only lens through which *Anna Karenina* can be read. It is widely regarded as a pinnacle in realist fiction, addressing previously sacred topics such as love, marriage, social class, and religious beliefs. At the same time, it can be read as an interesting example of the modernist novel. There is a whole network of recurrent leitmotifs and symbols, which leave plenty of space for productive imagination, thus expanding the limits of the reader’s subjective interaction with the novel. There were also a number of attempts to interpret *Anna Karenina* as a political novel in the direct sense of that term (as a critique of the impact of liberalism on society, on its judicial system, governing structures and so on), as

well as allegorically by focusing on the novel's meta-textual level (Anna as an epitome of Russia, suffocated by the old-state order symbolized by Karenin). The list of these approaches is far from exhaustive, being exhausted, and such a complexity certainly makes the work appealing for the readers. One can say that Tolstoy's text is akin to a multi-dimensional slideshow: the way you adjust the focus will define what you see on the screen.

Do you think the book has any weaknesses? If so, what are they?

I would say “no.” Dostoevsky claimed that “*Anna Karenina* is sheer perfection as a work of art” (Fyodor Dostoevsky 1972, 200), and I think that this text is still largely unparalleled in terms of its narrative plasticity and novelistic techniques. It is worth reading Vladimir Nabokov's lecture on *Anna Karenina* (in his *Lectures on Russian Literature*), to appreciate how masterfully it is constructed as a piece of fiction.

Sometimes the book is criticized for its meticulous and lengthy descriptions: Tolstoy offers seemingly endless passages concerning Anna drinking coffee, Karenin writing missives, or Levin cutting the grass (the same extends to the characters' emotional and intellectual deliberations). However, the more you read the novel, the more flavor you find in all these accounts, the significance of which registers only when one *does* know the plotline and the outcome of the intrigue. It is not coincidental that Tolstoy tries to draw attention to all these minute details, because it is the long periods of grinding routine that shape our identity and our existence, which is rarely illuminated by shocking challenges and melodramatic intrigues. And it is in this routine, he suggests, that one should look for happiness and for fulfilment.

Has your own thinking about the book changed in any ways over the years? If so, how and why has your thinking altered?

The beauty of Tolstoy's text is that every time you read it, you come up with a new layer of meaning. Most likely I am not original in

CRITICAL CONTEXTS

Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*: Responses from 1899

Robert C. Evans

Leo Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina* was first published in English in the United States in 1886. By the time it was later republished in the United States, in 1899, it had become recognized worldwide as a classic piece of literature and its author had come to be regarded as a great sage. In 1899, in fact, a *new* novel by Tolstoy began to appear in the United States, this time in a monthly serial publication, in the *Cosmopolitan* magazine. Titled *The Awakening*, it was eventually published in final book form as *Resurrection*, the last of Tolstoy's several large novels. By an interesting coincidence, at around the very same time as Tolstoy's *The Awakening* began to roll off the presses, so too did another book with the very same title, this one by the American writer Kate Chopin. By another interesting coincidence, both books called *The Awakening* also provoked genuine controversy and for much the same reason: both were accused of being too sexually frank for American readers. Chopin's book significantly damaged her career; Tolstoy's novel was censored by the *Cosmopolitan* because the editors feared that readers might find it too uninhibited.

However, the book by Tolstoy that *most* resembles Chopin's *The Awakening*—and even, perhaps, the book by Tolstoy that may have helped *inspire* Chopin's *The Awakening*—is *Anna Karenina*. Both novels deal with married women who grow dissatisfied with their marriages, consort with lovers, commit adultery, and then, eventually, commit suicide when their new lives do not develop as they had hoped or planned. Chopin must surely have known of Tolstoy's book when she wrote her own. Along with Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, *Anna Karenina* remains one of the two most famous books on the theme of adultery-leading-to-suicide ever

written, and Chopin's novel has now joined that list. In another essay in this volume, I explore some of the similarities and differences between Chopin's *The Awakening* and Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. Here, though, I want to examine the American reputation of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* at the very end of the nineteenth century.

By looking at how *Anna Karenina* was publicly discussed in the United States as the 1800s came to a close, and by comparing this book's reputation with reactions beginning in 1899 to Chopin's newly released novel, I hope to show just how differently (in general) the two books tended to be received. *Anna Karenina* was, for the most part, widely praised as a fundamentally moral book and as an illustration of the idea that "the wages of sin is death." In contrast, Chopin's *The Awakening* was often perceived as a morally troubling novel, a novel in which the author appeared far more sympathetic to an adulteress than Tolstoy had seemed. As I will show, however, not all the commentary about *Anna Karenina* and *The Awakening* was divergent: a few critics found Tolstoy's novel morally troubling, and a few commentators found Chopin's book morally sound. For the most part, however, Tolstoy's novel was regarded as a book that ultimately condemned adultery, whereas reactions to Chopin's text often suggested that it did not condemn adultery clearly or strongly enough.

