

VISUALIZING *ANNA KARENINA*

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Incorporated into contemporary culture through high-, middle-, and lowbrow manifestations, Tolstoi's *Anna Karenina* repeatedly demonstrates its ubiquity. The novel's reincarnations in various cultural forms consistently privilege the Anna-Vronskii story line over the parallel narrative of Kitty and Levin, thus "liberating" the adultery myth from its novelistic shackles. This remarkable diffusion and myth-oriented interpretation of *Anna Karenina* largely stems from the cinema's fascination with the novel.

The freedom with which filmmakers handle the allegedly well-known novel reveals the discrepancy between the literary text and its idea in the collective unconscious. This freedom also indicates that in popular awareness visual embodiments of *Anna Karenina* have become more authoritative than the novel itself. While shedding light on dramatic changes that have occurred in the "collective" idea of Tolstoi's novel, cinema—as a medium aiming at a mass audience—also manifests its essential connection with a myth of love that is stronger than death.

The filmmakers' constant maneuvering between myth and novel defies the latter as an unequivocal source of adaptation and thus justifies the approach I advocate in my dissertation: namely, bypassing the rigid binary opposition "the literary source versus its screen version." Interpreted as vehicles for recycling an old story of adulterous love, films of *Anna Karenina* reveal two overarching tendencies in their attempts to transpose the nineteenth-century text to the screen—tendencies they share independently of their production date, country of production, and film format.

The first strengthens the underlying myth of adultery by stripping the literary text of everything “irrelevant” to the mythical skeleton. The second disguises that skeleton by reproducing the accompanying subplots from the literary source. Yet even versions deeply rooted in the literary source are influenced by a myth-oriented perspective.

Though my principal emphasis falls on screen adaptations, I also analyze the novel’s recasting as a comic book. Unlike screen adaptations, this postmodernist revision of the novel was undertaken with the hope of undermining the novel’s elevated status as well as the fame of its creator, thus signaling a successful completion of its long journey into the mass unconscious.

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PREFACE

I wish to thank Helena Goscilo, who has inspired, encouraged, and supported me throughout my seven years at Pitt. I am also grateful to my committee members—Lucy Fischer, John Lyon, and Phil Watts—for their valuable comments and suggestions. Finally, my gratitude goes to my friends in this country and in Moscow for their support, loyalty, and humor and to my father, Efim Kreinin, and my son, Filipp Makoveev, for their unfailing love and care. Needless to say, I am in great debt to Lev Tolstoi for creating *Anna Karenina*—a magnificent novel that has become *the* book in my life.

1.0 OVERTURE

The very title of my dissertation, “Visualizing *Anna Karenina*,” indicates my bifocal interest in the metamorphoses of Lev Tolstoi’s novel *Anna Karenina* (1875-77) through a process of appropriation in visual media and, specifically, its cinematic adaptations as a cultural force that elevates the literary source to the level of myth. This study examines eight cinematic adaptations that appeared in Europe and the United States over the span of almost a century: three silent versions, by Vladimir Gardin (1914), Márton Garas (1918), and Edmund Goulding (1927); four feature-length films, by Clarence Brown (1935), Julien Duvivier (1947), Aleksandr Zarkhi (1967), and Bernard Rose (1997); and a television series by David Blair (2001).¹ As agents and simultaneously witnesses of the novel’s transfiguration into the master narrative or myth of adulterous love, these films represent the equally significant side of the *Anna Karenina* cultural construct—their disparate aesthetic values notwithstanding.

Though my principal emphasis falls on screen adaptations, I also analyze the novel’s recasting as a comic book, Katia Metelitsa’s *Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy* (2000). This visual-cum-verbal revision of the novel signals a successful completion of its long journey into the mass unconscious. Reassembled as an intrinsic component of today’s popular culture, the *Anna Karenina* comic book serves as a vehicle for the developing myth of the New Russians and thus

¹ My selection of films was determined by the films’ availability as well as their relevance to the specific angle of my research.

validates its own potency as myth. More important, the inclusion of Metelitsa's book aims, on the one hand, to broaden the focus of adaptation studies from an exclusive concern with celluloid versions of literary sources and, on the other hand, to go beyond traditional discussions of the novel-film relationship, thus engaging the "originary word" in a multilevel and dynamic cultural dialogue.

First Look into the Past (Novels versus Films)

Although canonical literary works have attracted filmmakers from the very first days of cinema, the relationship between the two arts has always remained ambiguous. Whereas fiction provides the obvious initial source for cinematic adaptations, in its use of literature cinema frequently attempts to eclipse its precursor. This double function of the verbal text in the process of its transformation into the visual narratives encourages Neia Zorkaia to define literature as *postoiannyi sputnik* (constant companion) of cinema and *meshaiushchii chuzhak* (disabling stranger, ["Russkaia" 106]). Undeniably, a film can hardly exhaust its verbal counterpart, but it would be misleading to attribute this "disability" of cinema to the inferiority of film as a medium—an *a priori* assumption that has governed adaptation studies since it was first introduced in George Bluestone's *Novels into Films* (1957).

However, as early as 1926 Iurii Tynianov insisted on reconsidering the hierarchical relation between literature and cinema, hoping that an unbiased understanding of the two arts would stimulate the appearance of scripts that would be more than merely hybrids of "a damaged novel and an unfinished play" (324). And although a novel is "damaged" to some extent by being filmed, not every screen adaptation is a damaged film. Yet a cinematic "surrogate" is

doomed to inadequacy in one way or another from the very moment of its conception, being at an initial disadvantage when seen as competing with the primary text.

Moreover, the tradition of pairing film with its literary prototext, which has dominated adaptation studies for four decades, also led to a notorious fixation on the criterion of fidelity. Even the “improved” status of cinema following the emergence of television—a new candidate for the stigma of inferior mass-culture entertainment—as well as the polemic initiated by the French New Wave praising *auteur* cinema, and publications on intertextuality challenging the idea of a single source did not help to exorcise the old “demons.” They were still present in the 1970s in such monographs as *The Novel and the Cinema* by Geoffrey Wagner, *Film and Literature* by Maurice Beja, and *Film and Fiction* by Keith Cohen. The 1980s, however, witnessed fruitful changes in the field, manifested in the work of Dudley Andrew, John Orr, and Joy Gould Boyum, who rejected the formalist approach of textual analysis in favor of studying the contextual conditions in which adaptations were produced. Inspired by both poststructuralism and cultural studies, this shift—as is evident from Mireia Aragay’s exhaustive survey (21-23)—heralded a crucial transformation of adaptation studies. Yet in his 1996 monograph, *Novel to Film*, Brian McFarlane revived some of the assumptions of the past, thus provoking Thomas Leitch to dub his book “an epitaph for the whole project of adaptation study” (249).

Although McFarlane’s narratological approach dwells on the centrality of narrative instead of fidelity to the written text, his method of evaluating films “against” novels, stressing the inability of film to adequately reproduce the intricate complexity of the literary source, promotes the same notion of literature’s supremacy. Not until the late 1990s was the critical need to liberate adaptation studies from this oppressive notion openly expressed—in such collections as *Pulping Fictions* (1996), *Adaptations: From Text to Screen* (1999), *Film*

Adaptation (2000), *Adaptation Revisited* (2002), *A Companion to Literature and Film* (2004), and *Books in Motion* (2005). To a great extent, the intent of the editors of the 1999 collection to “further destabiliz[e] the tendency to believe that the original text is of primary importance” (Cartmell 3) represents the approach of all five volumes. Robert Stam’s proposal to base adaptation on a Bakhtinian concept of intertextual dialogism—first expressed in his contribution to the 2000 collection and developed in the volume of 2004—seems appropriate and timely, given the contemporary refusal to rigorously differentiate between cultural strata. Simultaneously, his vision of adaptation as resulting from the “series of operations: selection, amplification, concretization, actualization, critique, extrapolation, analogization, popularization, and reculturalization” (“Beyond” 68) establishes various points of departure for reading adaptations.

While most publications of the last decade eschew discussing the novel-film relationship because of its centrality to an obsolete argument, Kamilla Elliott, in *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (2002), focuses on it. Going against the grain of most works separating film and novel on the basis of their divergent representational properties, Elliott argues for interart analogies—specifically, a looking-glass analogy that interprets adaptation as a two-directional metamorphosis enabled by “the reciprocal power of words to evoke mental images and of pictures to evoke verbal figures in cognition” (211). Elliott’s approach evokes some resistance, because it “bends” a linear opposition—the literary source against the screen version—into a closed-circuit entity and thus removes its members from a multilevel cultural dialogue. My goal, however, is to highlight the lack of interconnection between the novel *Anna Karenina* and its adaptations.

Major debates in adaptation studies are structured around the same binary opposition: the literary source versus the screen version. Even when critics grant a film the elevated status of *interpretation* rather than that of a *replica*—thus breaking the spell of dead-endedness—they hardly impinge on a common perception of the novel as the original source for the film production. Here I suggest another approach: abandoning not only the idea of an adaptation as a copy of the novel, but also the conception of the novel as an adaptation’s original. To challenge a long-honored perspective on the correlation between book and film, I interpret the *Anna Karenina* adaptations as revisions ultimately bypassing the novelistic discourse and laying bare the latent presence of the adultery myth in the nineteenth-century text.² In doing so, I obliquely answer James Naremore’s call to include adaptation studies in a general study of recycling and repetition (15).

Not only did the novel’s screen counterparts serve as vehicles for the myth’s resuscitation in Tolstoian raiment, but they also significantly contributed to the emergence of the *Anna Karenina* myth and cemented the distinctive reputation of Tolstoi’s novel among the many narratives of forbidden love. Initially appropriated as an easy “prey”—Virginia Woolf dubbed the literature-cinema relationship as that between prey and predator (269-70)—the story of Anna’s fatal affair appeased the nascent cinema’s reverence for literary classics, fascination with tragic love stories, and heavy reliance on recognizable templates. Defying expectations that cinema’s maturation as an art would do away with a “reductive” reading of Tolstoi’s novel only as a variation of the adultery myth—though justified by the novel’s very title—the last screen renditions of 1997 and 2001 display a similar tendency of approaching the literary source as the

² Zarkhi’s exceptionally respectful reading of the literary source in his 1967 film does not challenge my perspective because of the example’s uniqueness and also the director’s unwillingness to rearticulate the author’s condemnation of Anna the adulteress.

embodiment of the myth. “Fleshing out” the skeletal story of an illicit affair with the concomitant story lines from the novel (those of Kitty and Levin, and of Dolly and Stiva), the filmmakers nonetheless adhere to the myth, shifting the emphasis to the chivalric code of adultery that celebrates a love stronger than both life and death. In line with this archetypal modification, Anna’s suicide is redefined as a crowning component of her passion for Vronskii rather than retribution for her “crime.” By obliterating the moral aspect of an extramarital affair, privileged in the nineteenth-century novel of adultery, and bringing its mythical foundation to the fore, cinema—as a medium aiming at a mass audience—manifests its essential connection with myths while shedding light on dramatic changes that have occurred in the “collective” idea of Tolstoi’s *Anna Karenina*.

In a century-long process of subsuming numerous stories of adulterous love, this novel, albeit unabashedly shaded with romantic strokes, has become a worldwide myth. In other words, the novelistic discourse has been dispersed in and returned to the mythical element of its origins. Such an alteration in the narrative’s status was enabled not only by properties inherent in the novel itself, but also by the mythical consciousness of an average cinematic spectator, gradually acquired as cinema began to accumulate more and more visual texts and to store them in the spectator’s visual memory. Adjusting André Bazin’s assertion in 1948 that “novels are mythmakers” (23) to a modern culture in various ways shaped by cinema, one may legitimately suggest that the baton in the mythmaking relay was passed to or usurped by film.

Aleksei Losev's dialectical theory of myth helps to illuminate this phenomenon.³ Rejecting the notion of myth as fiction and contrasting myth with poetry and art, he writes that “myth is nothing other than the same poetic image, detached from things, but *materially and corporeally affirmed and posited*. Myth is *poetic detachment given as a thing*” (177, emphasis in the original). According to Losev, myth treats poetic reality as genuine reality, thereby creating a miraculous reality. It seems that an incessant reiteration of the novel's (truncated) plot on screen and the reassurance of Anna's material presence—its flatness and multi-embodiment notwithstanding—have produced a “miracle”: mythical consciousness enshrined Tolstoi's text as one of its basic myths.

If the novel's reappearance on television and big screens does not encourage, then it at least parallels, its reincarnation in the form of plays, ballets, comics, Internet images, anecdotes, and fleeting references in popular magazine articles. Whereas these allusions to *Anna Karenina* reveal its omnipresence as a cultural sign utterly detached from the literary text, such works as the new opera by David Carlson, which premiered in April 2007 at the Florida Grand Opera, betray a continuing fixation on Anna's tragic adultery/romance as the novel's quintessential feature, calling for an “operatic” consummation. A perfect coda to *Anna Karenina*'s ascent to mythological Olympus—though given the opposition of high-popular culture it would seem more of a descent—this adaptation places it on a par with such cherished myths in opera as Richard Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* and Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata*.

³ Unfortunately, Losev, a prominent and prolific philosopher and classicist, remains almost unknown in the Anglophone world. The first English translation of his work *The Dialectics of Myth*, published in 1930, came out only in 2003. For the uncensored additions Losev made to the book before its publication, he was sentenced to ten years in the Belbaltlag labor camp, where he became almost blind and from which he was released after two years. Despite his ordeals, Losev, thanks to his longevity (1893-1988), not only witnessed the publication of most of his works—among them the eight-volume *History of Ancient Aesthetics*—but also received the USSR Award in Philosophy in 1985.

Ingrained in contemporary culture through high-, middle-, and lowbrow manifestations, the *Anna Karenina* narrative repeatedly demonstrates its ubiquity. Moreover, devoid of its novelistic (historical) roots, it operates on the plane of simultaneity, existing in all its versions at the same time, and thus relegating the question of its source to the background. As Claude Lévi-Strauss in his influential essay “The Structural Study of Myth” states, “the quest for the *true* version or the *earlier* one” loses its relevance for mythological narratives (217, emphasis in the original). Incorporating Lévi-Strauss’s observation into his study of Superhero texts, Luca Somigli demonstrates how representations of the Superhero in cinema and comics cease to be adaptations or remakes; instead Somigli proposes the myth model as a legitimate tool for his investigation. Somigli’s prism likewise permits one to see the multiple variations of *Anna Karenina* as simultaneously circulating parts of the same mythical theme and to perceive *Anna Karenina* as a phenomenon illustrating the mechanisms that enable the mythologized narratives to function. However, this approach, deprived of a chronological dimension, can scarcely embrace and fully explain the process of myths’ emergence. Cinema has not merely robbed Tolstoi’s text of its novelistic abundance and reduced its discourse to the adultery core; rather, it has liberated the myth from its novelistic constraints. This “paradigmatic” point of view necessitates tracing the novel’s antecedents.

Second Look into the Past (Origins of the Novel of Adultery)

To a certain extent, all nineteenth-century novels of adultery⁴ originate in the ancient myth of the unfaithful wife, in which one may distinguish two archetypes: the lustful wife (with

⁴ Rigorous precision would require that the genre be defined as the novel of female adultery, given the novel’s preoccupation with specifically female characters’ transgressions against the marital bond. The dearth of fiction focusing on male adultery, however, renders such a distinction unnecessary.

an emphasis on female sexuality) and the amorous spouse (with an emphasis on the emotional aspect of the relationship). Curiously, a comparison of the first and final versions of Tolstol's novel shows an unattractively concupiscent Anna replaced by a tragic, loving Anna—a shift interpreted by Judith Armstrong as the triumph of a fictional character over its creator, who, in her view, attempted to exorcise his own insatiable sexuality by writing the novel (121). Both archetypes may be traced to ancient myths about Aphrodite, whose amorous activities parallel those of Zeus. However, Greek mythology chiefly describes the male adultery that invariably provokes the wives' fury (e.g., Heracles and Deianeira, Jason and Medea) and frequently brings their revenge down on female rivals and never on their own husbands. (Consider the jealous anger of Zeus's wife, Hera, which resulted in the torments of Io and the death of Semele.) At the same time, Helen's adulterous liaison with Paris led to a ten-year war, causing the deaths of numerous Greek heroes and Troy's total annihilation. Despite the overwhelming consequences of Helen's betrayal, Menelaus refrained from punishing his wife because of her divine beauty.

In the twelfth century, the troubadours introduced to European literature the most influential story of adultery—that of Tristan and Iseult, thereafter widely circulated in numerous retellings and reworkings. Sprung from the conflict between chivalry and feudal morals, as Denis de Rougemont convincingly shows in his *Love in the Western World*, the Tristan myth arose as a means of capturing dangerous passions and securely channeling them through symbolical expressions (21-23). The romance's pivotal features—the incompatibility of courtly love with the demands of conjugal fidelity, constant obstructions blocking the lovers' fulfillment, a happy culmination of passion as its negation, death as an extricable and consummating moment of passion—continue to structure the mythical consciousness of modern audiences. Although *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult* generates countless narratives of “a love that is stronger than life”

and entailing a tragic dénouement, medieval literature likewise abounds in comically shaded “adultery and erotic plots” (Meletinskii 67).

Within the tradition of carnivalesque folk laughter and the picaresque novel, adventures of the lustful wife are traditionally depicted in comic tones and rarely incur punishment: for example, Aleksandr Afanas'ev's *Zavetnye skazki* (Indecent Tales, 1872), Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1370), Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400), and Nikolai Gogol's *Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan'ki* (Evenings on a Farm Near Dikan'ka, 1831-32). In such works the “light” treatment of women's sexual escapades or liaisons, which are equated with male indiscretions, results from the absence of fundamental gender distinctions in the social and generic conventions regulating human conduct in the fictional world of the narratives.

Nineteenth-century literary texts, however, treat female adultery from a perspective that is primarily moral (religious) and tragic (comparable with the canon of ancient tragedy), with retribution for the committed “crime” usually portrayed as inevitable.⁵ Most novelistic examinations of adultery contrast their female protagonists with their parodic or reduced “doubles,” who conform to the prototype of the libertine. With rare exceptions—as, for instance, in Choderlos de Laclos's *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782)—libertines, including the female pupils of Ovid's *Ars amatoria*, so generously represented in the Tolstoian *beau monde*, suffer no retribution, as if by virtue of their “light-hearted amoralism.”⁶ Generic conventions, however, dictate an operatic conclusion: the agonizing death of the adulteress. Beyond the shared moments of sexual intercourse or a mutual if contingent “love,” the paradigm of the libertine rarely

⁵ Theodor Fontane's *L'Adultera* (1882) offers one of the few exceptions: Although a reduced punishment overtakes the novel's protagonist Melanie (in the form of the older daughter's hatred), she ultimately finds happiness in a fulfilling second marriage.

⁶ On the literary tradition of *libertinage* and its relevance to Tolstoi's novel, see Helena Goscilo “Tolstoy, Laclos, and the Libertine.”

intersects with that of the ostracized “fallen” wife. Authors and the worlds they create mete out punishment to adulteresses with a conscience, however intermittently awakened.

With their roots in a long-circulating cultural myth, the novels of adultery inevitably share a number of key motifs and episodes in their plot development: the heroine’s unexciting marriage to an older man; birth of a (later neglected) child; the first meeting of future lovers; heavy use of foreshadowing; a grand ball and initiation through dance; the primacy of external appearance in sexual desirability; self-identification through projection onto imaginary “romantic” characters; operatic music as analogue and omen; the symbolism of horseback riding, transportation (coach, train, sleigh); adulterous letters awaiting discovery; proficiency and pleasure in adulterous deception; “hallucinations” and symbolic portents; the eventual boredom and banality of adultery; the heroine’s confused mental state before death; and her “unnatural” end. Despite the repetition of these elements from one novel to the next, their function within the literary text varies from work to work and, moreover, receives different emphases.

