

Liza Knapp and Amy Mandelker (eds.), *Approaches to Teaching Tolstoy's 'Anna Karenina'*. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2003. x + 226 pp.

The appearance of this most useful collection of essays, the seventy-eighth in the MLA series *Approaches to Teaching*, may be seen as acknowledgement of the fact that *Anna Karenina* (in the words of Amy Mandelker: p. 4) is 'probably the most often taught nineteenth-century Russian novel in the American academy'. Implicit here is also the recognition that for the most part (and not only in the American academy) this teaching nowadays takes place, not within the structure of any traditional 'Russian lang. & lit.' degree program, but as part of courses with what the editors call 'a great-books focus' (p. 49). It is for this reason that the volume unapologetically addresses the challenges faced by those whose task it is to make the novel meaningful to undergraduates with little knowledge of its cultural context who are likely to be uncomprehending of the moral issues at its heart ('it is difficult for American students to take adultery seriously', p. 5) or even alienated by the didactic moralism of its authorial voice. These and other problems were canvassed in a questionnaire completed by thirty-nine experienced teachers (all but one, our own Judith Armstrong, working in North American institutions) and are examined from a variety of critical perspectives in the twenty-three essays making up the collection. Although the questionnaire itself is not reprinted here, the volume reflects the 'collective wisdom' (p. ix) of its respondents, from among whose ranks the contributors were recruited.

In the short introductory section, the editors write on certain preliminaries they judge to be of particular importance in demystifying the novel for an uninitiated readership: the vexed question of Russian names, and the culturally specific implications of the various settings. While these essays contain much valuable information (for example, on railway travel), they seem targeted more at undergraduates themselves, rather than at classroom instructors who might be expected to know about (and be able to explain) patronymics or have access to such excellent 'background' works as C. J. G. Turner's *A Karenina Companion* (1993). Similarly, the editorial essays in Part One ('Materials') might also, for all their merits, have been taken as read, or consigned to an appendix; although it is interesting to discover from Knapp's survey of

English translations that the current Norton edition (Aylmer and Louise Maude as revised by George Gibian) remains the most widely used in the college classroom, and useful to have the editors' checklist of secondary sources deemed most valuable by the questionnaire respondents.

The heart of the collection is its second (and final) part ('Approaches'), in which the contributions are grouped (sometimes, perhaps, arbitrarily) in three sub-sections: *Anna Karenina* in Tolstoy's Life, Thought and Times, *Anna Karenina* in the Literary Traditions of Russia and the West, and Classroom Approaches to *Anna Karenina*. Few aspects of the novel go unexplored, often by scholars of established international authority in their particular area of enquiry: Gary Saul Morson considers the text as a novel of ideas, Judith Armstrong as a novel of adultery; Gary Jahn is concerned with the moral crises in the novel and in Tolstoy's life, Donna Orwin with its philosophical preoccupations, and William Mills Todd examines the implications for the poetics of the text and the pragmatics of reading of the book's original serial publication. Kate Holland analyses the novel's beginning and Svetlana Evdokimova its ending; Julie Buckler focuses on questions of genre, Thomas Barran on Anna's dreams, and David Sloane on her reading habits. In addition to studies contextualizing the novel *vis-à-vis* contemporary laws on divorce, the Woman Question and the visual arts, there are essays on the pedagogical possibilities of film adaptations, reader-response journals, mind maps and 'scavenger hunts' in quest of related images and significant patterns. Theoretical underpinning is drawn variously from (among other sources) Platonic philosophy, Freudian psychoanalysis, Bakhtinian prosaics, Marxian economics, reception theory, and Tolstoy himself, most notably his celebrated *dicta* on the novel's architectonics.

The corollary of such diversity is inevitably a certain unevenness and diffuseness. For example, coming as it does immediately after Helen Goscilo's subtle and trenchant feminist critique ('Motif-mesh as Matrix: Body, Sexuality, Adultery and the Woman Question' — surely the outstanding contribution), the essay by Mary Helen Kashuba and Manuchar Dareshuri on 'Agrarian Issues in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* as a "Mirror of the Russian Revolution"' may seem more than a little pedestrian. As regards diffuseness, the editors have been at pains to stress overall coherence in the introduction and underline complementarities

and linkages by means of cross-referencing in the body of the text. In this, and in the overall standard of production and presentation, they are to be congratulated; although it is disconcerting to read (in Caryl Emerson's essay, p. 108) that authoritarian narrators crimp (rather than cramp) the freedom of fictional characters, or to discover one of the doyens of *tolstovedenie* figuring in the text (p. 47) and again in the comprehensive list of works cited under the false identity of 'Richard F. Christian'.

In summary, this is an invaluable guide, combining in almost every essay insights into current research on the novel with suggestions as to how these might be exploited in the classroom. Not all of the latter will appear practicable to those more constrained as regards resources and time than their colleagues in the American academy seem to be, but most teachers will find here some ideas for showing their students how (in the words of David Sloane, p. 130) 'in great works tiny windows open on to vistas of great depth'.

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Ronald O. Richards, *The Pannonian Slavic Dialect of the Common Slavic Proto-Language: The View from Old Hungarian*. (UCLA Indo-European Studies 2). Los Angeles: University of California, Los Angeles, Program in Indo-European Studies, 2003, xvii + 234 pp.

This important study represents the first serious attempt to evaluate the age and other properties of Slavic loans in Hungarian in the light of Hungarian diachronic phonology and thus to shed fresh light on the linguistic situation in the Pannonian borderland between West and South Slavic around the time of its conquest by the Hungarians at the end of the ninth century. The author's avowed purpose in doing this is to extract new information regarding Slavic ethnogenesis.

Chapter One usefully canvasses the poor methodologies that have allegedly led to a scholarly crisis over the ethnic and linguistic composition of Slavic Pannonia. Chapter Two details the Hungarian phonological (and some other) criteria by which early loans from Slavic may be