In supporting such claims, I plan to draw on archival evidence that has not received much (if any) previous attention.

American Responses to *Anna Karenina*: 1870s–1899

In a previous essay for another volume in the *Critical Insights* series, I surveyed American commentary on *Anna Karenina* from the 1870s to the late 1890s. Most of that commentary was highly positive, and there is no need to reproduce much of it here. Suffice it to say that the book, almost from the start, was praised for its convincing realism, its panoramic scope, and its sound moral implications (see Evans, from which the following quotations from early responses come). Many critics commended Tolstoy for presenting Anna's extramarital affair with Count Vronsky as obviously "criminal" (130), for depicting the lovers as "fickle" and "unstable" (131), for implying that marriage

should be “permanent and indissoluble” (134), and for seeing Anna’s suicide as “an act of madness” committed “in a moment of despair” (134). One critic even claimed that Tolstoy had succeeded in writing “the most strictly ‘moral’ book in existence” (137), asserting that “in Russia, *Anna Karenina*, which touches upon a perilous subject, is considered a manual of morals” (138). An English writer, published in an American periodical, considered Anna’s suicide an especially “powerful illustration of the thesis of the biblical Book of Wisdom, ‘Wherewithal a man sinneth, therewith also shall he be punished’” (139) and called it “an awful and lurid warning” against adultery. However, another commentator wrote that although it was “a pure and noble book,” it was nevertheless not exactly appropriate for “inexperienced” young readers (142). He concluded that although *Anna Karenina* “is eminently a book for older readers,” to “no reader . . . is it . . . a morally dangerous book” (142). Another reviewer praised the novel as a “deterrent” against adultery (144), and William Dean Howells, both figuratively and in fact the “dean” of American letters, extolled the novel (and Tolstoy in general) for its praiseworthy morality. He thought the book showed “how fatally miserable and essentially unhappy” adultery ultimately proves to be (144). So confident were editors, reviewers, publishers, and (most) readers about the moral implications of *Anna Karenina* that when the book was republished in 1899, all the “passages [that had been] formerly omitted” were now “restored” (1899; ix). Censorship was no longer necessary: the book had entered the canon as morally blameless no matter how frank it may have seemed.

American Responses to *Anna Karenina* in 1898

Not everyone at the tail end of the nineteenth century found *Anna Karenina* morally blameless. In fact, Mrs. Nelson A. Miles, in a talk reprinted in the *Los Angeles Herald* in early January, 1898, concluded that “Tolstoi’s ‘*Anna Karenina*’ and Amelie Rives’ ‘*The Quick or the Dead?*’ may be held largely responsible for the depraved taste of the present day. ‘*Anna Karenina*,’” she wrote, “should never be put in the hands of the young” (24). But another writer—an anonymous columnist in a piece titled “Women’s Ways”

that was published in the Fall River, Massachusetts *Daily Herald* in late March 1898, regretted that Tolstoy had presented such a gloomy, pessimistic picture of women in *Anna Karenina* and “venture[d] to hope he may permit himself to speak with far greater charity” in the future (“Women’s Ways” 5). Presumably this writer felt that, in depicting Anna, Tolstoy had been too harsh, dark, and unforgiving. This, however, was a minority opinion. Most writers seem to have thought that although the novel definitely condemned adultery, Tolstoy had often presented Anna in some genuinely appealing ways. Thus a writer in the *Daily Oklahoman*, in early January 1898, quoted the English novelist George Meredith as saying that Anna “is the most perfectly depicted female character in all fiction” (“Count Lyof Tolstoi” 2).

In fact, an anonymous writer for the New Orleans *Times-Democrat*, in August 1898, praised Tolstoy for being able, in *Anna Karenina*, to convey a powerfully moral lesson without explicitly spelling that lesson out. Tolstoy, according to this writer, assumed that his readers had enough intelligence to perceive his moral message on their own:

While we are yet in the nursery it may be necessary to admonish us that it was “wrong” for Slovenly Peter never to wash his face or have his hair cut; that Tattling Jenny should never have concerned herself unduly about her neighbor’s affairs, and that Cruel Frederick, who “beat his kind and gentle nurse,” would surely suffer if he attempted to take a like liberty with savage dogs. But, having reached a more mature stage, one craves the privilege of being allowed to do one’s own moralizing. There are no sermons in [Henryk Sienkiewicz’s novel] “Without Dogma” or “Anna Karenina;” but does any reader of those books fail to realize that the wages of sin is death? (“The Light Stubble”)