For instance, the double structure of *Anna Karenina*, in which the story of Anna Karenina the adulteress parallels the story of Konstantin Levin the righteous man, adds a metaphysical dimension to Tolstoi’s narrative of adultery, thus embedding it in a broader existential context. Whereas the descending trajectory of Anna’s romance with Vronskii tropes the disruptive power of an illicit (sexually determined) love, the ascending trajectory of Levin’s path symbolizes the triumph of a human spirit eagerly searching for true Love as the quintessence of life’s meaning. Anna’s passion for Vronskii destroys her marriage, deprives her of her beloved son—“awarding” her instead with an illegitimate and unloved daughter—and finally culminates in her “ugly”

suicide.⁷ By contrast, Levin enters into a lawful union with a loved and loving wife and brings into the world a son. More important, at the end Levin is granted not only a final understanding of God's universe, but also a hard-earned reconciliation with himself. Significantly, Tolstoi concludes his novel with Levin's words celebrating the notion of Christian love: "My whole life, independently of anything that may happen to me, every minute of it is no longer meaningless as it was before, but has an unquestionable positive meaning of goodness with which I have the power to invest it" (811). Thus, a lucid epiphanic moment displaces the dimming of an adulteress's deteriorating mind before her suicide.

Neatly juxtaposed, the Anna and Levin plots comment on each other. While one serves as a distorting mirror of contemporary values misinterpreted by a wayward woman, the latter offers a full-fledged alternative to the life of an adulteress, thus providing an "estranged" perspective on a female transgressor against the marital bond. Although conceptually linked in Tolstoi's edifice, these two frames of the novel rarely coexist on screen. While generally ignoring the story of Levin's spiritual quest, filmmakers still recreate some of its elements, but only as superficial allusions to Tolstoi's text or as additional attractions. For instance, cinematic adaptations traditionally include the scene of Levin and Kitty's wedding in an Orthodox church so as to exploit the striking spectacle of the ritual's extravagance (Figure 32). What is most relevant in the detachment of Levin's storyline in this way is that the individual choices made by directors reveal their essential unwillingness or inability to reconcile Anna's and Levin's stories within the same narrative. The failure of the 1997 film by Rose—an adaptation structured around Levin's spiritual search—doubly supports this conclusion.

⁷ Not accidentally, the vision of her mangled body "stretched out shamelessly before the eyes of strangers" (774) supplants Vronskii's memory of the first impression she made on him as an enchanting young woman.

In their persistent rejection of Levin's story as a source of meaning, film adaptations of *Anna Karenina* are surprisingly consistent with the views of scholars who insist on the gap between the two plots; such films can be used to illustrate their hypotheses. Iurii Lotman, in analyzing the discrepancies between Russian novels of the nineteenth century and those of Western Europe, adduces the example of *Anna Karenina* as an embodiment of both types. Whereas the European novel is oriented toward the fairy-tale archetype, in which the hero aspires to relocate himself and improve his status, the Russian novel is directed toward the mythic paradigm, in which the hero strives to change his inner self or attempts to alter the world around him. According to Lotman, Anna's story, culminating in suicide, reflects "the canons of a tragic variant of the European novel," whereas Levin's story remains open because his "continual tormenting spiritual search" represents the essence of the Russian novel ("Siuzhetnoe" 98). Indirectly, Lotman defines the traditional development of the adultery plot as foreign to nineteenth-century Russian novelistic discourse.

Gary Saul Morson—opposing the open-endedness of Levin's story as based on "life-prosaics" and the "dead"-endness of Anna's as directed toward the "book" she chose to follow—suggests that the juxtaposition of the two lines reveals Tolstoi's intent to discredit "conventional plots" and "plotting per se, because they impose closure and structure on a world that is fundamentally innocent of both" ("Anna" 150). According to Morson, the image of Anna structuring her passion along the lines of the adultery pattern helps her creator to reject the conventional novel's reliance on closure and to expose this model as inadequate. In contrast, Levin's plot celebrates the characters' free will in life, wherein alternatives ramify endlessly. Thus, although Morson's approach differs from Lotman's, according to his interpretation the plot of Anna's adultery is also introduced as an extrinsic element in Tolstoi's narrative.

However foreign—non-Russian and conventional—to Tolstoi’s own conception of his novel, Anna’s storyline (and not Levin’s) remains culturally viable in readers’ and viewers’ collective unconscious. Cinematic adaptations, as if insensitive to anything irregular in Tolstoi’s version of female adultery—anything that deviates from the adultery paradigm—ignore the unique structure of his novel and employ motifs that have been stored in the arsenal of the adultery narrative for many centuries. Filmmakers’ reluctance to adopt Tolstoi’s criticism of Anna’s romance may result from the difficulty of violating what Morson calls “our culture’s fundamental mythology . . . that truly great writers necessarily challenge, not reaffirm, such ‘bourgeois’ norms as marriage and the family” (“Anna” 152) as well as a fear of disappointing their viewers, who expect a compassionate depiction of Anna’s life. Additionally, if faithfully reproduced on screen, the Levin plot can overshadow Anna’s tragedy and jeopardize the cathartic moment expected from the adultery myth. Thus, discussions about screen *Anna Kareninas* mainly concern the adultery theme.

From the very outset, all filmmakers restructure Tolstoi’s original plot, to a lesser or greater degree discrediting the Anna-Levin parallel and focusing on her affair with Vronskii, modifying it in accordance with multiple factors: their general strategies of adaptation, their understanding of the literary source, their knowledge of the adultery paradigm, their familiarity with the pertinent verbal and visual texts as well as earlier adaptations of the novel, their willingness to accommodate and benefit from the actors’ on-screen personas, as well as financial possibilities, censorship requirements, and simply directors’ personal preferences. Because the formalist classification ignores most of these elements—although it conveniently allows for sorting the corpus of films as to the relation between the literary “original” versus the cinematic version—I suggest counterbalancing it by outlining two fundamental types of adaptation. The

first strengthens the underlying myth of adultery by stripping the literary text of everything “irrelevant” to the mythical skeleton. The second disguises it by reproducing the accompanying subplots of the literary source. In contrast to existing classifications in which the novel is assumed to be the adaptations’ unequivocal source, such a redistribution reveals additional sources for the film versions of *Anna Karenina*.

Third Look into the Past (Classifications)

The first formalist classification was offered by the Russian scholar Zorkaia, who distinguishes three basic types of literary adaptations: *lubok*,⁸ illustration, and interpretation. Zorkaia emphasizes that all three ways of filming literature coexist in cinema at different stages of its development. First, *kinolubok* actively erases the original author’s individuality. It levels out the different sources, transforming them into the same story on which the narrative concentrates (jealousy, love, and death). In general, *kinolubok* is cinema without cinematic devices. While this kind of adaptation is aggressive toward the original text, the second kind, *illustration*, is subservient to it. Illustration follows the literary text, striving for cinematic analogues, and, unlike *lubok*, is interested in recreating the details of everyday life. The third mode, *interpretation*, crucially differs from *lubok*-adaptation and dependent illustration. It consists of the cinematic embodiment of a literary work, an interpretation through cinematic means of the author’s style and conception of the original.

⁸ Zorkaia borrows the term *lubok*, which designates a special kind of “chap” literature. Originating in the seventeenth century as entertainment for the upper classes, this literature contained popular prints of a crude character accompanied by a text. In the nineteenth century *lubok* targeted mainly lower-class readers. In her book *Fol'klor. Lubok. Ekran*, Zorkaia discusses at length the interconnection between *lubok* and modern visual culture.

Geoffrey Wagner's classification also comprises three types of adaptation: transposition, commentary, and analogy (219-31). While *transposition* transfers the novel to the screen with a minimum of interference, *commentary* purposely or inadvertently reemphasizes the original. The last category, *analogy*, intentionally violates the original for the sake of creating another work of art through cinema. Its aggressive aspirations may be compared to those of *lubok*, though the results could not be more dissimilar.

McFarlane's classification rests on the distinction between *narrative* (that which may be transferred) and *enunciation* (that which requires adaptation). Applying Roland Barthes's opposition of *distributional* and *integrational* narrative functions to adaptation,⁹ McFarlane opposes the formal data of narrative (such data as the names, ages, and professions of the characters) that is transferable to film with the concepts (such as character and atmosphere) that remain open to adaptation rather than to a direct translation into another medium. He investigates the actual process of transposition rather than the result of it. In this respect his approach rationalizes and to some degree explains the classifications described above. For instance, while *kinolubok* and *transposition* adapt everything from the original, *illustration* transfers whatever is possible and sets aside the elements incompatible with it (such as characters' inner transformations); *interpretation* and *commentary* transfer the most and modestly adapt whatever elements call for such a transfer; finally, *analogy* adapts the original and transfers the least.

Useful for differentiating one adaptation from another—as, for instance, Brown's *lubok*-adaptation (1935) from Duvivier's illustration (1947) or Goulding's analogy (1927) from Zarkhi's interpretation-commentary (1967)—and also for understanding essential similarities between seemingly distanced films, such as Brown's and Rose's (1997), these classifications

⁹ Barthes's classification, in its turn, is a revision of Vladimir Propp's notion of structural functions introduced in his *Morfologija skazki* (Morphology of the Folktale, 1928).

relegate adaptation to a subordinate position. In doing so, they reaffirm it as a final product of the cultural transformation that a literary original undergoes and also deny the manifold functions of adaptation in a cultural dialogue.

In contrast, my approach, bypassing a rigid binary opposition, locates cinematic adaptation in a dynamic relationship. On the one hand, I understand adaptation *diachronically*, as an intermediate stage in a long chain of metamorphoses of the myth of adultery: ancient myth, national novelistic discourses, screen adaptations, and manifestations in other cultural forms. Focusing on the underlying myth, resuscitating and freeing it from novelistic “accretions,” celluloid renditions blur the novel’s exclusiveness. Thus, they prepare the ground for a global recycling of the adultery myth shaped by the most influential novel of adultery today, *Anna Karenina*. On the other hand, I conceive of cinematic adaptation *synchronically*, as only one of numerous reflections of the old myth in contemporary culture. Screen versions, on a par with novels of adultery and their adaptations in various cultural forms, represent variations of the mythic prototype and constitute a resilient cultural construct. This approach draws inspiration from Bazin’s prediction that the critic of the year 2050 will perceive the original and its adaptations as equal sides of “an artistic pyramid,” in which the work, as an ideal construct, will occupy only “an ideal point at the top of this figure” (26).

2.0 ANNA KARENINA AS THE DOMINANT NARRATIVE OF ADULTERY

Judging from the number of cinematic adaptations and the consistency with which filmmakers have repeatedly returned to the novel for over a century, *Anna Karenina* is clearly a favorite in cinematography, starting with the first Pathé version in 1911,¹⁰ and temporarily ending with the most recent one, made by Sergei Solov'ev, to be released in 2007.¹¹ In the interim, numerous other versions have been produced: the almost forgotten Hungarian *Anna Karenina* by Márton Garas, with Irén Varsányi in the title role (1918); two films starring Greta Garbo, the silent Edmund Goulding's *Love* (1927) and Clarence Brown's *Anna Karenina* (1935); several British versions, including the one starring Vivien Leigh by Julien Duvivier (1947), and several television productions: Basil Coleman's version, with Nicola Pagett (1977), Simon Langton's, with Jacqueline Bisset (1985), and David Blair's, with Helen McCrory (2001); four Russian adaptations, including Vladimir Gardin's silent film with Mariia Germanova in the leading role (1914), the filmed performance of the Malyi Theatre staging, with Alla Tarasova as Anna (1953), Aleksandr Zarkhi's *Anna Karenina*, with Tat'iana Samoilova (1967), the creatively

¹⁰ This film, the first of numerous cinematic adaptations of Tolstoi's works in world cinema, has not survived.

¹¹ The international movie database lists more than thirty titles. The Russian catalogue *Home Cinema Library (Domashniaia sinemateka)* mentions 16 cinematic adaptations of Tolstoi's novel (Segida 21). I was unable to locate all of these versions.

interesting film-ballet hybrid with Maïia Plisetskaia (1975);¹² and Bernard Rose's flamboyant and controversial *Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina*, with Sophie Marceau (1997).

Even a perfunctory glance at the list of cinematic interpretations of various national novels of adultery reveals the dominant position of the Russian novel in the corpus of adultery narratives adapted to the screen. While the never-ending cinematic reproduction of *Anna Karenina* stimulates and supports the incessant attention paid to this nineteenth-century novel, the public's interest and readiness to accept new versions of this particular text ensure the continued emergence of new adaptations.¹³

Why the privileged status of Tolstoi's novel among novels of adultery? And what elements contribute to its continuous celluloid reproduction? In contrast to *Madame Bovary* and *Effi Briest*, *Anna Karenina* is a focal point for various myths, some of which emerge in the course of the novel's unstoppable circulation. The collision of several myths within a single text cements its widely acknowledged status, generates divergent adaptations and transformations, and, moreover, guarantees the myths' recognition by the essentially myth-oriented mass consciousness. Most mainstream film adaptations are undertaken with the hope of becoming "bestsellers," and the reanimation of old myths can guarantee such a status. Films feed on myths, and simultaneously create them. Therefore, the more myths the source of adaptation endorses, the greater is its appeal for filmmakers, especially foreign.

However, the audience as well as film/mythmakers themselves may resist a further expansion of the extant myths' boundaries. Many demonstrate reluctance to refurbish "old

¹² Plisetskaia was both the choreographer and the main dancer in this production. In Zarkhi's film she appears as Betsy Tverskaia.

¹³ The fact that Tolstoi's novel was announced as the Oprah's Book Club summer selection for 2004 convincingly proves this trend. Such a recognition of *Anna Karenina* entailed a humorous article-dialogue between Tolstoi and Oprah interviewing the prominent author on her TV show (Frank 120).

stories,” and express intolerance toward adaptations, which undermine the stability of the collective (hypo)text inherited from the literary source or previous films. Not accidentally, in early screen versions, the narrative of adultery that underlies only part of Tolstoi’s novel (though emphasized by its title, which is the name of adulteress) displaces the line of Dolly and Stiva and that of Kitty and Levin, which are of primary significance for the writer.

The cinematic adaptations avoid portraying in detail Dolly and Stiva’s life, which is essential for the novel’s “family idea,” owing to its prosaic and non-dramatic development. More than any other episode in the novel, the opening scene of a rift between husband and wife contains some melodramatic potential,¹⁴ nullified, however, by its somewhat comic dénouement upon Anna’s arrival. At the very outset, the novel suggests a “light” perspective on Stiva’s sexual “pranks” and Dolly’s condescending manner of coping with them. Later adaptations restored some balance, but still in the form of retaining (or even exaggerating, as for instance, in the 2001 British version by Blair) the opening scandal because of its dramatic impulse.

Unlike the Dolly-Stiva line, which is deprived of any romantic flavor, the Kitty-Levin plot, especially its dramatic progression before their wedding, contains emotional appeal that allows this line to be represented in all adaptations except Garas’s (1918) and Goulding’s (1927) films, albeit in a truncated or twisted form (e.g., Brown’s adaptation with Garbo [1935]). Undoubtedly, Kitty and Levin’s wedding in an Orthodox Church likewise meets the requirements of such a visual medium as cinema. However, celluloid versions of *Anna Karenina* in general resist depicting their eventual attainment of the status of a happy family through immersion in the monotonous family routine praised by Tolstoi. In contrast to Anna and Karenin’s destroyed family, Anna and Vronskii’s failed union, and Dolly and Stiva’s “not good,

¹⁴ “Everything was upset in the Oblonskys’ house” (1).

yet not bad” family, Kitty and Levin occupy the central position of a “happy and good” family, and thus become a focal point of moral rectitude in Tolstoi’s text.¹⁵ Conversely, cinema privileges the dramatic rather than the moral center. In Morson’s terms, whereas in the novel—under Tolstoi’s palpable control—*prosaics* (everyday deeds) displaces drama, in cinema—under the filmmakers’ direction and audiences’ expectations—*poetics* (extraordinary feelings) triumphs over *prosaics*, neglecting not only the relevance of the latter within the novel’s design, but also the function of Stiva’s wife as a “moral compass” of the original (Morson “Prosaics” 6).

Gradually and cautiously, cinema ventured to amplify the pivotal Anna-Vronskii line with the previously rejected novelistic surpluses, but never to the full extent of paralleling Anna’s and Levin’s lives, and always exclusively in the form of ornament. A true breakthrough in *Anna Karenina*’s visual existence, Rose’s film attempted to rescue the Levin-Tolstoi connection from cinematic oblivion, to juxtapose it with Anna’s tragic fate, and to privilege the writer through compositional transformations and the imposition of a male voiceover. The film was a failure. Even the director’s reliance on the visual myths accumulated over a century and condensed in *Anna Karenina* could not prevent the fiasco of the film’s reception. Probably, Rose’s attempt to undermine the conglomeration of myths assembled under the title *Anna Karenina* was fatal for his adaptation. What are the components of the *Anna Karenina* phenomenon?

The Train

As a force ensuring the plot’s development in Tolstoi’s novel, the train enacts a significant link between *Anna Karenina* and its celluloid versions. Not accidentally, most

¹⁵ For her classification of the families in the novel on a scale “very bad-neutral-quite good,” Olga Karpushina suggests such criteria as (in)fidelity and pedigree of the spouses, their descendants, the distribution of duties in the family, and the family’s place of residence (66).

videotape boxes display a speeding train next to the obligatory depiction of Anna and Vronskii, often merged in a passionate embrace. Paradoxically, a certain fatal sign is inscribed in Lumière's train, which became the symbol of motion for both cinema and Tolstoi's novel of adultery. Within the narrative, the railroad fulfills the multifold function of transferring, bringing together, separating, and executing the characters, comparable to an omnipotent *Deus ex machina*.¹⁶ However, the connotations film confers on this machinery differ from those of Tolstoi, who perceived it as a sinister symbol of "the evil of civilization, the falsehood of life, and the terror of passion" (Eikhenbaum 160).

As a sign of modernity entering the new capitalist era, the train heralded the end of Russia's agrarian patriarchy, and thus morphed into a hostile image of moral regression in Tolstoi's universe. For him, the train's non-organic, mechanical, and impersonal essence evoked associations with sexual activity deprived of spiritual intimacy. In 1857, he wrote to Ivan Turgenev that "the railroad is to travel as a whore to love" (qtd. in Jahn 1). A crude comparison, later it defined Anna's fate as opposed to Levin's, who unsurprisingly preferred horses—a "natural" means of transportation.

Facilitating quick and easy travel for its passengers, the railroad not only created favorable conditions for Anna and Vronskii's affair, but also accelerated its pace. Even the train's external attributes, such as its accompanying steam and its gradually accelerating rhythm, justified the use of the train as a symbol of sexuality, albeit empowered by Tolstoi with strong negative connotations. Omitted from most adaptations, they reemerged in Langton's TV film (1985) in a scene of Anna and Vronskii's meeting at an intermediate station on her way back to

¹⁶ In addition to Anna's suicide, Vronskii's final appearance on the train that will transport him to his probable death demonstrates the sinister role of the railroad, which ultimately delivers the characters to their 'final' destinations.

St. Petersburg. The camera registers the characters' simultaneous getting on the train, and thus invites the viewers to doubt the preceding conversation, wherein Anna pretended to resist Vronskii's pursuit. Moreover, the shot enveloping both personages' movement justly highlights Anna's agreement to join Vronskii on this adventure that ultimately ends at the railroad tracks.

The arrival of Lumière's train—a "primal scene" in cinematic history—has a peculiar resonance in contemporary culture owing to Anna's suicide. Highlighting the "pseudomorphical relation" between the two events, Iurii Tsivian quotes the reaction of Vladimir Stasov, a Russian art and music critic, to Lumière's short film *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station* (1895): "All of a sudden a whole railway train comes rushing out of the picture towards you; it gets bigger and bigger, and you think it's going to run you over, just like in *Anna Karenina*—it's incredible" (3). The literary image, in other words, channels the threatening perception of the visual image.

In her book *Parallel Tracks*, Lynne Kirby emphasizes the *protocinematic* nature of the railroad, and establishes a direct connection between the experience of the spectators in the movie theatre and that of the passengers on the train. "The cinema developed images, myths, and perceptions of the train as much as the train informed cinema's own ways of conceiving of itself" (3). An early cinema icon, the train remains untouched and lovingly reproduced in the *Anna Karenina* films, apart from one intriguing instance: Goulding's *Love*, which deprives the moving machine of its symbolic relevance within the narrative structure. Anna and Vronskii's first meeting, unlike in the literary source, occurs in an open field as they ride from Gatchina (!) to St. Petersburg, when a snowstorm renders Anna's sleigh immovable (Figure 9). Julie Buckler suggests that such a substitution reveals the railroad as the destination rather than the departure point for *Love*, which "points to the evolution of media from the horse-drawn sleigh of the novel to the sleek efficiency of cinematic locomotion" ("Anna Karenina" 12).

Greta Garbo

Garbo, who embodied Anna on the silent as well as the ‘talking’ screen, may well have lent her luster to the distinct reputation of Tolstoi’s narrative abroad. Brought to Hollywood in 1925 and first appearing in the American melodrama *The Torrent* by Monta Bell in 1926, the Swedish actress quickly established herself as a screen symbol of the modern woman “unconventional on both the sexual and moral plane” (Fischer 95). Garbo’s European origins inevitably contributed to her enigmatic image as an independent ‘foreign’ creature, who could afford ‘inappropriate’ behavior, “as though Americans could only tolerate such a risqué woman on-screen if she were not an ‘All-American Girl’” (Fischer 95). At the same time, her national “otherness” predetermined her being selected for ‘foreign’ roles.

Yet Garbo’s representations of Anna Karenina deviate from the paradigm of her traditional roles. Unlike in her many films of the 1920-30s, the threatening aura ascribed to Garbo’s heroines is toned down in both of her Annas. Garbo portrays Tolstoi’s protagonist as a loving mother rather than an adulteress undermining society’s foundations, so typical of Garbo’s on- and off-screen personas. Surprisingly, Garbo’s *Love* and *Anna Karenina* counterbalance “the modern woman’s” determination and audacity with a strong emphasis on her maternal qualities. Reinforced by Garbo’s performance, the potent link between Anna and her son remains unique for *Anna Karenina* adaptations as well as for Garbo’s films.

In many ways, the title role in *Love* predetermined Garbo’s subsequent image as a suffering lonesome beauty in Jacques Feyder’s *The Kiss* (1929) and Goulding’s *Grand Hotel* (1932). To a certain extent, these performances altered the initial negative image of Garbo as a

vicious woman—as, for instance, in Brown’s *Flesh and the Devil* (1927).¹⁷ Time proved beneficial to Garbo and Anna’s encounter on the screen. As Anna assisted Garbo in her ascent to cinematic Olympus, the actress contributed to the exceptionality of the adulteress figure. While Garbo’s second appearance as Anna, on the sound screen in 1935, led to the New York Film Critics’s Award for Best Actress, the Anna-as-Garbo reincarnation enriched the literary character with elements of Garbo’s (off)screen personality.¹⁸ In his review of the 1935 adaptation, Graham Greene pointed out its impact on both Garbo’s and Anna’s cinematic careers. He suggested that “in *Anna Karenina* she [Garbo] has been better served than in most of her films.” At the same time, “there is no other actress on the screen who would have not made the idea of doom false and preposterous, who would have convinced us, as she [Garbo] does from her first appearance on the Moscow platform” (35). And in the viewers’ eyes, even the undeniable discrepancy between Anna’s and Garbo’s appearance—Garbo is the only blonde Karenina—failed to impede the Garbo-Anna merger.

Brown’s film may shed light on Tolstoi’s heroine, if in a controversial manner. In his article “Anna Karenina’s Omens,” Morson suggests the intriguing possibility of interpreting Anna’s life through the Garbo film. Stating that Anna creates her own life, in which “everything seems to fit a melodramatic plot centering around [sic] a grand and fatal passion; there are neither accidents nor choices,” Morson adds that “this is why she [Anna] seems to resemble Greta Garbo *playing* Anna Karenina” (142). Emphasizing the discrepancy between Tolstoi’s and Anna’s readings of her life, he praises the film for capturing correctly Anna’s story “*as she tells*

¹⁷ The significance of this critical moment in Garbo’s career was supported to an extent by her victory in a financial battle with MGM just before shooting on *Anna Karenina/Love* began.

¹⁸ Lucy Fischer highlights the interconnection between Garbo’s on- and off-screen personalities, when some phrases of Garbo’s heroines—as, for instance, “I walk alone *because I want* to walk alone”—reinforce her reputation for aloofness and independence (120, emphasis added). Probably, the “free will” of Garbo’s persona accentuated Anna’s rebellious nature.

it to herself" (142). Just as the actress successfully embodies a "fated heroine" on screen, the literary character plays out the imaginary life of a "fated heroine," and consequently faces a tragic end. The implacable logic of the adultery myth defines both women's 'performances.'

Exoticism

The exoticism of Tolstoi's novel, or, more precisely, its "Russianness," spiced by aristocratic glamour, may likewise fascinate the visual medium more than does the French provincial background of *Madame Bovary* or the "gloomy" German setting of *Effi Briest*. As in versions of *Madame Bovary*, filmmakers cannot resist the temptation to exaggerate visual lavishness beyond the plausible. The grandeur of the palaces inhabited by the screen doubles of Tolstoi's personages conforms to the residences of the Russian Czars, one more myth successfully preserved within the vast museum environment in St. Petersburg and Moscow (Figure 31). While the later films, such as Rose's *Anna Karenina* (1997), take full advantage of the post-Soviet era's possibilities to film the action in Russia, earlier adaptations compensate for the lack of such authenticity with extravagance in sets that verges on excess.

The long-standing myth of a mysterious dualistic "Russianness" inevitably affected the contradictory manner in which *Anna Karenina* has been filmed. Sophistication and lavishness of the setting, décor, and costumes are combined with signifiers of the primitive and barbaric. For instance, *Love* installs the former through the Art Deco settings by Cedric Gibbons, and costumes by Gilbert Clark. In Duvivier's *Anna Karenina*, it is inscribed through Anna's sumptuous wardrobe, designed by Cecil Beaton, which strikingly differs from the characters' relatively modest residences. Unlike any other adaptation, Brown's *Anna Karenina* takes liberties by foregrounding the readymade stereotypes of the barbaric "Russian soul," and

counterbalances it with elegant Western gowns designed by Adrian. Presumably, this opposition restores the contradictory essence of Russian identity.

While exploiting national clichés, early Hollywood studios hired Russian consultants and Russian actors.¹⁹ In her article devoted to the Russians who worked in Hollywood during the 1920-1930s, Ol'ga Matich traces the careers of the huge émigré population that was involved in filmmaking. She emphasizes the difference between the studios' notions of authenticity and those of the Russians. For the latter, authenticity was a matter of "identity, even if it had been infiltrated by kitsch, their own or the film industry's" (209). As Oksana Bulgakova demonstrates in her perceptive article "The Russian Vogue' in Europe and Hollywood: The Transformation of Russian Stereotypes through the 1920s," Russians, in order to be identified as such, strived for superficial but exaggerated 'authenticity,' thus satisfying the American moviegoers' desire for exotica.²⁰ Therefore, they colluded in producing the clichés that the directors equated with 'real Russians.'

For instance, the opening credits of Brown's film proudly announce Count Andrey Tolstoy as its Russian 'connection.' Yet the opening scene of the film epitomizes the tendency to condense, however indiscriminately, quintessentially simplistic markers of national identity. The first, overhead shot depicts a huge bowl of caviar on ice, and as the camera pulls back, the spectators observe officers in Russian uniform greedily eating and drinking (presumably, vodka).

¹⁹ For instance, Lev Tolstoy's son, Ilya, who collaborated on the script of Goulding's *Love*, likewise appeared in Edwin Carewe's adaptation of his father's novel *Resurrection* (1927).

²⁰ While watching *Anna Karenina* at MGM studio at the end of the 1940s, Greta Garbo made the noteworthy remarks: "Those were real Russians... Those were feathers [a snowstorm]" (qtd. in Paris 409). Presumably, Garbo paid tribute to the Russian actors playing imaginary Russians. However, by juxtaposing the real (props as Russian officers) and the false (feathers as snowflakes), she undermined, consciously or otherwise, the principle of "authenticity" underlying the Hollywood productions, and its relative value in the reel realm. The feathers substituting for the snowflakes exclude the possibility of the "truthfulness" of Russians in the film.

A portrait of the Russian Emperor and Russian flags hang on a wall behind a table (Figure 10). Having signaled “Russia,” the director follows with a masterfully composed reverse tracking shot that offers a panoramic view of the table—incredibly long and lavishly set—with the officers standing along it singing a Russian folk song.²¹ The next scene shifts to a brothel with a gypsy chorus. Here, the officers continue their excessive drinking, but in the form of a curious competition. Each of them takes a shot of vodka, and then crawls under the table. They proceed in this fashion until all but one are unconscious. Predictably, the heroic survivor is Vronskii. While establishing him as a true aristocrat and the best officer, blessed with an extraordinary tolerance for alcohol, this scene ironically presages Anna’s choice of lover and her subsequent defeat.²² More importantly, the episode ensures the viewers’ credulity in endorsing the film’s Russianness and prepares them to be lost in the vortex of a spectacularly Russian adultery.

Intensity of adultery

The prevalence of adultery in *Anna Karenina* likewise contributes to its leading position among the other novels of adultery. Characteristic of the numerous characters’ lives, sex outside marriage constitutes the focus of Tolstoi’s text. No matter how structurally relevant and spiritually influential the Levin storyline is, the novel’s fame rests on Anna’s tragedy, and not on Levin’s quest for the meaning of human existence. Anna’s story, not Levin’s, excites an average

²¹ Brown first employed a similar reverse-tracking shot in *The Eagle* (1925). He recalls “No equipment existed to do it. So we made two perambulators. We put one on each side of the table and constructed a bridge, with stressbeams so that it was rigid. Then we dropped a crosspiece and fastened the camera from the top, so that the bottom of the camera could travel along the top of the table. Nothing could obstruct the movement of the camera, so we had prop boys putting candelabra in place just before the camera picked them up. I liked the effect so well I did it again in *Anna Karenina*” (qtd. in Paris 316).

²² In a somewhat similar vein, the protagonist of Sergei Bondarchuk’s film *A Man’s Fate* [*Sud’ba cheloveka* 1959] establishes his Russian identity as superior to the German: by gulping down three glasses of vodka without any food, he earns the German officers’ admiration and the Russian audience’s approval.

reader/viewer. In this respect, cinema not so much intentionally truncates the novel as visually embodies its mythic core as preserved in the collective memory and the unconscious.

Adultery saturates the life of the *beau monde*. Not only are its various representatives involved in extramarital affairs—Betsi Tverskaia, Liza Merkalova, Safo Shtol'ts, Baroness Shil'ton—but also the numerous adulteries and adulterers serve as perennial themes for gossip and discussion. They form the pivot of the *beau monde*'s existence. This form of unattainable “bliss,” about which Emma Bovary learned from books, and a glimpse of which she steals during the ball at Château Vaubyessard, constitutes Tolstoi's aristocratic realm. The characters haunting Emma's imagination populate Anna's non-imaginary world. In contrast to Emma's adulteries, unusual for her environment as described by Flaubert, and Effi's adulterous “slip” as hinted at by Fontane, Anna's affair as represented by Tolstoi is part of an omnipresent phenomenon. While the social exceptionality of Emma's and Effi's affairs subjects them to the stigma of being social pariahs, Tolstoian high society ostracizes Anna for the “abnormal” way she conducts her affair rather than for having one.

Moreover, by rooting adultery in the immediate past—Vronskii's mother is famous for her affairs—and by referring Anna's transgression to previous literary traditions (of libertinage and adultery) and ancient mythology, the writer historicizes the multiple manifestations of infidelity in Russian high society. For instance, the scene depicting Anna leaning over a sleeping Vronskii with a candle in her hands is reminiscent of the myth of Cupid and Psyche. Psyche's treachery incurred her long-term punishment by Venus. In her analysis of the shadow imagery in *Anna Karenina*, Amy Mandelker traces two additional myths of transgression in Tolstoi's subtext: the Faust legend and the biblical fall in Genesis (142). In that sense, Tolstoi's novel absorbs various myths of adultery and complicates them psychologically.

In addition, the imposition of the tragic love's nuances on an affair inevitably enhances Anna's adultery. Emma's two affairs reduce the tension of the adultery myth and negatively affect the readers'/viewers' perception of the heroine because of her 'immorality' as an adulteress. Effi's relative indifference to her lover eliminates the necessity of empathy for an illicit passion. Conversely, Anna's self-sacrificial devotion to a single man reanimates the myth of a "love that is stronger than death." As another manifestation of the same paradigm, Anna's maternal passion for her son and the impossibility of reconciling it with her passion for the lover arouse audiences' compassion.

Adulteress-mother

As a relevant element in the plot dénouement, Serezha significantly contributes to the tragic dimension of his mother's affair. In contrast to Emma's and Effi's daughters, who fail to affect their mothers' fates, Serezha occupies a central position in the peripeteia of Anna's adultery. While her indifference to Annie, her daughter by Vronskii, parallels Emma's neglect of her child owing to her gender, Anna's passion for Serezha, her son by Karenin, may be compared only to her passion for Vronskii. Her strong attachment to her son complicates the 'traditional' love triangle, transforms the child into Vronskii's rival, supports the tension between the three apexes—Vronskii-Anna-Serezha/Karenin—and thus exacerbates Anna's deplorable position between the male characters.

Although not necessarily contradicting the statement that female transgression against the marital bond, as depicted in the nineteenth-century novel of adultery, defines the gender of the heroine's child, the portrayal of Anna's relationship with her son and daughter fulfills a more

intriguing function.²³ On the one hand, Anna's strong connection with Serezha and her inability to relate to her daughter mark less the presence or the lack of maternal love, than Anna's gradual separation from her own sex and its traditional preoccupations—a feature that manifests itself more obviously as her affair with Vronskii's progresses. Taking the stance of an independent woman, she excludes herself from the domain of female delights. On the other hand, Serezha is Vronskii's precursor. In defiance of Segal's just observation that the adulteress's son, "a real barrier to desire," is supposed to pull the strings of her guilt (9), Serezha embodies his mother's unclaimed sexuality and desire itself. While Anna's adultery promotes her son to an adult level through his direct involvement in their conflict, the explicitness of his point of view in the text places him on a par with the major characters.

Not accidentally, to intensify Anna and Vronskii's romance on the silent screen, Goulding resorted to the device of an emphasis on the eroticism of Anna and Serezha's relationship. In a somewhat sarcastic vein, Barry Paris, one of Garbo's biographers, commented that in her 1927 and 1935 films, "Garbo's main lovemaking is directed toward her child. But in the talkie, it is virtually the *only* lovemaking she does" (317). Matthew Kennedy, in his recent book describing Goulding's career and life, likewise noted that, despite "the combustibility of

²³ Good mothers are granted sons, and bad mothers have to be satisfied with daughters. In her article "The Fallen Woman's Sexuality: Childbirth and Censure," Loree MacPike introduces a thesis that the portrayal of childbearing in the nineteenth-century literature stems from the (il)legitimate nature of female sexuality. Distinguishing between "patrilinear" and "matrilinear" mothers, Naomi Segal broadens the understanding of "punishment" imposed on the female characters by their creators: "[...] the woman transferred from one paternal chain to another, or the woman marginalized into a cellular space in which paternal is in abeyance, a matrilinear chain held up as negative utopia, harem, *gynaecium*, prison" (10). While the versions "of mothers and sons" allow "the author-narrator-protagonist remain inside a protective patrilinear structure," those of mothers and daughters "become a portrait in negative of the potential dispensability of male authority" (192). Although intent on reinterpreting the factor of childbearing in the context of cultural, historical, and ideological dissimilarities among the novels of adultery rather than merely that of gender, Bill Overton fails to abandon the paradigm earlier delineated by MacPike and Segal.

the Garbo-Gilbert pairing, an equally compelling story takes place between Anna and her son Sergei” (66). Nevertheless, the later adaptations toned down Anna’s passion for her son, depriving the boy of his ‘inappropriate’ significance as a potent counterbalance to the adults’ passion, refining and separating two divergent myths of purified maternal and illicit loves, and reinstating the adultery myth as the core of the narrative. The filmmakers rethought the child’s role by reassigning the love triangle’s tension to his father, whose sexuality increased in proportion to the decrease of his son’s (e.g., in Rose’s and Blair’s adaptations).

In sum, several factors contribute to *Anna Karenina*’s status as a dominant narrative of adultery in cinema: the intensity of the myth’s presentation in the novelistic discourse; the tragic dimension of Anna’s adultery; the exotic appeal attributed to the Russian original; the railroad’s significance for Tolstoi’s narrative and cinema; and, ultimately, the appearance of Garbo in Anna’s role. Additionally, the figure of the Russian writer himself—a widely acknowledged literary colossus—eclipsed the fame of the other novels of adultery and their creators. The numerous adaptations of Tolstoi’s novel not only reflect its textual polyvalence but also promote it on screen, and thus shape audience expectations of *Anna Karenina* films.

3.0 CINEMATIC ADAPTATIONS OF *ANNA KARENINA*

3.1 *ANNA KARENINA* (1914)

The earliest *Anna Karenina* in circulation—the partially preserved Russian adaptation by Gardin²⁴—comprises only four scenes without intertitles: Stiva and Levin hunting on Levin’s estate; horses pulling a sleigh along a snowy alley; Anna taking opium while in bed, seeing a ghost, getting out of bed, and escaping from the room; Anna joyfully greeting Vronskii, continuously knitting, discussing his tour with the prince, and describing her nightmare. A meticulous analysis of the actors’ gestures and mimicry reveals that the last scene faithfully, though rather sparsely, reflects the literary text. One recognizes the visual equivalent of the novel’s Anna reproaching Vronskii for his weak of “pleasures” with the visiting prince, attempting to exorcise “the demons of her jealousy,” and ridiculing her husband, whom Vronskii met while entering the house.

The visualization of Anna’s dream is especially effective (Figure 1). As soon as Anna starts retelling it, the background of the room fades out and transforms into a screen, which displays the peasant (*muzhik*) striking the train’s wheels with a hammer. The curtains—which simultaneously frame and separate the rear part of the room – add the final stroke to the

²⁴ For the first time, the producer of the film, P.G. Thiemann, announced the director’s name in the opening credits (Anninskii 81).

remarkable spatial transformation. Sitting with their backs to the improvised screen, neither Anna nor Vronskii can see the visual image. Vronskii comforts his lover, who is shown shielding her eyes with her hand. The enlarged image of the peasant in the upper right area of the frame dominates the minimized figures of the lovers in the lower left, inscribing its subsuming power as an omen haunting Anna and Vronskii's adulterous lives. In addition to a clever exteriorization of Anna's doubts and fears, the screen-within-the-screen asserts the supremacy of the symbolic vision/insight for Anna as well as for the spectators. Curiously, unlike Gardin's film, in which the visual image carries the semantic burden, and like the Hungarian silent film by Garas, which uses displayed words (i.e., intertitle) to narrate Anna's dream, most of the sound-era adaptations also rely on a verbal (oral) description of the nightmare.