Tolstoy, in other words, had managed to condemn adultery without condemning it openly, subtly, and therefore inartistically. The

same point was made by another anonymous writer, identified only as “The Onlooker,” in a fascinating piece published in September 1898 in the Louisville, Kentucky *Courier-Journal*. This article is especially intriguing, in fact, because it implies that while the moral message of *Anna Karenina* was perfectly plain to *some* readers, it could be missed or misinterpreted by readers who, through such misinterpretation, thereby revealed their own moral flaws:

Not so very long ago some one [sic] asked me: “What are your favorite novels?” and I answered without hesitation: “Tolstoi’s ‘Anna Karenina,’ Harold Frederic’s ‘Damnation of Theron Ware,’ the ‘Consuela’ of George Sand and ‘The Descendant’ [by Ellen Glasgow]. Not long after the person (it was a man) sent me two or three books, which he said he hoped I would like. I read them and sent them back, utterly nauseated and disgusted with them. I shall not give their names, for it would only lead to the curiosity in some one else to peruse them. Suffice it to say they were all of the same type, sickening stories of immorality and vulgarity, possessing not even the excuse of being well written; simply a sewerage constructed by the perverted mind of the author to convey its fetid burden of uncleanness to the minds of others. I knew after reading them the inmost soul of the man who had sent them to me. I knew then that he had read the flawless story of “Anna Karenina” with the gloating sense of a vulgarist, that he had scanned the pages of “Theron Ware” only looking for Vice and that to ask him to read “The Descendant” was like casting pearls before swine, and that the mire of his own mind had bespattered the pure white pages of genius. There are people who are incapable of knowing that chaste nudity is art, that realism is not vulgarity. If you really want to know the true depth and breadth

CRITICAL READINGS

Early English-Language Responses to Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*

Matthew Arnold, William Dean Howells, et al.

Editor's Note: Although Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* was first published in book form in 1878, it did not take long for that book to become hailed throughout Europe and the English-speaking world as a monumental classic. The comments below, printed in the 1917 Collier edition of an early English translation, came from some of the most respected literary figures of the turn of the century. Matthew Arnold (1822–88) was perhaps the most significant English critic of his day; William Dean Howells (1837–1920) held a similar eminence in the United States. They, along with the other commentators whose assessments are reproduced below, helped cement the work's position as not simply a great *Russian* novel but as one of the most important novels of the modern world. The commentators' original ways of spelling, as well as their occasional references to the book's title as "*Anna Karenin*," are here preserved.

Comments by Emile Melchior, Vicomte de Vogüé

Tolstoy's troubled, vacillating mind, obscured by the mists of Nihilism, is by a singular and not infrequent contradiction endowed with an unparalleled lucidity and penetration for the scientific study of the phenomena of life. He has a clear, analytical comprehension of everything upon the earth's surface, of man's internal life as well as of his exterior nature: first of tangible realities, then the play of his passions, his most volatile motives to action, the slightest disturbances of his conscience. This author might be said to possess the skill of an English chemist with the soul of a Hindu Buddhist.

Whoever will undertake to account for that strange combination will be capable of explaining Russia herself.

Tolstoy maintains a certain simplicity of nature in the society of his fellow-beings which seems to be impossible to the writers of our country; he observes, listens, takes in whatever he sees and hears, and for all time, with an exactness which we cannot but admire. Not content with describing the distinctive features of the general physiognomy of society, he resolves them into their original elements with the most assiduous care; always eager to know how and wherefore an act is produced; pursuing the original thought behind the visible act, he does not rest until he has laid it bare, tearing it from the heart with all its secret roots and fibres.

Unfortunately, his curiosity will not let him stop here. Of those phenomena which offer him such a free field when he studies them by themselves, he wishes to know the origin, and to go back to the most remote and inaccessible causes which produced them. Then his clear vision grows dim, the intrepid explorer loses his foothold and falls into the abyss of philosophical contradictions. Within himself, and all around him he feels nothing but chaos and darkness; to fill this void and illuminate the darkness, the characters through which he speaks have recourse to the unsatisfactory explanations of metaphysics, and, finally, irritated by these pedantic sophistries, they suddenly steal away, and escape from their own explanations.