The scarcity of surviving footage notwithstanding, one may posit the filmmakers' aspiration to adapt the renowned novel to the screen rather than to reduce it to a mere visualization of the adultery myth. The latter might have been unacceptable owing to the cult status of Tolstoi, who died only four years before production started. The contemporary critical responses to the film collected in the catalogue *Velikii Kinemo* enable a partial restoration of various segments (180-88). While reading them, one immediately notices that the major complaints spring from the critics' consistent comparison of the literary and visual texts. They focus on such discrepancies as cinematic inaccuracy in the details' representation. For instance, Anna's ultra-modern gifts to Serezha do not correspond with the novel's epoch [184], and Levin declares his love to Kitty in a garden instead of a room [184]. The critics likewise deplore the historical and physiological incongruity between Tolstoi's characters and those who play them. Stiva's resemblance to a footman rather than to an aristocrat [184, 185] infuriates some critics. Moreover, reviewers cite the "muteness" of the adaptation, wherein a lack of verbal commentary

reduces the depth of “complex spiritual movements” to the simplicity and vulgarity of empty visual signs [181, 182]. The casting of Mariia Germanova, an actress at the Moscow Art Theater, in the title role also provoked negative comments about her appearance. Nevertheless, her “psychologically” faithful performance, in accordance with the traditions of the Moscow Art Theater, received acknowledgment.²⁵

In their demands for fidelity to the novel and its epoch, these educated early film spectators displayed an innocence uncharacteristic of a modern audience. Expelled from the verbal Garden of Eden, today’s viewers, burdened by their accumulated cinematic knowledge and experience, expect an adaptation to diverge from the literary source rather than to clone it. On the other hand, bereft of historical and sometimes literary memory, these same viewers might remain insensitive to references regarding a character’s preposterous and non-aristocratic whiskers, Anna’s fit rather than plump body, or an excessively anachronistic view of the train’s engine.

It is noteworthy that, in his search for the correct make-up for Karenin, Gardin relied on the famous painting by Vasilii Pukirev *Unequal Marriage* (*Neravnyi brak* 1862) rather than on Tolstoi’s verbal description (qtd. in *Velikii Kinemo* 186). The selection of such a source indicates that the director’s criterion for plausibility is based on immediate recognition, and the imprinted image’s correspondence to cultural icons rather than its historical accuracy. In the eyes of the filmmakers, the latter taps the painting’s ability to evoke associations that reveal the character’s essence, especially important in an environment devoid of sound.

In his memoirs, Gardin stresses several aspects of production: the theatrical atmosphere that prevailed during the filming; the pavilion’s size, approximately that of a theatrical stage; and

²⁵ Anna Karenina was Germanova’s first screen role.

the simplicity of the decorations that represented an “ultra-realistic” style (qtd. in *Velikii Kinemo* 187). The twenty-day shoot took place in a studio and in the real houses of the Russian aristocracy (e.g., Count Shcherbatov’s house). The mass scenes, to which producer P.G. Thiemann paid exclusive attention, supplemented the theatrically staged chamber scenes (qtd. in *Velikii Kinemo* 181). Despite criticism that the filmmakers failed to adequately render Levin’s spiritual sufferings, the Kitty-Levin line was not truncated (185). As various references mention, such crucial episodes as the races, Anna’s labor, and Anna’s visit home on her son’s birthday were included in the visual narrative. Gardin’s adaptation, however, ends with Anna’s suicide.

Although the film’s end signals the completion of the adultery myth rather than the dénouement of the novel, I refrain from concluding that Gardin’s adaptation centers on the myth. Realizing that any assumption about this film would be made on a speculative rather than empirical basis, owing to the scarcity of its footage, I suggest that Tolstoi’s text served as a major reference point for the filmmakers, and not as a mere marketing device for the film. However, in accordance with the habitual adapting practices of early Russian cinema, the literary text was inevitably (and understandably) stripped of its philosophical ‘surpluses’ and reduced to its intriguing core, Anna’s tragic love.

Zorkaia considers this stage in early adaptations a lowering (*snizhenie*) of the original, which led to its “lightening” and “simplifying” (*Na rubezhe stoletii* 101). Such a transformation could have resulted in the total disappearance of the novelistic content, but the audience’s responses, several critical reviews, the film contributors’ remarks, and the preserved original footage demonstrate the film’s conscious resistance to the subsuming power of the adultery myth. Gardin’s film pinpoints the tragic dimension of Anna’s love rather than its transgressive aspect, an emphasis that accords with contemporaries’ perception of Anna as a victim, and with

early Russian cinema's prevailing standard plot of "seduction" (*Zorkaia Na rubezhe stoletii* 244), which represents female protagonists as sufferers. In sum, the filmmakers' decisions stemmed from their novel-oriented aspirations, albeit restricted by contemporary approaches to the adaptation of classics.

3.2 ANNA KARENINA (1918)

Unlike Gardin's *Anna Karenina*, the silent Hungarian adaptation by Márton Garas, a prolific pupil of Pathé, strengthens the mythical core of the literary source. Focusing on Anna's tragic affair, the director completely eliminates the Kitty-Levin line,²⁶ and retains the Dolly-Stiva story in rudimentary form. The film uses Stiva as a means of linking episodes focused on Anna, her lover, and her husband so as to cover temporal and spatial ellipses.²⁷ Moreover, the 1918 adaptation redefines Anna's adultery as a seduction plot, with Anna as a victim subjected to suffering by Vronskii rather than by the *beau monde* ostracizing her.

²⁶ The fleeting appearances of Levin (in a curious scene of *Troika-Wettfahrt*) and Kitty (in the ball episode) do not allow the spectators to identify the characters or their connection with Anna and Vronskii. Unless searched for by a Tolstoian devotee, they are inconspicuous. Nevertheless, the seemingly illogical inclusion of the characters attests to the filmmakers' attempt to prevent possible accusations of literary infidelity, their intent to establish a link between the film and the novel, in order to satisfy the audience's expectations based on its familiarity with the original.

²⁷ While most adaptations employ Stiva (or his domestic troubles) as a starting point in the Anna-Vronskii plot, Garas's version, by mirroring Stiva's appearances in various spaces within a short period of time, pinpoints his function as an active negotiator in trying to obtain Anna's divorce. The quickness of Stiva's transference from Anna's room to Vronskii's and Karenin's recalls the train, especially as it is filmed in the first part (or "act," as the intertitles suggest) of Garas's adaptation. Reduced to a messenger, Stiva may be compared with the train transporting the characters. My observation that this cinematic adaptation inadvertently equates the train's and Stiva's functions within the visual narrative echoes Jahn's argument that Stiva is "the character most closely associated with the railroad" (5). As proof, Jahn lists Stiva's social mobility, his presence at the first and the last railroad scenes, his witnessing two children's railroad games, and his obtaining a better position in the railways department.

A desperate sufferer in the concluding scenes of the film, Anna (Irén Varsányi) is a happy mother and wife in its establishing shots. Added to the original plot, three episodes—a family dinner, Anna’s parting with Serezha, and her departure to the train station, with Karenin as loving escort—transform Anna’s troubled marriage into an idyllic family.²⁸ When Stiva’s telegram, which prompts Anna’s journey to St. Petersburg, arrives, the Karenins are pleasantly dining and conversing in a carefree manner. Anna sits at the head of the table,²⁹ her husband to her right and her son to her left. Her placement denotes, on the one hand, her leading role and responsibility as a mother and wife, and, on the other hand, her capacity to “behead” this well-balanced union. The succeeding episode shows the Karenins as a religious family, for before her departure, she and Serezha pray. Kneeling, Anna and her son face each other, their hands folded in prayer. This medium shot also includes the figure of Karenin and that of a female servant in the background. Karenin in the film emerges as a family man, not a state official with the features of an automaton. The additional scenes of Karenin stroking his son’s head after dinner, and later accompanying his wife to the train car, indicate the director’s aim to establish Anna’s family as a solid “trinity.”

Emphasizing the Karenins’ closeness as the initial situation in Anna’s tragedy, the Hungarian adaptation deviates from the adultery paradigm, which dictates a boring or troubled marriage as the starting point for an affair, and places Anna’s story within the seduction

²⁸ Langton’s version (1985), with Jacqueline Bisset in the title role, also establishes the Karenins as a solid family at the very outset. The opening shots depict Karenin and Anna’s return home after the reception celebrating his new award, and their entering Serezha’s bedroom to wish him good night. The inclusion of such an intimate moment inevitably creates the illusion of a properly functioning family.

²⁹ Curiously, as much as the dining table unites all family members in the establishing shot, later it signals the family’s disintegration. The couple’s fight about Anna’s inappropriate behavior in public takes place at the same table, but not during the family meal. Later in the film, the dining table as a symbol of a prosperous and integrated family is banished from the visual narrative.

Anna, Vronskii, and Karenin are depicted sitting only at their individual desks. Conversely, as a sign of internal alienation, the long table reappears in Zarkhi’s adaptation (1967), starring Tat’iana Samoilova.

paradigm, with Vronskii as a seducer. His strenuous pursuit becomes explicit in the ball scene, which portrays Anna as the prey to Vronskii-the-predator.³⁰ Garas has Anna faint during the waltz, and her brief loss of control over her body cleverly marks the beginning of her illicit love. In his attempt to adjust Tolstoi's text to the conventions of adultery, Garas replaces the mazurka—the dance that signals the beginning of Anna and Vronskii's affair in the literary source—with the waltz, “a form of erotic temptation” (Sandler 251). But to indicate Anna's resistance to Vronskii, the Hungarian director prudently prevents the dance associated with a sexual transgression from concluding.³¹

In a similar vein, the succeeding episode presents Vronskii as a libertine. In response to his, presumably, frivolous remarks, Anna interrupts their conversation and reminds him of her marital status. In contrast, the film ‘voices’ Anna's behavior, thereby reducing Vronskii to a ‘flat’ personage-seducer, at odds with the psychologically complex figure of Anna as the seduced. The response of an indignant Anna, on the one hand, supports the viewers' assumptions about the Vronskii function, and on the other hand, defines Anna as an object of male aggressiveness. This distribution of roles conforms to the seduction plot rather than to the adultery plot. Two medium close-ups of Vronskii reinforce an unflattering perception of him in the scene in which he greedily observes Anna in Stiva's house on the night of her arrival in

³⁰ Although most adaptations eschew portraying Vronskii as a sinister seducer, they fail to resist the temptation to ‘embellish’ his slavish behavior in Anna's presence. For instance, Blair's film (2001), starring Helen McCrory, ‘improves’ his personality from the very outset. Before even dancing with Anna, he invites her to smoke Egyptian opium with him (which she gladly does). Moreover, in his attempt to prevent Anna from leaving the ball, Vronskii not only follows her, but also grabs her hands in the presence of other guests.

³¹ As Stephanie Sandler suggests, the partners' closeness, their isolation from the other couples, and, more importantly, the intensity of the dance resting on the repetitive use of the same steps contribute to the perception of the waltz as a “reprehensible” dance. “The waltz's dangers, then, would extend to an unarticulated perception that this dance was generally without rules [as opposed to a strictly regulated mazurka], that it was a moment when anything could happen (and thus often did)” (268). Iurii Lotman underscores that the nineteenth century defines the waltz as a romantic dance: “passionate, insane and close to nature” (*strastnyi, bezumnyi i blizkii k prirode*) (*Pushkin* 526).

Moscow, and in the episode in which he ambiguously ogles the wet nurse in Anna's presence.³²

The adaptation's superficial delineation of the Vronskii persona deviates from Tolstoi's description of Anna's lover and redirects the visual narrative toward a mythical discourse.

In fact, Garas's version nicely illustrates Zorkaia's structural analysis of the seduction plot and its nine constituent functions (*Na rubezhe* 201-7): temptation—trip to Moscow; seduction—ball in Moscow; resistance—Anna and Vronskii's conversation at Betsy's; seducer's triumph—consummation of passion in Vronskii's apartment; discovery—races (and pregnancy); a new life—Anna and Vronskii's trip to the South; self-removal of the abandoned—Karenin's disappearance from the narrative; disillusionment—the obvious signs of Vronskii's coolness; and collapse—Anna's despair, culminating in suicide.³³ All other screen adaptations emphasize the groundlessness of Anna's suspicions and jealousy, and thus forestall possible accusations that Vronskii is a dishonorable seducer. No matter what reasons for Anna's frustration the films foreground—the loss of her son, her inability to move in the *beau monde*'s circles, or her overuse of opium—Vronskii's estrangement from Anna is depicted as the consequence rather than the cause of her deplorable condition. Vronskii is not shown as blameworthy. Only Garas's interpretation of Vronskii as a villain simplifies the literary treatment of the Anna-Vronskii-Karenin triangle, and simultaneously adjusts it to the prevalent narrative of early cinema that privileges the image of the woman-sufferer. Such a shift lends more "respectability" to Anna's persona. It also motivates a psychological elaboration of the female protagonist.

³² The actor's exaggerated facial expression in these close-ups inevitably strengthens such an impression. Although Garas's film demonstrates several features of "the new acting style," which is characteristic of the late 1910s and is based on restrained gestures and mimicry rather than exaggerated pantomime, some scenes are acted out in a "codified pantomime style" (Bordwell 189).

³³ In the films with one "move," Zorkaia distinguishes nine functions, but since every new move generates additional functions, their total is twenty-nine.

Irén Varsányi's eloquent performance and the rare close-ups of her face inevitably single out Anna among other characters. To reveal the protagonist's emotions, to introduce Anna's point of view as dominant, and to evoke the audience's empathy for a confused heroine, Garas's film occasionally employs the technique of close-ups.³⁴ A comparison between the close-ups mirroring Anna's various psychological states reveals a peculiar progression in both the acting style and the shots' meaning. The first close-ups unequivocally transmit Anna's feelings: her interest in Vronskii (in the ball scene), her sexual desire (while in the bedroom), and her agitation (during the race). The simplicity of decoding the actress' facial expression stems from her acting technique, based on a rigorous interconnection between the face-sign and its meaning. In such cases, the close-up merely comments on the situation.

However, as the film approaches the tragic dénouement, Garas increasingly uses close-ups not only to convey emotion, but also to substitute for whole scenes. For instance, the powerful close-up of Anna's profile as she leans against the train's windowpane replaces Tolstoi's extensive description of Anna's last ride on the day of her suicide. Inserted between the shot depicting an Anna severely suffering after Vronskii's departure and the shot preceding her suicide, Varsanyi's piercing portrayal of a silently crying Anna differs from the previous close-ups by virtue of its psychological multifacetedness (Figure 3). To a significant extent, this shot signals a climactic moment in Anna's affair, after which the tension lessens. Therefore, the succeeding episodes of her reading the last note from Vronskii at the train station and of her

³⁴ The rigorous precision of today's cinematic vocabulary requires identifying Garas's close-ups as merely close framings (compare to Kristin Thompson's definition of Griffith's first 'close-ups' as "actually medium medium-long shots" (Bordwell 191). Apart from the last close-up of Anna on the train, the other eight close-ups may be characterized as such only because they contrast with the long and medium-long shots. Garas's film demonstrates that Hungarian early cinema of the late 1910s was only approaching the stage of a face-centered narration as opposed to the space-centered narration customary at the time. The abrupt and clumsy insertion of these close-ups likewise attests to the transitory stage in the development of Hungarian cinema.

suicide serve more as an appendix borrowed from the literary source. This “double-ending” closure convincingly illustrates the myth-oriented essence of Garas’s adaptation. However, the negative simplification of Vronskii, the empathy for the female sufferer, and her husband’s neutral depiction add shadings of the seduction intrigue to the adultery paradigm.

At the same time, the silent Hungarian version neglects the train image as a force directing Anna’s fate, and, therefore, fails to endow it with mythical connotations. Employed as a “passage shot,” the train is bereft of its narrative potency. In the first act, Garas’s locomotive rapidly advances across the screen three times, and thus retains its significance as a device providing spatial and temporal continuity. However, the use of extreme long shots for displaying the speeding train in the snowy fields, or the long shots that register the motionless train without emphasis on the characters standing next to it, disrupts the link between the train and its passengers’ storylines. Their figures resemble the props of Lumière’s documentary rather than Tolstoi’s characters, thus depriving the train of its symbolic function in the narrative. Although Garas reiterates Lumière’s image in the beginning of his adaptation, he does not employ it in the concluding scene of Anna’s suicide.

Unlike Gardin, who directs the train toward the audience *à la* Lumière in order to engage spectators in Anna’s psychological state, Garas alters the train’s course. The long shot depicts a desperate heroine walking on the tracks toward the audience. The following medium close-up has her facing the train’s off-screen approach, as if from inside the movie theatre. Implying Anna’s death under the train’s wheels, the medium side shot of the flashing cars crowns the film. While eliminating the distance between Tolstoi’s protagonist and her viewers, Gardin’s closure intensifies the scene’s emotional impact. Garas’s ending, by contrast, enhances the audience’s voyeuristic pleasure through dissociating the spectators’ point of view from Anna’s. Thus, as in

the first “act,” wherein the locomotive merely signals a change of locales and is devoid of connotations as a structurally relevant image, the concluding shots establish the train’s subsidiary position within the visual narrative. As an ‘empty’ device, the train scarcely ensures the development of the adultery plot.

Unprepared to fully employ the cinematic image as a meaningful sign within the visual narrative, Garas instead relies on the verbal sign. Letters replace the train in the next three acts; they trigger and motivate the scenes as well as compensate for the absence of an aural dialogue. Significantly, the intertitles of Garas’s adaptation register the personages’ conversations rather than provide transitions between the episodes. Their multiplication on the screen occurs at such a pace as to produce the effect of an accelerating train. These letters stimulate the characters to act. Written, delivered, received, and read, the inserted epistles serve not only to supply the audience with necessary information and to advance the plot, but also to cement the film to its literary source with the most appropriate tool—the written word. Thoroughly designed, the complex organization of the letters’ appearance on the screen attests to their particular functions.

The Hungarian film consists of four “acts” that contain nine letters. Their identical and non-personalized handwriting transforms them into multiple manifestations of the same artistic device rather than the individualized reflection of characters’ traits or psychological states.³⁵ Only seemingly hectic, the letters’ projection on the screen has an underlying logic. The first two “acts” include one written document each: a letter from Stiva urging Anna to come to Moscow, and Vronskii’s note informing Anna about his health after the races. The third “act” not only contains more letters—four of them—but also reveals their capacity to comment on the development of Anna’s adultery. For instance, Anna’s letter to Vronskii announcing her

³⁵ The only adaptation that employs a convulsed handwriting as a manifestation of Anna’s confused state before her suicide is the British television production, with Helen McCrory (2001).

confession to Karenin remains unspoken, and thus attests to the lovers' futile attempt to legitimize their affair. At the same time, the next letter, from Karenin, whereby he insists on preserving the marriage, binds all three characters together while it travels from one to the other, and thus signals the inviolability of the inscribed Word/Law. We see Karenin writing and sending the letter to Anna, Anna reading and passing it on to Vronskii, and Vronskii becoming acquainted with its contents. The last four letters foreshadow the characters' movements: Vronskii visits Anna upon receiving her letter about her husband's departure; Karenin arrives home during his wife's labor after receiving her written request; Vronskii has to leave the club after learning from Anna's note that their daughter is sick; and the last letter from Vronskii prompts Anna to throw herself under the train. No matter how illogical Anna's reaction to Vronskii's note,³⁶ the written word retains its power to direct actions till the very end.

The only letter that fails to stimulate action is the love letter. Its appearance merely marks a formal link to the adultery paradigm. The fifth out of nine epistles, it has structural relevance inhering in its amorous nature. The camera registers Anna joyfully reading a letter, while Karenin inconspicuously enters her room and angrily wrests it from her. Unlike the other eight letters that propel the events' succession, this letter attests to Anna and Vronskii's affair, evokes the cuckolded husband's indignation, and introduces one of the key stages in the adultery plot. Garas has no need to show the letter's content, for it may be deduced from the adultery paradigm's conventions. Unlike the displayed letters that reinforce the novelistic peripeteia disguising the adultery skeleton—Stiva's domestic troubles, the races, Anna's labor, the divorce, Annie's sickness—the invisible love letter foregrounds the myth underlying the novelistic discourse. In sum, in Garas's adaptation, the structural centrality of Vronskii's love letter affirms

³⁶ From Vronskii's message stating that he will be back tomorrow, Anna concludes that "Das ist das Ende" (This is the end).

the film's reliance on the conventions of the adultery paradigm, albeit enriched with elements of the seduction plot.

3.3 *LOVE (1927)*

While Garas's adaptation rarely employs close-ups to reveal otherwise invisible shifts in Anna's states of mind, or to simulate her point of view, Goulding's silent film *Love*, starring Greta Garbo, relies on close-ups to focus on the characters' facial expressions, or more precisely, on those of the Hollywood stars. At the very outset, it should be acknowledged that the adaptation's primary goal was to shoot the stars, not the novel. This approach inevitably affected the structure of the film and its emphases.

As *Photoplay* concluded about the 1927 version by Goulding, "It isn't Tolstoy but it is John Gilbert and Greta Garbo, beautifully presented and magnificently acted" (qtd. in Paris 134). The playful marquee for the film, "John Gilbert and Greta Garbo in *Love*," on the one hand, revealed a real-life romance, and thus accommodated the spectators' interest in the stars' private lives. On the other hand, this advertisement predetermined the viewers' generic expectations of the on-screen romance, and more importantly, their perception of the visual narrative through the life of their renowned contemporaries. Such a shift not only permitted the off-screen reality and its myths to rearrange Tolstoy's plot, but also invested the worshipped stars' performances with authority.

Gilbert and Garbo's *renommée* sanctioned the crude deviations from Tolstoy's narrative, and simultaneously granted it new planes, such as Anna's striking beauty, capable of controlling

male lust,³⁷ and her unconditional attachment to her son, comparable with that to her lover.³⁸ Both facets of Anna's personality stem from the constructed image on the screen—that of the Madonna. The theme of elevated love constitutes the core of the 1927 adaptation, with Garbo's Anna radiating not *eros* but *caritas*. In this respect, the title of Goulding's film encapsulates the essence of the visual narrative better than the project's first title, *Anna Karenina*. Accordingly, Goulding's film accentuates the phenomenon of love and its various manifestations, obliterating Anna's adultery and relegating its subversive potential and immoral subtext to the background. Whereas Garbo's Anna commits suicide owing to Vronskii's wickedness, Goulding's Anna "removes" herself from her lover's life because of her nobility and his benignity, acquired not without her "lovely" influence.³⁹

Unlike any other celluloid version, *Love* takes such enormous liberties in adapting Tolstoi's novel to the screen that it seems almost illegitimate to compare the verbal text and its visual counterpart. Rather than following the usual practice of reducing the Kitty-Levin and the Dolly-Stiva lines, Goulding's version eliminates these characters and their subplots entirely. In addition, the visual narrative refrains from rendering the novelistic "excesses"—such as the confusing issue of divorce, Anna's pregnancy and labor (rarely if ever shown or insinuated on screen in the USA in this era), society's irreconcilability with Anna's affair, Vronskii's gradual coolness, and Anna's resultant despair. Goulding's narrative proceeds directly toward its

³⁷ One of the first scenes depicts Vronskii forcefully attempting to kiss Anna in the inn where he has accompanied her because of the fierce snowstorm on her way to St. Petersburg. Anna's lengthy icy stare puts a halt to his indecent intentions, and compels him to retreat. To a certain extent, the episode comments on Garbo's rather than Anna's relationships with men.

³⁸ Commonly, the mention of sexual overtones in Anna's love for her son adduces an example of Anna stroking her semi-nude son during her secret visit on his birthday (Kennedy 66-67, Paris 132).

³⁹ Such an interpretation scarcely originates in Tolstoi's motivation for Anna's suicide: "And death, as the sole means of reviving love for herself in his heart, of punishing him, and of gaining the victory in that contest which an evil spirit in her heart was waging against him, presented itself clearly and vividly to her" (744).

center—namely, Garbo-as-Anna. Such a bifocal orientation toward Garbo’s onscreen persona and Anna’s adultery results in a contradictory structure that bypasses the novelistic discourse in favor of the myths surrounding the two women. The sequence of episodes composing the skeleton of the film convincingly illustrates the priorities of the visual narrative.

The film opens with Anna and Vronskii’s encounter in a snowstorm in an open field. The weather compels Anna to accept his offer of aid and to spend a night at the inn, where he insults her with his impudent manner. But the future lovers’ second meeting during the Easter service allows Vronskii to apologize for his indecent behavior. The following celebration at the Karenins’ house signals the beginning of Anna and Vronskii’s romance. Not only do they briefly unite in a waltz there, but also, they tellingly drink champagne—presumably, an “imperial” substitute for a love potion—after Karenin raises a toast to Love (!). Here the editing between separate close-ups of the lovers creates the impression that they drink from the same glass. Next, the wolf-hunt scenes—especially, Anna and Vronskii’s shared fascination with the ride, their seclusion in the woods, and Vronskii’s declaration of his love for Anna—consolidate the adultery. The succeeding shots, showing a guilty Anna and her son after the hunt, Vronskii’s letter demanding serious steps from Anna, and the lovers’ conversation interrupted by Serezha’s appearance, mark the obstacles to the lovers’ happiness. However, a detailed episode of the races culminates in the lovers’ long-awaited reunion. After Anna leaves Karenin, and he visits them in Vronskii’s apartment, Anna and Vronskii escape to Italy. As soon as they return to St. Petersburg, Anna visits her son on his birthday, but retreats on Karenin’s sudden appearance. An infuriated Karenin gloatingly announces that Vronskii’s name will soon be “struck from the rolls of the regiment.” This news impels Anna to see the Grand Duke and promise him that she will disappear from Vronskii’s life. While Vronskii, unaware of Anna’s decision, drinks with his

comrades and the Grand Duke to Love (!), Anna disappears. And here MGM's direction definitively challenged Tolstoi's "tyranny" by shooting an alternate ending: one has Anna jumping in front of the train, but Goulding also shot a conclusion in which Karenin's convenient death allows the lovers to reunite.⁴⁰

Whatever their differences, both endings of the 1927 film characterize Tolstoi's adulteress as a selfless woman predisposed to sacrifice for the sake of Love. To protect Vronskii from the dishonorable collapse of his career, she voluntarily disappears—forever in accordance with the original tragic finale, or temporarily until her husband's death, in accordance with the scriptwriter Frances Marion's innovation/adaptation. Curiously, Garbo's interpretation of Anna as a transcendental character better corresponds with the "improved" ending, because it demonstrates her success as a mediator and restorer of the family archetype—man, woman, child. Paradoxically, Anna's adultery entails the formation of an exemplary family rather than its destruction. Love, and not blood, cements this union. The concluding shot depicts Vronskii visiting Serezha in his military school after a three-year break, while Anna unexpectedly appears from the swinging open doors.⁴¹ Love triumphs, the loss of the unloved and unloving Karenin

⁴⁰ Despite the frequent commentaries on *Love's* double-endedness as an attempt to satisfy the spectators in the US and overseas—an explanation to which the only accessible copy of 1994 by Turner Classic Movies adheres—Paris provides his readers with more curious information. While the American distributors on East and West coasts preferred the original ending, the "in-between" audience was introduced to a new ending (132). It is unlikely, however, that the distributors' arbitrariness triggered the viewers' discontent, precisely because of audience expectations of seeing a love story with Garbo in the title role rather than the screen version of Tolstoi's novel, probably unfamiliar to most of them. At the same time, judging from the statement of a Russian scholar, Lev Anninskii, that Goulding's film introduced Anna's suicide only as a dream optimistically followed by a happy-ever-after ending (174), one may conclude that in Russia the 1927 adaptation was shown with two closures as successive parts of the same narrative.

⁴¹ Extensively used throughout the film, the door transforms into a multivalent metaphor for transgression and for Anna's existence in incompatible realms. For instance, Vronskii's ardent pursuit is continually restrained by the closed doors in the inn and in Anna's house. Anna makes her final decision to participate in the wolf hunt, despite her earlier reservations, and thus to indulge her interest in Vronskii, while standing in the doorway to her husband's bedroom. Moreover, the scene depicting Anna and

notwithstanding. Thus, this closure supports the adaptation's essential focus on the Anna-her son-Vronskii triangle rather than that of Anna-her husband-Vronskii.

Moreover, Marion's finale echoes the earlier episode in the Karenins' countryside house before the races—in my view, central for defining the dominant (*dominanta*)⁴² in Goulding's film. Visually, this scene discloses the complexity of Anna, Serezha, and Vronskii's relationship, and inscribes it as a conflict-forming element of the narrative. The camera records Anna and Vronskii's conversation about their unbearable situation. Interrupting their passionate embrace, Serezha unexpectedly appears from the depth of the shot behind the glass door separating the garden and the room. Separated from each other by the door, the mother and her son merge in a kiss on the lips, while their symmetrical touching hands complete the impression of their convergence. For a minute, they reflect each other (Figure 4). Then, moving away from the door in opposite directions, they morph into two individuals. Exquisitely used by Goulding, the transparent surface serves as a mirror, on the one hand externalizing Anna and Serezha's indivisibility, and, on the other hand, foreshadowing their future separation. Inevitably, the episode concludes with a jealous Vronskii reproaching Anna for her strong attachment to her son, Anna declaring equality of her "infinite love" for both of them, and Vronskii deserting Anna.

Goulding's eloquent visualization of the mother-son bond captures not only his sense of quintessential maternal love but also Anna's inability to sacrifice it for Vronskii. At the same time, the organization of the shots displaying Anna and her son somewhat undermines the

Vronskii together for the last time is structured around the door's opening and closing. Anna's inner struggle to leave her lover and the power of their love are visualized through Anna and Vronskii's inability to leave the door closed.

⁴² In Roman Jakobson's words: "The dominant may be defined as the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components. It is the dominant which guarantees the integrity of the structure" (Matejka 82).

significance of Anna and Vronskii's love, or, at least, diminishes its power. Graphically, "the two-bodies-merging embrace" of the lovers is contrasted with "the two-bodies-separate embrace" of mother and son. Usually, the amorous couple is depicted either in an ardent embrace obscuring the characters' individual features, or separately while facing the audience in the shot/reverse-shot sequences. Conversely, the close-ups of Anna and Serezha show them together and facing each other (Figure 6). The distance between their bodies encourages the audience to view them as reflections of each other because of their identical facial expressions, movements, and gestures (mainly holding and kissing).

It is tempting to see Goulding's mise-en-scène here as reanimating the myth of androgynous creatures split in half by the jealous gods—recounted by Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*—giving it both a maternal and a romantic inflection. While Goulding represents the unity of mother and son as a single body, he highlights the lovers' isolation from each other. Whereas Anna and Vronskii strive for perfect union, Anna and Serezha have already achieved it. Curiously, the "happy-ending" version of *Love* bestows upon the lovers this harmonious state—as signaled by their embrace in the film's concluding shot—only after Vronskii merges with Anna's son in "the two-bodies-separate embrace" through a close imitation of her gestures (Figure 7). Virtually substituting for an absent Anna, a Vronskii fleetingly transformed into Serezha's mother ensures the lovers' future androgynous unity.⁴³ The film's "unhappy" version, however, both disrupts the logic of Goulding's interpretation of Anna as the divine Mother and contradicts Tolstoi's representation of Anna as primarily Vronskii's mistress. In its emphasis on Garbo's physical and spiritual superiority, its transformation of the adulteress into the exemplary mother, the adaptation violates the structure of the adultery plot—failing to provide her with

⁴³ Barbara Heldt claims that the "androgynous terms"—meaning both lovers' submissiveness—in which Tolstoi describes Anna and Vronskii's romance create an irresistible appeal for readers (43).

sufficient motivation for abandoning her son or for committing suicide in order to free her lover. In the wake of these shifts, the original tragic dénouement evokes perplexity and appears even more artificial than Marion's ending.⁴⁴

Moreover, Anna's violent death ruptures associations implied by Garbo's "divine" face, which is presented as a portal to the heroine's psychology. By veiling Garbo's face in the opening shots, Goulding builds "suspense" and enhances the audience's and Vronskii's anticipation. Once uncovered in the "inn" scene, Anna's face strikes Vronskii so much that he forgets to extinguish a burning match (Figure 5). Like Goulding, Brown in his 1935 adaptation also creates a pause before exposing Garbo's face through the steam screen unexpectedly emerging in front of Vronskii, and emphasizes the mesmerizing effect of Anna's face on him (Figure 11). Although such an introduction flouts Tolstoi's portrayal of the lovers' first meeting, it is consistent with the device of postponing "gratification" of the viewer frequently employed in revealing the mysterious beauty of Garbo's on-screen personas. For instance, Brown's *Flesh and the Devil* (1927) mirrors the impact of Countess Felicitas von Kletzingk's appearance on the male protagonist, Leo (John Gilbert), before showing her "admirable face-object" (Barthes 82). The delay in displaying the object of ecstasy, on the one hand, valorizes the spectators' scopic pleasure, and, on the other hand, programs their reaction to the screen image.

In his attempt to decipher the enigma of Garbo's face, Barthes suggests that it "represents this fragile moment when the cinema is about to draw an existential from an essential beauty, when the archetype leans toward the fascination of mortal faces, when the clarity of the flesh as

⁴⁴ For instance, Mordaunt Hall, a *New York Times* reviewer, writes that "the spectators were surprised on the opening night of this picture, because they expected Anna to go forth with her child, or that the story-teller of the screen would cause the husband to die and to show Anna and Gilbert happy" (7). Curiously, the critic proposes an ending identical to Marion's. Skeptical about the likelihood that he was familiar with both endings, I suggest that the logic inspired by Garbo's performance dictated this imagined closure.

essence yields its place to a lyricism of Woman” (83-84). Producing such an overwhelming effect on her audience, Garbo’s face also succeeds in enslaving Tolstoi’s narrative. While the writer pinpoints such appealing “earthly” features of Anna’s personality as kindness, tenderness, and liveliness, William Daniels, Garbo’s cameraman, illuminates her *divinity*. Defining *the Divine*—an appellation bestowed upon Garbo—Barthes interprets it not as an acknowledgment of her exceptional beauty, but as “the essence of her corporeal person, descended from a heaven where all things are formed and perfected in the clearest light” (83). And, in fact, Goulding’s and Brown’s introductions to their Garbo-as-Anna privilege these two elements—creation in the light and descent from heaven—respectively.

3.4 ANNA KARENINA (1935)

In the cinematic history of *Anna Karenina*, Clarence Brown’s film of 1935 was the most influential, primarily because of the “mesmerizing Garbo” herself. Probably, all actresses portraying Anna on screen were daunted by the challenge of following Garbo’s performance. By now critics compare any version of *Anna Karenina* to this one, the first sound adaptation of Tolstoi’s novel. The story of its production shows how the film, unlike its literary source, necessitates the interaction of various forces that were sometimes hostile to one another. The first director of the 1935 adaptation, George Cukor, left the project because he “couldn’t face all the suffering, agony and rat-killing” of the original story (Swenson 331). Garbo’s co-star, Fredric March, considered the project a mistake, and was anxious to make a modern picture instead of a costume drama. The producer himself, tired of the endless instructions from the Production Code

Office regarding the script, insisted on doing another film.⁴⁵ However, since Garbo was unwilling to alter her schedule in any way, work started on *Anna Karenina*, with Brown as its newly assigned director.

Like Goulding's 1927 film *Love*, structured around Garbo, whose mythical "divinity" subsumes the novelistic discourse and redirects the trajectory of Anna's adultery, Brown's 1935 version also highlights Garbo's presence. However, the earlier focus on Garbo-as-Anna blurs in favor of Anna-as-Garbo. The Garbo myth, working toward its consolidation in 1927, had reached its peak by 1935 and yielded to a growing myth of adultery as represented in Tolstoi's narrative. Rather than affirming the Garbo mythology, Brown employs it to elevate the status of Tolstoi's novel. Presenting his heroine as a paradoxically idealized adulteress-mother, Goulding's conception of Anna attempted to reconcile the Madonna-like image with that of an adulteress, therefore inevitably compromising both the adultery narrative and the perspective of the novel. Brown's 1935 film, however, softens the intensity of Garbo's earlier representation of Anna as both an impeccable mother and lover, while adhering more closely to the original storylines.

As in most celluloid versions of the novel, the passionate love story of Anna and Vronskii, or more accurately, of Garbo and March, bolsters the visual narrative.⁴⁶ Karenin plays a subsidiary role, in which his sole purpose is to show that his wife's love story is romantically

⁴⁵ The studio's main concern was that the picture could be accused of setting up a double moral standard. The administrator even recommended avoiding the scenes displaying intimate contact between Anna and Vronskii. Selznick wrote in response, "I am distressed because your comments come too late to do anything but give us the alternative of making a completely vitiated and emasculated adaptation of Tolstoy's famous classic" (qtd. in Swenson 335). He realized that any substantive changes would lead to a loss of the story, but he had to agree to some compromise.

⁴⁶ Gary Morson thinks that the novel consists of three, equally important lines. "Popular renditions of *Anna Karenina*, like the Garbo film or the BBC production, usually dramatize only the Anna plot, and we properly fault them for including only one story out of two. But I think that most critical readings which tell us that there are two foci are also leaving one out" ("Prosaics" 5). Although in the film of 1935 all three plots are transformed according to the laws of *lubok*-adaptation, the Stiva-Dolly line emerges more recognizably than the Levin-Kitty line.

doomed. Protestations of painful, forbidden love and references to “unimaginable despair or unimaginable bliss,” “Heaven on Earth,” “no escape,” or to guilt, punishment, and forgiveness simply frame yet one more Hollywood story of tragic love. According to the rules of that genre, the story of Kitty and Levin is happily transformed into “the unbearable lightness of being.” Conveniently present at the ball early in the film, Levin watches as Kitty loses Vronskii to Anna and kindly asks Kitty to dance with him in order to avoid exposing her humiliation. Presumably, the filmmakers later “give” Kitty to Levin as his charming bride to reward him for such gallantry. Even the Stiva-Dolly relationship is more complex and true to the book than the 1927 version. The screenwriters found an excellent and economical way of portraying Stiva by having him endlessly flirt with all the women he encounters, repeating what a wonderful woman his wife is.

The Anna-Vronskii story is also changed and presented with no ugly fights; there are no misunderstandings without an obvious reason between the lovers (such as Vronskii’s desire to join the Turkish-Serbian war); there is no opium and no disoriented last day. Accordingly, Vronskii leaves without saying a kind farewell, and Anna cannot bring herself to approach the train car because of the presence of his mother and Countess Sorokina. Anna stays at the station until nightfall, when rather surprisingly, she throws herself under the train. Why does she do so?⁴⁷ This is not an appropriate question for *kinolubok*, to which Brown’s interpretation belongs, for the main concern of this literary adaptation is *what*, not *why* or *how* (Zorkaia “Russkaia” 109).

⁴⁷ Curiously, at the beginning of their collaboration on the film’s screenplay, Clemence Dane said to Salka Viertel, “I have very little understanding for Anna Karenina. What *does* she want?” (qtd. in Swenson 330).

Another feature that classifies Brown's adapting strategies as characteristic of early *kinolubok* is his primitive way of gluing sequences together: one plot block is simply added to the next. The *Anna Karenina* of 1935 serves as a digest of the key episodes of the story. Every scene is completed as an independent episode and may be easily separated from the others. The main blocks of the plot, leaving aside the overture (the first three scenes with "a Russian flavor" mentioned above), are presented in the following scenes: at the Moscow train station; Anna and Stiva on their way home; Anna talking to Dolly; Anna discussing Vronskii with Kitty; the ball; Anna reading in the railway car; Anna and Vronskii at Bologoe; Anna at the train station in St. Petersburg; Anna and Serezha; a game of croquet; Karenin's warning to Anna; Vronskii and his mother talking about Anna; Vronskii and Iashvin talking about Anna; Vronskii at the Karenins' country house; the races; Anna's confession to Karenin; Iashvin and Vronskii on the officers' code of honor; Anna and Vronskii in his apartment; Kitty's wedding; the sojourn in Italy; Karenin calming Serezha; Vronskii in the regiment; Anna and Vronskii in a hotel room; the climactic scene at the opera; Anna visiting Serezha on his birthday; Vronskii reading Iashvin's letter in Anna's presence; Anna visiting Dolly, Stiva, Kitty, and Levin; the scene at the train station; Vronskii and Iashvin talking about Anna.