Gradually, as Tolstoy advances in life and in his work, he is more and more engulfed in doubt; he lavishes his coldest irony upon those children of his fancy who try to believe and to discover and apply a consistent system of morality. But under this apparent coldness you feel that his heart sobs out a longing for what he cannot find, and thirsts for things eternal. Finally, weary of doubt and of search, convinced that all the calculations of reason end only in mortifying failure, fascinated by the mysticism which had long lain in wait for his unsatisfied soul, the Nihilist suddenly throws himself at the feet of a Deity—and of what a Deity we shall see hereafter.

—From “Tolstoy,” in “The Russian Novelists,” translated by J. L. Edmands (1887)

Comments by Charles Edward Turner

The germ of Count Tolstoy's novel "Anna Karenin" [sic] is to be found in one of his earlier tales, entitled "Family Happiness." In both we have the sole basis and surest guarantee of home-life set forth, and both teach the necessity of recognising the prosaic seriousness of life, and the danger of abandoning ourselves to the vague dreams and unsubstantial illusions of youth. The happiness of Marie Alexandrovna, the young wife of the staid Sergei Michaelovitch, is as nearly wrecked through the childish idea that marriage is nothing less than an idyll, a perpetual song of love, as the peace of poor Anna Karenin is completely destroyed through her wilful forgetfulness that human nature requires more solid nourishment than mere passion can afford, and that love, so far from being a blessing, becomes a hindrance to our spiritual development, from the moment we allow it to usurp the place of duty, and make it the one paramount law of our being. We should do wrong to attribute the disenchantment that gradually came over the life of Marie, and made her fretful and discontented, to the disparity of years that existed between the child-wife, with the unknown world lying before her, and the comparatively aged husband, who has tasted its pleasures and proved their hollowness, and is consequently the better able to protect and shield her from the temptations and thousand dangers that beset a young and inexperienced wife. In the same way, we shall equally err if we try to trace the miseries of Anna Karenin to the disparity of tastes, ideas, and inclinations, that rendered it so hard for the dreamy, passionate, impulsive wife to understand or sympathise with the cold, formal, precise nature of her bureaucratic husband, with the eternal *Portefeuille* [portfolio] under his arm, and the dry, prosy government returns and reports, that formed his exclusive reading and occupied his every thought. It is, rather, in their mistaken conception of the true work of life—to discover which is the end and purpose of all Count Tolstoy's elaborate studies of human character—that we shall find the real source of their disappointments and disillusion. Pure passion is an exotic, that can grow naturally and flourish only in a sphere different from our own. They who would transplant it in the cold, hard soil of earth, may for

a brief moment find delight in its ethereal beauty, but the frail plant, lacking its native nourishment, will quickly perish and decay.

As we have already seen, Count Tolstoy's moral theory is based on the mutual relation between human happiness and the eternal, all-powerful laws of Nature. By obedience to them man can alone attain to his highest felicity. The violation of these laws as infallibly brings with it misery and ruin. And never has this lesson been taught with sterner and more unpitying force than by the author of "Anna Karenin." "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay," is the motto prefixed to the novel. And as we read the story, we feel throughout the overhanging presence of an inexorable power that shapes out the lives of men, allotting to them peace or discord, according as they submit to or rebel against their fate. Not that we are to suppose, as M. Vogüé and certain critics appear to think, that Count Tolstoy is, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, a fatalist. In his view of life the Parcae do not spin the threads of each concrete, individual existence, but the threads of those general, abstract laws which envelop and surround universal human life. We can bring our own lives, if we will, into harmony with those laws. We are not, like Oedipus, the blind slaves of a fate that has ordained beforehand the crimes we are to commit, and the punishment those crimes involve, and from which there is no hope or possibility of escape. Anna Karenin could have escaped her ruin; it was within her power to control the wild impulses of her nature; but in yielding to lawless passion, and sacrificing everything to its satisfaction, she necessarily and inevitably brought upon herself the vengeance with which any outrage committed against the high laws of Nature is justly and righteously repaid.

—From "Count Tolstoy as Novelist and Thinker" (1888)

Comments by Matthew Arnold

There are many characters in "Anna Karenin"—too many if we look in it for a work of art in which the action shall be vigorously one, and to that one action everything shall converge. There are even two main actions extending throughout the book, and we keep passing from one of them to the other—from the affairs of Anna and Wronsky

to the affairs of Kitty and Levin. People appear in connection with these two main actions whose appearance and proceedings do not in the least contribute to develop them; incidents are multiplied which we expect are to lead to something important, but which do not. What, for instance, does the episode of Kitty's friend Varenka and Levin's brother Serge Ivanovitch, their inclination for one another and its failure to come to anything, contribute to the development of either the character or the fortunes of Kitty and Levin? What does the incident of Levin's long delay in getting to church to be married, a delay which as we read of it seems to have significance, really import? It turns out to import absolutely nothing, and to be introduced solely to give the author the pleasure of telling us that all Levin's shirts had been packed up.