An analysis of these twenty-nine blocks of the plot demonstrates how strongly the film focuses on the Anna story. The only scene devoted totally to Kitty and Levin—their wedding—seems to be included in the film only for its "Russianness." Although Anna does not appear physically in the last five scene blocks, she is a subject of discussion in all of them. As is typical of *kinolubok*, nothing takes the viewer's mind off her story, and all "distracting" moments are reduced or eliminated.

In the novel, the heroine commits suicide as a result of her deplorable social and emotional situation caused by her fixation on the object of her sexual desire, Vronskii. In the 1927 film, Goulding's Anna voluntarily sacrifices herself to preserve his honor as an officer. By contrast, under Brown's direction, Anna throws herself under the train precisely because of her unwillingness to free Vronskii the officer. The fight preceding his departure for the war discloses the conflict between Vronskii's intention to join his comrades and Anna's desire to prevent him from fulfilling his manly duties.

During this episode in the 1935 film, Vronskii unequivocally declares that he is "sick and tired of love." One of the shots cleverly visualizes Vronskii's threatening potency by equating him with Karenin expelling his wife from the house. Instead of showing Vronskii facing Anna, who questions him about his dinner with the regiment, the camera focuses on the heavy back of Vronskii's head. Executed as a powerful close-up, this shot implies the menace emanating from the man. Despite the difference between this close-up and the usual technique of filming Karenin's oppressive full-size figure from below, Brown's direction brings to the fore the essential similarity between Anna's lover and her husband, their hostility.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, the succeeding shot fails to support the implied connection as the camera unexpectedly switches from showing Anna behind a sitting Vronskii to showing her facing him. Vronskii's irritated tone is also reminiscent of Karenin's preaching to his wife on the inviolability of marital ties. The suggested parallels between Anna's lover and her husband result in a curious paradox within the adultery paradigm: it is not the lovers who confront the cuckolded husband, but the adulteress who opposes both men.

⁴⁸ Additionally, the distinctly "male" occupations of Anna's husband (a prominent statesman) and lover (an outstanding warrior) justify the "male" unison of their voices.

Thus, the film exposes the antagonism between the male's prerogative to participate in the military fraternity and the female's "domestic" preoccupation with love issues. Anna's inability to separate the two spheres costs her her life. To emphasize this aspect of her tragedy, the film also tones down her jealous attacks on Vronskii. Significantly, in Brown's version, it is Anna's infringement upon male freedom, not her transgression against marital laws, that incurs punishment. In addition, the 1935 adaptation opposes Anna to the women—such as, for instance, Vronskii's mother and Countess Sorokina—joyfully bidding farewell to the officers. Not only is Anna graphically distant from Vronskii's train car, beside which the women are standing, but also Vronskii's mother confesses that the sight of her son's uniform gladdens her, a sentiment that contrasts with Anna's feelings and manifests her otherness.

Moreover, the male discourse in the film frames the story of Anna's adultery.⁴⁹ Similar to the film's overture, which flamboyantly depicts masculine ways of spending time, the shots following the suicide scene show Vronskii and Iashvin, the latter seeking to console his friend, as they sum up Anna's fate. Sympathetic yet essentially condescending, the judgment of the two men—that Anna is "forgotten and forgiven"—provokes viewers' resistance, especially because the episode occurs in her surrogate presence. Securely silenced and reduced to the photograph positioned between the conversing men, Anna must acquiesce to the male verdict. The conclusive opinion of the men reanimates the novel's epigraph, "Vengeance is mine. I will repay," and thus their judgment equates them with that of a higher power. Despite her brief

⁴⁹ Clarence Brown's film *Romance* (1930), also starring Garbo, employs the same composition. The aged clergyman narrates the story of his romance with the "divine diva" Rita Cavallini, who, as a result of her infatuation with the young man, chooses the righteous path as a convent nun.

victory over the male circle represented by Vronskii's resignation, Anna ultimately loses him to the regiment. The patriarchal order reasserts itself.⁵⁰

Brown's film grants male discourse the authority of condemnation.⁵¹ Throughout the visual narrative, the men directly or obliquely pass judgment on Anna. On Serezha's birthday, the thundering voice of her indignant husband exiles Anna from the house, thus highlighting the excruciating power of the male word. Even Anna's buoyant brother, Stiva, an opponent of the monogamous conjugal life, lectures her on the sanctity of the family during their last encounter in his house. Moreover, Levin, whose acquaintance with Anna in Brown's adaptation is limited to a fleeting encounter at the ball, likewise passes his judgment on her: "Whatever she's done, she is paying for it." The final conversation between Anna's lover and his friend crowns the male narrative that conspicuously captures the disruptive forces of female adultery, even if the divine Garbo herself represents it. Displayed in the concluding shot, her entrapped image, tellingly enclosed in a shiny picture frame, attests to her failure as Tolstoi's adulteress. Unlike Goulding's Anna, she retreats in the face of Tolstoi's or, more precisely, male, authority.

Additionally, Vronskii as Anna's lover is given an appalling interpretation in Brown's film. This depiction results from the lack of a cementing reference point and the friction among the three major forces—namely, Garbo's powerful presence, the memory of Goulding's 1927 film,⁵² and Tolstoi's plot. For a while, reminiscent of John Gilbert and his performance, Fredric

⁵⁰ Not accidentally, whereas Goulding deprives Vronskii of a close male friend, and portrays him exclusively in connection with Anna, Brown reinforces Vronskii's membership in the community of men through emphasis on Vronskii's strong attachment to Iashvin.

⁵¹ In a peculiar way, this adaptation of Tolstoi's novel corresponds with Segal's interpretation of Anna's fate as her fixation on the patrilinear function: "Anna is entrapped in her patrilinearity, condemned to look for love (and here her author is crucial) where there must instead be judgment" (Segal 141).

⁵² Numerous episodes in the 1935 film attest to the director's attempt to revise Goulding's *Love*. While some of these revisions appear as obvious remakes (e.g., the races), the others disguise their imitative origins. For instance, analyzed in the previous section, the 1927 episode where Anna and Vronskii drink

March, as Vronskii, ceaselessly declares his devotion to Anna. However, his restrained performance reduces the credibility of his verbal statements, and in the course of the narration Vronskii transforms into a presumptuous lover more preoccupied with his regiment than with the woman who loves him. Whereas Gilbert undeniably succeeds in portraying an amorous Vronskii, despite criticisms of his exaggerated acting,⁵³ March, who was not a major romantic lead, fails to convey the passion that endures throughout the various stages of the affair. This impression may stem from the actor's unconvincing performance as well as from the adaptation itself. Unlike Vronskii of the 1918 film, played by Kertész Descó as the seducer who deserts Anna, probably for another woman, Brown's Vronskii-the-warrior paradoxically rejects his lover because of her sex.

Later screen versions of the novel play down Vronskii's coolness as a motive for Anna's suicide and thus diminish his responsibility for her actions. For instance, Langton's 1985 television film, starring Christopher Reeve as Vronskii, closes with the freeze-frame of an extreme close-up of a screaming bereaved lover. The shot signals his deepest involvement and shock, comparable to the explicitly expressed remorse in even later versions, such as those of Rose in 1997, with Sean Bean as Vronskii, and of Blair in 2001, with Kevin McKidd. However, instead of lamenting Anna's death, Vronskii as played by March rather regrets his improper farewell—after the fight he had left her “without kind words.” While Tolstoi and most filmmakers introduce the war element into the plot mainly to portray a repentant man seeking

champagne, signaling their initiation into the affair, morphs into the close-up sequences depicting Anna's and Vronskii's faces behind the train windows on their way to St. Petersburg in Brown's later adaptation. Despite the divergent representations of the beginning of the affair in the 1927 and 1935 films, the detail of the rising sun that illuminates the future lovers' faces after they take a love potion or board the same train of adultery reveals Goulding's *Love* as a source for Brown's *Anna Karenina*.

⁵³ Although today's viewers may perceive Gilbert's exaggerated smile and his wide-eyed look as inherent in the silent-era acting style, his performance was criticized by his contemporaries. In his 1927 review, Hall suggests that Gilbert's part “might have been better if he had controlled his stare and his smile” (22).

atonement, even oblivion, Brown uses the war to indicate the dead-endedness of adultery, and, above all, female adultery.

Brown presents war and adultery as opposed manifestations of sexually marked activities. The fact that Vronskii's departure for the war serves as the tragic resolution of his affair with Anna reflects the unequal significance of the two phenomena. Inserted into the visual narrative just before Anna's suicide, the war diminishes the pathos of Anna and Vronskii's doomed romance, which Brown had established at the beginning of his adaptation, and seems to have inherited from Goulding's *Love*. Not accidentally, in the suicide scene, the train, like the lovers' passion itself, slowly retreats into the background of the frame and ultimately disappears. Having earlier released the emotional impact of a train rapidly advancing toward the camera, Brown calms the audience down after Anna's leap under the train's wheels. Simultaneously, the filmmaker redirects the spectators' attention to a post-suicide event—Vronskii and Iashvin's concluding conversation—which explicitly offers a detached and male-indulgent perspective on Anna's life (Figure 13). Anna's lover becomes an omniscient narrator capable of abstracting himself from the moral implications of adultery.

Both like and unlike the original narrative and its dramatic adaptations, the 1935 film defines the lovers' trip to Italy as the turning point in the adultery plot. Structurally relevant, the moment of their return to Russia signals the end of their triumphant love and reveals the discrepancy between their aspirations. While Vronskii longs to resume his role of warrior, Anna strives to keep him as her undivided companion. Previously absorbed in a mutual desire of absolute possession of each other, they now cease to share this desire. On the one hand, such an interpretation does not irreversibly alter the original meaning of the lovers' return to Russia as a bitter realization of their failure. On the other hand, the elimination of the concomitant events

preceding and succeeding the trip distorts the novelistic plot, and attests to the filmmaker's desire to expedite the agony of a tragic dénouement. As if exhausted from the effort of adhering both to Tolstoi's narrative and to Goulding's film, Brown resorts to the adultery myth and its inexorable requirement of the adulteress's death. Its cause becomes irrelevant.

To avoid presenting Vronskii's departure for the war as a major motive for Anna's suicide, Brown relies on the viewer's familiarity with the seduction template. According to its development, physical intimacy inevitably initiates the decline of the male lover's interest. Conveniently, the omission of Anna's labor in childbirth and her long recovery, as well as all allusions to the lovers' sexual relations, contributes to the perception that the long-awaited consummation of their passion occurs after their escape from cold St. Petersburg to warm Italy. Thus, once they have returned to Russia, Vronskii's desire for reunion with his comrades is subliminally justified by the seduction plot, now set into motion. Formally, Vronskii's behavior fits the paradigm. Therefore, the striking change in his attitude toward Anna, and her suicide ostensibly triggered by the lover's neglect, seem less perplexing.

The shift from portraying Vronskii as an honorable soldier rather than a seducer reveals a curious paradox. To preserve the authority of the male discourse that is consolidated at the narrative's end, the filmmakers had to resort to the popular seduction model. This move attests to the multiple incompatible objectives within the adaptation, and the lack of any mechanism or structure that could reconcile them. In the process of adapting Tolstoi's novel and remaking Goulding's film, Brown attempts to foreground a disapproving perspective on female adultery, but mistakenly ascribes it to the male protagonist, who happens to be the adulteress's lover.

Moreover, to follow the conventional adultery myth that must culminate in the adulteress's death, the filmmakers are forced to suppress the discrepancy between Vronskii the

devoted lover and Vronskii the narrator who condemns the adultery. Conveniently, the lack of psychological insight into the screen characters allows Brown to “play” with Vronskii’s personality and to deviate from Tolstoi’s literary portrayal. While Vronskii the warrior is granted the authority of a righteous man, Vronskii as seducer ensures the appropriate retribution for the heroine’s adultery, suicide. And while the adulteress’s voluntary death provides the circumstances that invite the male’s final verdict, Garbo’s gaze in this adaptation symbolizes, in Anninskii’s words, “femininity itself looking with a mute reproach at people who dragged her through the mud” (“Lev Tolstoi” 182).

3.5 ANNA KARENINA (1947)

A British film by Julien Duvivier,⁵⁴ with Vivien Leigh as Anna, marked a new stage in the cinematic existence of Tolstoi’s novel. In this 1947 adaptation, the complexity of the original, which had been significantly truncated in the previous films began to claim its place onscreen. Also, Duvivier ventured to release his narrative from the adultery myth constraining his precursors’ versions. Crucial as it was, this shift in adapting strategies could not ensure the adaptation’s success; in fact, it distorted the narrative structure of the film. Devoid of the strong presence of the myth—namely, of its triangular foundation—as well as of a “strong reading” of the novel, the 1947 visual interpretation suffers from the “inferiority complex” that the filmmakers seem to experience before the nineteenth-century novelistic discourse of adultery. As

⁵⁴ A prolific French director, Duvivier was influenced by “poetic realism.” Anninskii singles out its elements in the visual style of the 1947 adaptation, in which, according to him, the opacity of the air, where “everything floats in a haze, fog, and flood,” conveys the fatality of the stream embracing Anna (183).

my further analysis shows, the British filmmakers perceived Tolstoi's novel as only a part of the European narrative of adultery.

The palpable lack of a conceptual *dominanta* in Duvivier's adaptation possibly accounts for the cool reception of the film.⁵⁵ In one critic's words, it "was beautifully mounted and magnificently produced, even within the limitations that black and white film imposed, but unfortunately it seemed never to come alive" (Edwards 160).⁵⁶ Although guided by the novel, Duvivier failed to visualize it, even if only its quintessence, as a self-supporting structure. In contrast to Goulding's *Love* and Brown's *Anna Karenina*,⁵⁷ Duvivier opted for faithfulness to the novel, but precisely the illustrative rather than interpretative nature of his adaptation prevented it from becoming a cinematic "consummation."

Bakhtin's theory of authoring helps to explain the lacunae in the structure of this *Anna Karenina*. What Duvivier's film lacks is an "excess of seeing" (*izbytok videniia*).⁵⁸ According to Bakhtin, aesthetic activity comprises two obligatory, albeit not necessarily successive, stages: projection of oneself into the other (*vzhivanie*) and consummation of the other (*zavershenie*).⁵⁹ While the former—penetrating the character and emotionally merging with him—enables the

⁵⁵ Undeniably, the acting could be one of the additional reasons. As if unable to forget Anna's tragic end, Leigh was often depressed during the shooting, and "Korda was puzzled by her lack of spirit" (Edwards 160). Some of the actors are obviously miscast: Kieron Moore as Vronskii, Nial McCinis as Levin, etc.

⁵⁶ In a reviewer's words, Duvivier's film "lacks the verve of the MGM version released a decade earlier" (*Sight and Sound* 74).

⁵⁷ As Matthew Kennedy, Edmund Goulding's biographer, writes, "Tolstoy was none too faithfully interpreted in *Love*, but that didn't bother Eddie [Goulding]. He was not reverential to original material, no matter its literary stature, if it didn't suit the needs of a movie translation" (62).

⁵⁸ Bakhtin's notion of an "excess of seeing" and his suggestion that the act of perception is reminiscent of the interaction between hero and author shed light on the heterogeneity of the novel-oriented adaptations. Most films after the British 1947 adaptation may be identified as at least formally novel-oriented.

⁵⁹ Owing to the 1980s translations of Bakhtin's works made by Caryl Emerson, the verb *zavershit'* is usually rendered as "to finalize." However, the 1990 translation by Vadim Liapunov, which I use, suggests another English equivalent "to consummate." The translators' use of different words may reflect Bakhtin's dissimilar attitude to the process of consummation/finalization (*zavershenie*) at the earlier and later stages of his career.

author to obtain an “inner” cognition of his hero, the latter—returning to oneself outside the character—allows the creator to arrange and consummate this knowledge by virtue of his “excess of seeing,” enabled by his “outer” position. In Bakhtin’s words: “Aesthetic activity proper actually begins at the point when we *return* into ourselves, when we *return* to our own place outside the suffering person, and start to form and consummate the material we derived from projecting ourselves into the other and experiencing him from within himself” (*Art and Answerability* 26).

As an aesthetically consummated product of the collective unconscious, myth gives an author such an “excess of seeing.” Since Tolstoi “consummated” Anna as his heroine through this excess, the adultery myth determined the trajectory of her romance in the original story. In removing the mythic aspect of Tolstoi’s novel, Duvivier transforms the adultery line of Tolstoi’s plot into raw material requiring arrangement and consummation. Had the director functioned as a screen author capable of experiencing and simultaneously distancing himself from the characters as they were “consummated” by Tolstoi, he might have compensated for the lost (mythic) excess of seeing.⁶⁰ Yet in Duvivier’s film this metamorphosis did not take place; the director merely reproduced the verbal original as a visual narrative, without shaping it through his own understanding of the novel’s *dramatis personae*. By contrast, the creators of the 1918 Hungarian version “consummated” Tolstoi’s work while adopting the excess of seeing inherent in the seduction myth. So, too, the American celluloid versions of *Anna Karenina* derived their excess

⁶⁰ Unless reduced to a superficial cliché, the mythic element constitutes an excess of seeing, which requires “inner” cognition of the hero. Although integrated differently from the modern novelistic devices, the projection into the characters does occur in mythic reality. Suffice it to recall one of the basic narratives of adultery—namely, *Romance of Tristan and Iseult* (as retold by Joseph Bédier), which illuminates its “consummated” characters from inside and outside. Though Denis de Rougemont laments the myth’s death as a result of its vulgarization and popularization in mass-produced novels and films (232-35), one has to admit that the myth not only continues to shape readers’ and viewers’ minds, but also provides them with an authorial surplus.

of vision from various myths as described above, while “authoring” Tolstoi’s novel. As a powerful source of a ready-made excess of seeing, the myth-dominant, it seems, bridges the gaps in the narrative and ensures its integrity. Conversely, the dominant’s absence in Duvivier’s narrative leaves the original characters aesthetically unconsummated, despite his commitment to following the literary text.

The film’s very first shot demonstrates its close connection to the literary source (Figure 15): a page projected on the screen shows the novel’s famous opening line—“All happy families resemble one another, every unhappy family is unhappy after its own fashion”—and another page ends the screen version with the line, “And the light by which she had been reading the book of life [...] went out forever.” This verbal framing of the film accords with the basic method of adaptation used in this production: transferring as much as possible from the original text. The circular textual composition takes the audience back not only to the beginning of the novel, but also, with the last cut, to its epigraph, “Vengeance is mine. I will repay.” One of the last shots shows Anna under the train, which advances toward the camera and then leaves the frame, after which Tolstoi’s written text appears on the screen. The camera moves from above, craning down towards Anna’s solitary body on the railroad tracks in the darkness. While the emerging words acknowledge the novelist’s authoritative presence in the visual narrative, Duvivier’s choice of the bird’s-eye view alludes to the higher power inscribed in the epigraph.

Just as faithfully, Duvivier structures the film around Tolstoi’s original counterpoint of two couples: Anna and Vronskii, and Kitty and Levin. The couples’ stories not only develop parallel to each other, but also intersect in the wedding scene through crosscutting. While Kitty and Levin are getting married in a church, Anna is packing to leave for Italy with Vronskii. This climactic moment defines the two couples’ divergent destinies: Levin becomes a husband and

potential father, and Anna definitively separates herself from her son by openly becoming Vronskii's mistress. To demonstrate Anna's final break with her family, Duvivier betrays his otherwise strict fidelity to the text and sends Karenin and Serezha to Kitty's wedding, while the still ailing Anna remains at home.⁶¹ Although juxtaposed with the Kitty-Levin line, the Anna-Vronskii story retains its encompassing function.

Privileging Tolstoi's narrative, Duvivier simultaneously enfeebles the novel-oriented structure of his film by dissociating the novel from the myth. Consciously or unconsciously rejecting the adultery myth as a substratum for his adaptation, the director, nevertheless, fails to replace it with an equally strong structure. While the 1927 and 1935 films condense and strengthen the myth of adultery by stripping off the novelistic purported "excesses," the 1947 adaptation edges out the myth with the pertinent subplots of Tolstoi's novel. The inclusion of numerous novelistic scenes unrelated to the underlying myth, however, not only obscures the structure of Duvivier's film, but also entails deviations from the adultery paradigm. For instance, while the film's structure seemingly rests on the conventional adulterous triangle, the traditional characteristics of its constituent elements are neglected. This inconsistency inevitably undermines the very core of the myth—its adulterous triangle.

Duvivier refrains from presenting Tolstoi's characters in accordance with standard adultery conventions, and thus forestalls their immediate identification as the doomed adulteress, the predatory lover, and the cuckolded husband. The director blurs the roles ascribed to Anna, Vronskii, and Karenin when he lessens the passionate nature of the adulteress, nullifies her lover's assertiveness, and highlights the deceived husband's "humaneness." Duvivier's reading

⁶¹ Not only does the film invent this episode, but it also disregards the "geographical" implausibility of such an event. Owing to Tolstoi's meaningful assignment of the families to Moscow and St. Petersburg—the Shcherbatskiis live in Moscow, the Karenins in St. Petersburg—Karenin and his son cannot attend the Moscow wedding without taking a train.

of the characters challenges the adultery pattern, which in many ways rests on the fixity of its constituent elements. At the same time, the filmmaker reduces Anna's son, Serezha, to a minor component of the Anna-Vronskii story. Whereas Goulding's *Love* foregrounds Serezha as a true rival to Vronskii and creates an Anna-Serezha-Vronskii triangle (the remains of which are perceptible in Brown's *Anna Karenina*), the 1947 film disregards the dramatic potential of the child character. The boy ceases to act as a full-fledged personage.

Like most directors, Duvivier ignores Serezha's function as a moral barometer—a role emphasized by Tolstoi.⁶² He also hesitates to use Anna's son as a means of reinforcing a tragic dimension of her romance. Duvivier reduces Serezha to a mere signifier, first of Anna's status as a mother, and then of her deplorable situation. For instance, he alters the scene of Anna's return to St. Petersburg after she reconciles Stiva and Dolly: not only Karenin, but also Serezha awaits her at the train station.⁶³ While the original scene of Anna and her son's joyful reunion at home after her trip to Moscow shows their strong attachment to each other and simultaneously separates them from the head of the household, Duvivier introduces the Karenins as an exemplary family.⁶⁴

Additionally, Duvivier's conception of Serezha as a subsidiary character may be inferred from his decision to omit the unexpected encounter between Serezha and Vronskii in the

⁶² Tolstoi compares the lovers' feelings evoked by the boy's presence with those that "a sailor might have who saw the compass that the direction in which he was swiftly sailing diverged widely from the right course but was quite unable to stop, and felt that every moment was taking him farther and farther astray" (185). These thoughts scarcely reach the screen. While the restrictions of the visual medium prevent the narrator's comments from being fully transposed onto celluloid, in this particular instance, their omission springs from the fact that the adaptations celebrate the power of "a love that is stronger than death" rather than pinpoint the immorality of an extramarital affair.

⁶³ As if approving of this alteration and claiming loyalty to the 1947 adaptation of *Anna Karenina* rather than to the literary source, a 2001 British version by David Blair, starring Helen McCrory, reproduces Duvivier's interpretation of the scene.

⁶⁴ A similar interpretation was offered in the opening sequence of the Hungarian film by Márton Garas (1918), which establishes the Karenins as a solid "trinity."

Karenins' country house before the races. Devoid of significance as an independent character, Serezha is unable to compete with Vronskii for his mother's affection. Therefore, Duvivier avoids a collision between Anna's son and her lover in the same space; thus, their confrontation, which is taken to an extreme by Goulding in his film *Love* (1927), becomes irrelevant and superfluous. Whereas most adaptations include this episode in order to expose the complexity of Anna's ambiguous position as an adulteress and a mother, Duvivier eliminates Anna's moral dilemma, which is so essential for Tolstoi's novel.

In line with Serezha's transformation into a signifier bereft of a signified, Duvivier emasculates and reduces Vronskii to a "shadow."⁶⁵ The director exaggerates Vronskii's slavishness in his relationship with Anna, as well as with his mother, and simultaneously diminishes his relatedness to the military fraternity—a link stressed in Goulding's and Brown's adaptations. The 1947 interpretation of Anna's lover not only contradicts the traditional role distribution of the adultery triangle, but also goes against the grain of most *Anna Karenina* adaptations, which celebrate Vronskii's masculinity, albeit in different ways.

Two mythic figures seem to determine the cinematic doubles of Anna's lover—Tristan, a formidable exemplar of courtly love, and his inverted reflection, Don Juan, an unsurpassed master of seduction. While Garas's Vronskii manifests his masculinity in his behavior as a seducer, Goulding's Vronskii, though initially also a seducer,⁶⁶ proves himself by developing

⁶⁵ The *beau monde* of St. Petersburg sarcastically notes the changes in Anna after her trip to Moscow, from which "she has brought back with her the shadow of Alexis Vronsky" (135).

⁶⁶ In addition to the emphasis on Vronskii's impudent manners in the opening sequence, Goulding incorporates one of the traditional motifs of the seduction plot—a man entering a woman's room by a trick (Garry 283)—to ensure that the audience recognizes Vronskii-Gilbert as a womanizer. Vronskii's suitcase, "mistakenly" delivered to Anna's room, constitutes the pretext of his intrusion. Garbo's "divinity," however, thwarts his immoral intentions.

into a knight. Brown's Vronskii, despite some contradictions in his demeanor,⁶⁷ conforms to the chivalric archetype. Yet Duvivier's character is nothing like either of these: his Vronskii is neither a seducer nor a knight. Devoid of a distinct personality as a male lover, and subsequently of his agency, the British Vronskii as played by Kieron Moore preposterously occupies the niche designed for a successor of either Tristan or Don Juan. In fact, his inexpressiveness as a lover impairs the structural balance of the triangular pattern. Diminishing Serezha's significance might have strengthened the conventional adulterous triangle because his secondary status discourages viewers from focusing on Anna's decision to leave him for a lover and, subsequently, from recoiling from her. But the obscuring of Vronskii's male desirability weakens the reasons behind the triangular relationships. The consequence of Duvivier's inconsistency is that both characters function as Anna's irrelevant satellites indicating the director's "infidelity" to Tolstoi's text as well as to the adultery paradigm.

In contrast to Serezha and Vronskii, Duvivier's Karenin exceeds the limits of a cuckold and becomes an independent character. The film is most successful at tracking Karenin and his relationship with Anna, establishing that although Karenin is a prominent statesman and caring husband, Anna finds his love insufficient after experiencing passion with Vronskii. One of the penetrating scenes in the film shows Karenin seizing her love letters and pushing her away. The moment he sees her on the floor, Karenin repents of his violent behavior and offers Anna his hand, which she refuses. Later, when she starts to blame him for never having loved her properly, he helplessly and sincerely answers that he does not understand her. The visual key to

⁶⁷ What undoubtedly contradicts the chivalric code is the fact that Vronskii-March insults his beloved when leaving for the war. However, the last shots of *Anna Karenina* (1935), which depict him offering an apology to Anna's image in the picture frame and expressing his sentiments while addressing her picture, ironically link him to the advocates of courtly love, for whom passion necessitates distance and who desire their ladies most when far from them.

the psychology of this scene is Karenin's extended hand in a gesture that signals his habitual politeness, regret, and persistent desire to be reconciled with Anna (Figure 19). Karenin's violence in this episode, not manifested in Tolstoi's novel, reveals Karenin's feelings visually through gesture, whereas Tolstoi achieves a similar effect verbally. Karenin's lack of control and desire to compensate for his momentary violence cast him in a more sympathetic light than presented in the novel, where his stutter renders him vulnerable yet partly comical:

“No!” he shouted in his squeaky voice, which now rose to a higher note than usual; and seizing her so tightly by the wrists with his large fingers that the bracelet he pressed left red marks, he forced her back into her seat. “Baseness? Since you wish to use that word--it is baseness to abandon a husband and a son for a lover and to go on eating the husband's bread!” (363)⁶⁸

“That's all very well, but you think only of yourself! The sufferings of the man who was your husband do not interest you. What do you care that his whole life is wrecked and how much he has suf . . . suf . . . suffled!” (364)⁶⁹

With Duvivier's film, cinema begins to reconceptualize Anna's husband and his function in the plot. Karenin as a sinister or comic figure metamorphoses into a personage worthy of the audience's respect and empathy, at least intermittently.⁷⁰ At the same time, as a character psychologically more developed than Serezha and Vronskii, Duvivier's Karenin is another factor

⁶⁸ –Нет!–закричал он своим пискливым голосом, который поднялся теперь еще нотой выше обыкновенного, и, схватив своими большими пальцами ее за руку так сильно, что красные следы остались на ней от браслета, который он прижал, насильно посадил ее на место.–Подлость? Если вы хотите употребить это слово, то подлость это то, чтобы бросить мужа, сына для любовника и есть хлеб мужа! (364)

⁶⁹ –Да, вы только себя помните, но страдания человека, который был вашим мужем, вам не интересны. Вам все равно, что вся жизнь его рушилась, что он пеле . . . пеле . . . пелестрадал. (365)

⁷⁰ Unquestionably, the commanding presence of Basil Rathbone, an excellent actor and the Sherlock Holmes of British cinema, contributed to creating a convincing, more complex Karenin.

in the film that undermines the traditional adultery triangle. The emphasis on the husband's pain redirects viewers' attention away from Anna's distress and inevitably expands the tragic implications of Anna's affair. Brought to the fore while Anna's son and lover are relegated to the background, Karenin becomes a pivotal figure on a par with Anna. Together, they form a two-member opposition strenuous enough to replace the love triangle, with Vronskii or Serezha as its third point.

Duvivier not only depicts the effects of Anna's affair on her husband and shows his suffering, but also accentuates her acknowledgment of his condition. By doing so, the director pinpoints Anna's adultery as a disruptive social force rather than making it primarily her personal misfortune. This interpretation of her story contrasts with those of earlier adaptations. To accentuate Anna's tragedy, Garas portrays her as a woman sacrificing everything to a seducer; Goulding depicts her as a selfless mother and lover; and Brown represents her as a pariah in a male-constructed society. Duvivier, however, creates an image of the woman who recognizes her guilt in violating society's rules. In contrast to the cinematic predecessors of Vivien Leigh's Anna, whose tragedies are rooted in their inner selves (misinterpretation of Vronskii [1918], inability to combine maternal and romantic love [1927], or desire to dominate a man [1935]), the 1947 adulteress suffers from the rift that appears between her and the outer world after her separation from Karenin. As her husband, Karenin embodies her only chance to remain socially acceptable. According to Duvivier's interpretation, Anna's social ostracism, caused by her extramarital affair, triggers her subsequent behavior.⁷¹ Thus, the 1947 adaptation

⁷¹ Intriguingly, Duvivier's interpretation of Anna's destruction corresponds to Felicia Gordon's Hegelian reading of Tolstoi's novel: "By betraying her husband, Anna denies the universal ethical principle represented by the husband and, through him, civil society. In Hegelian terms, Anna loses all possibility of significant Being when she abandons her role as wife, since Being flows from the husband. Outside of

champions the marriage, not the “love that is stronger than death,” as a source of meaning.

Duvivier’s interpretation echoes Tolstoi’s statement that “the family idea” determined his *Anna Karenina*.

Duvivier’s emphasis on the role of society emerges clearly in the film’s detailed depiction of Anna’s *milieu*, which is absent from earlier adaptations. Resurrected from cinematic oblivion, many characters from the novel help to recreate the socio-historical background for Anna’s transgression against the institution of marriage. The film shows aristocratic life in Moscow and St. Petersburg, Karenin’s professional meetings, and Levin’s life in the country. The audience learns more about the Shcherbatskii family and Kitty from this film than from any other. Society becomes a live force here, not only applying pressure on Anna but also exposing the rigid rules of its “game.” Karenin teaches Anna how to behave in public; Betsy refers to the example of Lisa Merkalova, who masterfully coordinates husband and lover, while Serpukhovskoi explains to Vronskii the importance of marriage to a successful professional life. The main characters are no longer isolated from one another and the rest of the world, as in the Garbo films. They become a part of the social community; in most of the scenes they appear either in a crowd or juxtaposed against a group.

The 1947 film also establishes a curious connection between Anna and Stiva, one implied but not explicitly articulated in the novel. The day after the ball, Stiva comes home to take Anna to the train station; after praising her dancing of the previous night, he asks her whether she remembers “their old days.” This reference to a flirtatious past, though not reprised later in the film, coincides with Morson’s claim: “The key to understanding Anna is that she is Stiva’s sister, Anna Oblonskaia. It is a truism that Tolstoi had the special ability to create families that were not

marriage there is nowhere to go. She enters a parody of marriage as Vronsky’s mistress, but her self-confidence, warmth, and vitality vanish” (89).

mere collections of individuals but a sort of small cultural unit of their own” (“Prosaics” 7). No matter how unobtrusive Duvivier’s hint regarding Anna and Stiva’s shared past, it attests to the filmmaker’s determination to link his characters in space and time. Similarly, the rumors referring to absent people and their past, which are eagerly discussed by the *beau monde*, serve a similar purpose in the 1947 adaptation. Duvivier’s developed network of secondary characters subsumes the adulterous triangle.

As stated above, the reason for the filmmaker’s conscientious departure from the adultery myth was his wish to commit to the screen Tolstoi’s entire novel rather than its mythic core. However, his elimination of the markers signaling the national specificity of the setting and the characters, triumphantly celebrated in the American adaptations, may lead to a different and broader conclusion. Duvivier aspired not so much to adapt the Russian novel *Anna Karenina* to the screen as to adopt it as a European narrative of adultery by blurring its national exclusiveness. How else can one explain the contradiction inherent in the director’s puzzling decision to belittle Serezha’s role in Anna’s tragedy?⁷² If Duvivier had excluded the novelistic “complication” from the traditional love triangle, to focus on the structure of the myth, it would have contradicted his otherwise consistent orientation toward the novel and not the myth. However, in adhering to the European novel of adultery rather than to Tolstoi’s work, Duvivier had to obscure the Anna-Serezha line, owing to the Russian writer’s emphasis on the relationship between the adulteress-mother and her son, which diverges from other narratives of adultery.⁷³

⁷² While creating a powerful obstacle to Anna’s “fall” and highlighting its unequivocal immorality, Tolstoi, unlike Flaubert and Fontane, intentionally foregrounds her strong attachment to her son and describes their intimate relationship in detail.

⁷³ For instance, Emma Bovary’s and Effi Briest’s daughters are incapable of affecting their mother’s affairs and competing with their lovers. The children’s gender predetermines their inability to become rivals to their mothers’ sexual partners and partly explains Emma’s and Effi’s indifference to their own

The very beginning of the 1947 project attests to the filmmaker's indifference to the national identity of Tolstoi's novel of adultery. In the first version of the script, Jean Anouilh and Duvivier situated the story in France, and the story returned to its original Russian setting only at the request of the producer, Aleksander Korda (Edwards 158). The film nonetheless does not strive for national exoticism and has more European flavor than any other adaptation of *Anna Karenina*. Undoubtedly, Beaton's sumptuous European-style costumes add a visual exoticism to the British film, but their lavishness reveals the high social standing of the characters rather than their national identity.⁷⁴ The only visual marker that may signal "Russia" is the heavy snowfall that accompanies Anna's first trip to Moscow and her return to St. Petersburg. However, in the last shots of the film—when Anna faces the advancing train and her disordered mind recreates the snowstorm of long ago instead of registering the rain in her present—the snow tropes the turbulence of a romantic affair, whereas rain evocative of tears signals adultery's tragic end.

Unlike the American 1927 and 1935 productions, which condense simplistic markers of Russian identity—caviar, vodka, gypsy singers, a Russian *bania* (steam bath), and a Russian cure for hangovers—as a marketing device and as a token of the film's authenticity, the 1947 film deemphasizes the Russianness of the original, to make it a European narrative of adultery. And what is important is that the British filmmakers structure their celluloid version of such a narrative around a novelistic discourse while ignoring its mythic skeleton. Therefore the verbal framing of Duvivier's film—along with its title, *Anna Karenina*—rather than claiming Tolstoi's novel as its source, sooner testifies to the adaptation's dependence on the literary original and, consequently, the novel's supremacy. Declaring his reliance on a "high-culture" product,

daughters. While Anna's cool relationship with her daughter by Vronskii follows the same pattern, her strong bond with her son defines him as a powerful element in the Tolstoian love triangle.

⁷⁴ One of the reviews singles out Beaton's costumes as a defining feature of the film: "The result [the adaptation] is a handsome but woefully overdressed affair" (*Sight and Sound* 74).

Duvivier confers greater respectability on his film and thus employs the novel as both an “elevating” and a marketing device. Whereas Goulding and Brown strive to conquer their viewers by satisfying their desires for exotica, myths, and visually recognizable patterns in the plot, Duvivier ventures to please his audience by linking his adaptation to a nineteenth-century European novel of adultery.

3.6 ANNA KARENINA (1967)

This Russian adaptation by Aleksandr Zarkhi, with Tat'iana Samoilova in the leading role,⁷⁵ is distinguished by its accurate, respectful, and at the same time “strong reading” of the novel. The film interprets the original concept via cinematic devices without violating the source or its mythic core. Unlike Duvivier, who disregarded the adultery myth in favor of Tolstoi’s text, which he presented as a European novel of adultery, Zarkhi adheres to both the literary source and its underlying myth, but he redefines Anna’s adultery in accordance with the paradigm of a mythic hero/ine striving for changes in her inner self and in the world around her.

More than any other celluloid version, the 1967 rendition visually and aurally emphasizes the tragic nature of the Anna-Vronskii story and, moreover, renders it as a narrative of suspense. Zarkhi’s consistent reproduction of the novel’s omens accompanying different stages of Anna’s adultery and of the incessant anxiety that haunts the heroine creates an eerie tension that dissipates only in the scenes from the other story lines. Tellingly, a gunshot sometimes serves as

⁷⁵ The actress became famous in Russia and abroad for her dramatic acting in Mikhail Kalatozov’s *The Cranes Are Flying* [*Letiat zhuravli* 1957], the winner of the Palme d’Or at Cannes.

an abrupt transition between them.⁷⁶ The rhythm emerging as a result of such narrative alternation constitutes a peculiar feature of the Russian film. The arresting and even sinister music by Rodion Shchedrin—a key component in the film—as well as a mobile camera by Leonid Kalashnikov significantly contribute to the adaptation’s unique cinematic style and help to dramatize the plot.

Whereas other directors present the story of Anna and Vronskii’s affair without implying its tragic dénouement, throughout, Zarkhi approaches the plot with a strong assumption of such knowledge. He avoids any pretense that Anna’s future is unknown either to her or the audience. This adaptation therefore becomes an investigation of the foreknown suicide (or murder) of an adulteress—a shift that presupposes a commentating rather than a purely storytelling function of the visual text. Implicitly retrospective, the Russian version explores the causes of the heroine’s frame of mind and her tragic end, even while presenting the development of her romance with Vronskii.