But the truth is we are not to take "Anna Karenin" as a work of art; we are to take it as a piece of life. A piece of life it is. The author has not invented and combined it, he has seen it; it has all happened before his inward eye, and it was in this wise that it happened. Levin's shirts were packed up, and he was late for his wedding in consequence; Varenka and Serge Ivanovitch met at Levin's country-house and went out walking together; Serge was very near proposing, but did not. The author saw it all happening so—saw it, and therefore relates it; and what his novel in this way loses in art it gains in reality.

For this is the result which, by his extraordinary fineness of perception, and by his sincere fidelity to it, the author achieves; he works in us a sense of the absolute reality of his personages and their doings. Anna's shoulders, and masses of hair, and half-shut eyes; Alexis Karenin's updrawn eye-brows, and tired smile, and cracking finger-joints; Stiva's eyes suffused with facile moisture—these are as real to us as any of those outward peculiarities which in our own circle of acquaintance we are noticing daily, while the inner man of our circle of acquaintance, happily or unhappily, lies a great deal less clearly revealed to us than that of Count Tolstoy's creations.

—From "Essays in Criticism," Second Series (1888).

RESOURCES

Artwork from Early Editions and Films of *Anna Karenina*

Editor's Note: Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* has inspired numerous other artists, especially visual artists, whether they be painters, book illustrators, movie makers, creators of posters, or even sculptors. The number of book illustrators who have tackled Tolstoy's novel is lengthy; to do justice to them all would require a book of its own. Here, then, are just a few of the ways *Anna Karenina* has been visually imagined, especially in the first fifty years of its existence.



Figure 1: *Anna and her son*, by Mikhail Vrubel, 1878.
Wikimedia.



Figure 2. Vronsky and Anna, by Elmer Boyd Smith, 1899. Wikimedia.



Figure 3. Levin and Kitty, by Elmer Boyd Smith, 1899. Wikimedia.

Chronology of Tolstoy's Life

- 1822** Marriage of Tolstoy's parents.¹
- 1828** (28 Aug. old style) Birth of Leo Tolstoy.
- 1830** Death of Tolstoy's mother.
- 1837** Death of father and grandmother; return to Yásnaya Polyána (family estate).
- 1840** Famine year.
- 1841** Death of the Countess Osten-Sáken; moves to Kazan.
- 1844** Matriculates at Kazan University.
- 1847** Leaves the university.
- 1848** Passes two examinations at Petersburg University.
- 1849** Starts Peasant Children's School at Yásnaya.
- 1851** Leaves Yásnaya Polyána for Caucasus; goes on expedition from Starogládovsk; writing *Childhood*.
- 1852** Goes on expedition; finishes *Childhood*; receives letter accepting *Childhood*, which appears in *Contemporary*; *The Raid* finished.
- 1853** Nearly killed by grenade; *The Raid* appears in *Contemporary*; chased by Tartars; war between Russia and Turkey.
- 1854** Receives his commission; revisits Yásnaya Polyána; starts for Bucharest; war involving England and France against Russia; Tolstoy reaches Bucharest; siege of Silistria abandoned; Tolstoy leaves Bucharest for Russia; western allies land in Crimea; *Boyhood* appears in *Contemporary*; bombardment of Sevastopol; Tolstoy reaches Sevastopol.
- 1855** *Memoirs of a Billiard Marker* published; serves in Sevastopol, in Fourth Bastion; *Sevastopol in December*

Additional Works by Tolstoy¹

Novels

War and Peace. 1869

Anna Karenina. 1877

Resurrection. 1899

Novellas

Childhood. 1852

Boyhood. 1854

Youth. 1856

Family Happiness. 1859

The Cossacks. 1863

The Death of Ivan Ilyich. 1886

The Kreutzer Sonata. 1889

The Devil. 1911 written 1889

The Forged Coupon. 1911

Hadji Murat. 1912

Stories

“The Raid.” 1852

“A Billiard-Marker’s Notes.” 1855

“The Wood-Felling.” 1855

“Sevastopol in December 1854.” 1855

“Sevastopol in May 1855.” 1855

“Sevastopol in August 1855.” 1856

“The Snowstorm.” 1856

“Two Hussars.” 1856

“A Landlord’s Morning.” 1856

“Lucerne.” 1857

“Albert.” 1858

“Three Deaths.” 1859

“The Porcelain Doll.” 1863

“Polikúshka.” 1863