Like Duvivier, Zarkhi begins his adaptation by projecting the novel’s first page on the screen and thus declaring the literary text as the encompassing element. However, the two directors’ similar intentions culminate in dissimilar results. To a significant extent, Duvivier’s detachment from *Anna Karenina* resulted in the illustrative nature of his adaptation. His removal of the original’s mythic core from the visual narrative and the characters’ “unconsummated” state undermined the film’s structure and impaired its wholeness. Conversely, Zarkhi’s original directorial vision and a distinct conceptual *dominanta* make the 1967 rendition a strong example of interpretation-commentary. Zarkhi’s “excess of seeing,” on the one hand, allows him to

⁷⁶ The gunshots are employed to foreshadow the tragic dénouement of Anna’s affair and to contrast the development of the Anna-Vronskii and the Kitty-Levin plots. For instance, while crowning the scene of Anna’s labor and according with Vronskii’s attempted suicide, the gunshot also opens the sequence of Kitty and Levin’s wedding.

cinematically consummate Tolstoi's characters from the authorial standpoint, and, on the other hand, to transform Anna's adultery into a conscious protest against society's effort to suppress her individuality.⁷⁷

Proposing that Anna's principal transgression is her unwillingness to perceive her affair with Vronskii as disgraceful and her refusal to accept it as a crime, Zarkhi alters the interpretations of earlier filmic versions. In these, no matter how different Anna's respective onscreen images appear, in the end she is always perceived as a victim—a victim of her self-delusion as played by Varsányi in 1918, of her “divinity” as portrayed by Garbo in 1927, of the inviolability of gender roles as suggested by an older Garbo in 1935, and the rigidity of social laws as performed by Leigh in 1947. By contrast, the Russian filmmakers depict Anna as a heroine aware from her very first encounter with Vronskii of the inevitably tragic dénouement of her affair, a heroine who almost rebelliously accepts her path and thus establishes herself as a tragic character voluntarily ascending her Calvary. Her behavior sooner arouses the viewers' respect and admiration than empathy for a victimized adulteress. For instance, while praising Samoilova's superb performance, one film critic justly observes that she dramatically emphasizes Anna's “spiritual rather than physical charms and disappointments” (Vinson 555).

Samoilova's Anna challenges her milieu not as an adulteress but as an individual declaring her refusal to negotiate with the laws of the *beau monde*. Doubly threatening, her uncompromising demeanor infringes on the sanctity of marriage and of libertinage—two institutions that ensure the smooth functioning of the community to which Anna belongs. Zarkhi casts her adultery as the heroic deed of a conventionally married woman who dares to openly

⁷⁷ In one of his interviews, Zarkhi explains his vision of Anna's adultery. It is a “story about a passionate, all-consuming and proud love that fails in the world of falsity, evil, and hypocrisy” (154). Curiously, in Anninskii's view, it was precisely this (pre)conception that led to the “blunders” in Zarkhi's adaptation (240-42).

love a man of her choice. Unlike its antecedents, the Russian film avoids portraying Anna as an adulteress lamenting her destiny and refrains from provoking a sentimental reaction in viewers through a display of her tears. Appropriate for the sufferer's halo crowning Anna's pre-1967 depictions and incompatible with her new elevated status as a rebel, the tears become invisible.

It is revealing to compare various screen representations of the second opera-house scene, where Anna exposes herself to public disapprobation. After being ruthlessly expelled from her former home on Serezha's birthday, a heart-broken Anna flies in the face of Vronskii's warnings and her stigma as *persona non grata* by accepting an invitation to the theater. To dramatize high society's perception of Anna as a pariah, Tolstoi deprives her of Vronskii's support; the writer separates them in the theater, situating her lover among the spectators observing Anna's humiliation. Moreover, empowered with the ability to recognize her pain as a "pilloried" woman behind her tranquil appearance (544), Vronskii maximizes her shame—that of a woman put on display—by laying bare her true feelings for the reader.⁷⁸ If visualized, the novel's episode describing Vronskii's convergence with the theater audience and Anna's solitary position as an object of her society's condemning gaze calls for transforming a fallen woman into a rebel confronting the crowd and asserting her rights as a free individual. Yet, such a shift in perspective would relegate the adultery myth to the background and activate the hero myth; therefore most adaptations—an exception being the 1967 film—follow Tolstoi in eschewing the heroic potential of the scene and stage it, if at all, in a melodramatic mode.

⁷⁸ The Russian film strengthens the effect of Anna's "nakedness," availability to hostile glances, and simultaneously her ability to confront them through the camera's position and Anna's costume. Because of the deep *décolletage* of clothing fashions for upper-class women of the period, the filmmakers, on the one hand, graphically reinforce Anna's vulnerability by filming her sitting in the theater box from outside. In a tracking shot, they deliberately align the naked part of her body with the rim of the box, thus obscuring her clothed body. On the other hand, her sculpturesque bust emphasizes her heroic stance.

For instance, the 1918 Hungarian adaptation omits this episode as irrelevant to the seduction plot, according to which Anna's misfortune stems from her lover's infidelity rather than from her own social ostracism. The scene is also absent from Goulding's 1927 film for a somewhat similar reason. Here, favorably disposed toward Garbo's Anna, the aristocratic society seems completely indifferent to her marital status because the major conflict of the narrative rests on Anna's fear of ruining her lover's reputation rather than losing her own standing as a "decent" woman. The 1935 and 1947 versions, while reproducing the original episode at the opera, modify it in accordance with the paradigm of romantic love: two unfortunate lovers struggle against a hostile external force forestalling their happiness. Unwilling to oppose the lovers in the theater, both directors avoid portraying Vronskii in the audience—he either is present in the box or meets Anna just outside it—and thus avoid revealing his behavior, which is dubious from a romantic perspective. Brown and Duvivier include this scene in their films as though to reassure Anna (and the viewers) of Vronskii's chivalric love for her. Both adaptations spotlight Anna's distress and tears, with a consoling Vronskii beside her.

By contrast, Zarkhi's film exaggerates Anna's tragic isolation from the rest of the audience.⁷⁹ Left alone as if on trial, Anna courageously parries the collective gaze, while her strained posture and proudly raised head attest simultaneously to her vulnerability and her readiness to face her opponents. The pathos of the moment transforms her box in the theater into a court room's dock and, more important, converts the accused into the accuser. The final shot,

⁷⁹ In the novel, Anna, although deprived of her "knight," is not alone; her preposterous aunt, Princess Varvara, and Vronskii's intimate friend, Iashvin, share her opera box. Vronskii himself only briefly appears in her box during the intermission, but their interaction is limited to Anna's sarcastically remarking that he has already missed the best aria, that is, the scandal triggered by her presence, and his picking up the program she has accidentally dropped (542-46). They meet only later at home.

not coincidentally preceded by Violetta's crowning aria from Giuseppe Verdi's *La traviata* and showing Anna in full length, foregrounds her superiority before her judges.

A suggestive context for *Anna Karenina*, Verdi's opera is not mentioned in the novel.⁸⁰ The director's choice of the Italian opera celebrating Violetta's honorable self-denial and disclosing the complicity of her lover's father in her tragedy is eloquent. As a possible commentary on Anna's destiny, Verdi's opera could presage her death; moreover, it could analogize a noble courtesan and an adulteress declaring the moral superiority of a fallen woman. However, Zarkhi's staging of this "drama-within-a-drama" episode goes beyond merely drawing a parallel between Violetta and Anna. Rather than encouraging viewers to perceive Anna in relation to her ill-fated operatic counterpart, the director instead contrasts them, to highlight the Russian heroine's otherness from the passively suffering Violetta and Anna's subversively heroic nature. The tracking shot culminating in Anna's close-up reveals her struggle to dissociate herself from Violetta and identify herself as someone other than a pitiful adulteress. Whereas the close-up makes visible the quick flow of her diverse emotions, the long take intensifies the moment's significance. As if responding to the call of destiny or, more precisely, of her screen creators, Anna goes through the "trials of initiation" to emerge as a hero/ine.

To quell any doubts about Anna's capacity to withstand the opprobrium of a hypocritical society, Zarkhi ends this episode by having Anna remain in her box, despite the public's indignation (Figure 23),⁸¹ subsequently rise to her full height, and applaud a staged spectacle of

⁸⁰ However, the draft of the novel's second chapter contains a reference to Verdi's *La traviata* (Buckler 132).

⁸¹ While Tolstoi's adulteress quietly leaves the theater before the opera's end, Zarkhi's heroine stays to celebrate her victorious confrontation with St. Petersburg's *beau monde*, accompanied by triumphant music and applause only seemingly addressed to the performers.

which she is undoubtedly a part. The ambiguity of Anna's applause, simultaneously referring to the famous soprano Patti, to the selfless Parisian courtesan of the opera, and to herself struggling to become a strong individual, testifies to the filmmaker's decision to present adultery in accordance with the hero paradigm. Whereas Brown and Duvivier imply Anna's defeat by showing her in tears and fleeing from the theater, Zarkhi introduces the opera-house scene as a climactic moment in Anna's transfiguration into an individual coming to terms with her mission to confront the complicity and connivance of her community.

Zarkhi's reimagining of Tolstoi's heroine supports Lotman's distinction between nineteenth-century Russian novels and those by western European authors. For Lotman, whereas Russian protagonists aspire to alter their inner selves or the world around them (the mythic archetype), heroes of European fiction strive to improve their status (the fairy-tale archetype). On the basis of this observation, Lotman obliquely defines the adultery plot as foreign to nineteenth-century Russian novelistic discourse and opposes Anna's and Levin's story lines as European and Russian schemas, respectively ("Siuzhetnoe" 97-98). As if illustrating this thesis, Zarkhi adjusts the adultery plot to the Russian paradigm, which necessitates modifying the character of the adulteress. The director bestows upon Anna the mythic hero's capacity to challenge, if not alter, her environment.

Zarkhi's heroic representation of Anna springs from the Russian literary tradition that treats an instance of female adultery in several ways: first, as a result of the existential conflict between an individual and an oppressive society; second, as a sign of society's deficiency rather than the individual's promiscuity;⁸² and third, as moral opposition to the social conventions of

⁸² The description and critique of the idle existence of the Russian aristocracy, its mores and ethic, became a focus of "society tales"—a popular genre of the 1830s. Many representatives of this literary movement

her time. Consider the example of Katerina in Aleksandr Ostrovskii's play *The Thunderstorm* (1860). Married off to a weak-willed heir of a wealthy merchant family, Katerina vainly strives for love and understanding. Unable to endure the stifling atmosphere at home, the young wife enters into an affair with an intelligent and sensitive man. However, the onset of a thunderstorm compels her to confess her "crime" before the group gathered in a shelter, leading to her persecution by her mother-in-law and Katerina's eventual suicide as she throws herself into a river.

Anna's motive for adultery, according to Zarkhi, is reminiscent of Katerina's. It also correlates with the reading of the play prevalent in Soviet literary criticism, mainly based on the play's materialist interpretation by Nikolai Dobroliubov—an influential "civic" critic of the 1850-60s, for whom literature was a reflection of the real world. In his words: "In Katerina we see a protest against the Kabanov conceptions of morality, a protest carried to its logical extreme, proclaimed under domestic torture and over the chasm into which the poor woman threw herself. She refuses to resign herself to her lot, she refuses to drag out the miserable existence which she is offered in exchange for a living soul" (633). Although the filmmaker tones down Dobroliubov's overwhelming desire to envision Ostrovskii's heroine as "a ray of light in the realm of darkness"—his essay's title—and almost as a revolutionary, he depicts Anna's personality against this critical background.

Additionally, Zarkhi's cinematic treatment of Anna's affair could not help being influenced by the fundamental cultural shifts occurring in the Soviet Union in the 1960s during

belonged to the elite circles themselves and provided their readers with firsthand experiences (e.g., Prince Vladimir Odoevskii, Countess Evdokiia Rostopchina, and Count Vladimir Sollogub).

Khrushchev's Thaw.⁸³ This era demonstrated a new interest in the nuclear family and multifaceted individuality, and a recognition of the complex female psyche, in contrast to the Stalinist era's preoccupation with the big family (the state), a monolithic collective, and a conception of woman as a reliable member of the Soviet community entirely fitting into it. In line with this reorientation, the image of the unfaithful wife absent from Stalinist cultural narratives made its way onto the post-Stalinist screen. Moreover, the Thaw to an extent rehabilitated the fallen woman.

In this respect, Kalatozov's melodrama *The Cranes Are Flying*, in which the female protagonist, Veronika, is portrayed by the same actress who plays Zarkhi's Anna, is pertinent to our analysis.⁸⁴ Despite Veronika's betrayal of her fiancé, Boris, who is away fighting the Nazis, and despite her marriage to Boris's cousin, Mark—an act that metaphorically causes Boris's death—she is granted forgiveness. As Veronika's confused mind tests Anna's death by leaping from a bridge in the path of a train, the sound of a car braking to avoid hitting a homeless boy puts a halt to her suicidal plan. Not incidentally, the child's name is also Boris. Redeeming Veronika,⁸⁵ Thaw culture refrains from meting out punishment to the unfaithful woman with a conscience and thus redirects the tragic trajectory of adultery.⁸⁶

⁸³ Although Nikita Khrushchev was removed from his leading position in the party in 1964, the Thaw-era trends persisted in the cultural industry until the end of the 1960s (1968, Prague Spring, is the traditional date cited).

⁸⁴ In his detailed analysis of Kalatozov's film, Alexander Prokhorov focuses on the radical shifts in the war and family tropes in post-Stalinist narratives. He suggests that Veronika's "individual feminine experience becomes the locus of Thaw-era values" (215), while her victimized body and psyche become "a major site of war trauma" (217).

⁸⁵ Kalatozov's finale optimistically depicts Veronika's convergence with the Soviet people celebrating their victory in the Great Patriotic War. The heroine's "speaking" name, which consists of the Russian *Vera* (faith) and the Greek *Nike* (Victory) may be decoded as a key to her successful future.

⁸⁶ In a similar vein, Lev Kulidzhanov in his film *The House I Live In* (1957) spares the geologist's unfaithful wife from physical retribution, owing to her repentance and spiritual sufferings.

Zarkhi, meanwhile, is unable to alter Anna's end, owing to the literary plot's development and his perception of Anna's suicide as a criticism of the inhumanity of the *beau monde* rather than an unavoidable consequence of adulterous immorality. Tellingly, however, he entrusts Samoilova, who portrayed Veronika a decade earlier, to embody Tolstoi's adulteress on screen, thus undermining the moral lesson of the novel. The selection for the role of Anna of an actress who made her famed debut as a forgiven unfaithful woman betrays Zarkhi's desire to predetermine viewers' reactions and, above all, to bypass the judgment that is present in Tolstoi's text. No matter how divergent Anna's and Veronika's moral itineraries, Samoilova's distinct onscreen persona bridges the gap between the two women, blending them into a fallen woman who not only atones for her guilt through suffering, but also is able to face the consequences of her actions.

In addition to the unifying function of the actress, the structural sameness of the Anna-Vronskii and Veronika-Boris lines likewise enables the convergence of Kalatozov's and Zarkhi's protagonists in the viewers' minds.⁸⁷ The axis of Veronika's loss constitutes an inversion of Anna's trajectory in the pursuit of love: married to an unloved Karenin, Anna commits adultery when she encounters Vronskii, whereas Veronika, initially engaged to her beloved Boris, loses him as she "adulterously" marries Mark. Only seemingly opposite, the two plot triangles, Karenin-Anna-Vronskii and Boris-Veronika-Mark, are congruent mirror images of a latent structure "husband/lover-woman-lover/husband," on which both films rest. The centrality and stability of the fallen-woman element—endowed with two faces, those of Anna and Veronika—

⁸⁷ This argument holds only in reference to Soviet spectators of the 1960s, who were generally familiar with both films, and what is important is that they would probably have seen the Kalatozov film before Zarkhi's.

and the shifts between the positions of husband and lover call for several conclusions relevant for understanding the modifications that Tolstoi's personage underwent in Zarkhi's adaptation.

First, the adultery dimension in both films originates in Tolstoi's novel *Anna Karenina*. While for the 1967 adaptation it constitutes an obvious point of departure, in *The Cranes Are Flying* it seems more of an invisible substratum. Although less conspicuous in Kalatozov's film than in Zarkhi's, the allusions to Tolstoi's text are sprinkled throughout the visual narrative. For instance, not only does Veronika in her suicidal thoughts recall Anna's end under the train's wheels, but also the actual moment of her "fall" is depicted as a rape, reminiscent of Tolstoi's description of Anna's first sexual intercourse with Vronskii.⁸⁸ Despite their divergent conceptions of adultery, both Tolstoi and Kalatozov link it to an unlawful forced sexual encounter—an eloquent marker of moral violation. Second, Kalatozov attempts to rewrite the adultery myth as reflected in the nineteenth-century novel. Unlike Tolstoi, he defines its key notion of adultery as a transgression against an individual conscience; for Kalatozov, Veronika commits adultery when she marries Mark. Isn't that what Anna had done in her *mariage de convenance*? Accordingly, stressing Anna's adulterous union with Vronskii as a liberation of her true self defies Tolstoi's emphasis on its transgressive and immoral nature. Third, Zarkhi, while faithfully transposing the novel's plot onto the screen, adopts Kalatozov's (re)definition of adultery, thus inevitably displacing Tolstoi's perspective on Anna's affair. Although a

⁸⁸ The connotations of Veronika's upside-down close-up accompanied by the bomb explosions are similar to those of Tolstoi's portrayal of Vronskii and Anna as their love is consummated. While "she felt her degradation physically, and could say nothing more," he stood over her and "felt what a murderer must feel when looking at the body he has deprived of life" (148).

“conventional” adaptation, the 1967 film may as well be read as a replay of the Thaw-era values manifested in *The Cranes Are Flying* and subsequently applied to nineteenth-century adultery.⁸⁹

In sum, Zarkhi’s representation of Anna, while based on Tolstoi’s novel, is also influenced by other sources—such as the nineteenth-century Russian literary tradition of “altruistic” heroes, Ostrovskii’s adulteress in the *Thunderstorm* and its critical reception, and Kalatozov’s film with Samoilova. As a result, it differs from Tolstoi’s vision. While accurately reproducing the stages of the conflict among Anna, her husband, and her lover, as well as the original dialogue, preserved in the film script, Zarkhi occasionally alters the internal logic of Anna’s demeanor to accentuate her status as a rebel. In the adaptation, Anna’s oppositional stance overshadows her original function outlined by her position in the love triangle. Also, to emphasize her significance as a courageous individual confronting society, he deliberately focuses on her predicament and permits her point of view to structure the whole narrative.

For instance, the film’s perspective on Karenin completely coincides with Anna’s. Among the various cinematic versions of the novel, Zarkhi’s adaptation offers the most severe portrait of Karenin. Throughout the film long shots distance him from both Anna and the viewers. His characterization reflects her interpretation of him, whereby he is the main source of her unhappiness. He functions as a punishing automaton not only with his wife, but also with his son. Even in the 1935 film, which generally depicts Anna’s husband in a hostile light, Karenin unexpectedly opens up as a caring father when he calms Serezha down and talks to him in the night.

⁸⁹ The narrative borrowings hardly exhaust the two films’ intertextuality. As if in homage to the renowned cinematographer Sergei Urusevskii, whose avant-garde techniques significantly contributed to the success of Kalatozov’s film, Kalashnikov photographed most of the scenes in which Anna appears by echoing his precursor’s dramatic style. For instance, the camera work in the sequence depicting Anna’s last ride and her suicide reiterates the visually disturbing sequence of Veronika’s near-attempt at suicide.

Karenin, superbly portrayed by Nikolai Gritsenko, is a cog in the powerful mechanism of a bureaucratic government, and the film consistently draws analogies between him and machines. He is a small machine himself. More than any other, the Russian version interprets Karenin as an extremely boring, monotonous, and even dangerous creature deprived of all human feelings. His cinematic image consistently relies on auditory signals. Viewers hear Karenin's rhythmic steps throughout the film, their horrifying effect comparable to the fateful steps of the Commandant's statue approaching his wife, Donna Anna, and Don Juan.⁹⁰ His mechanical, clocklike speech is devoid of meaning, a deficiency most obvious during the race scene, when his voice drones on and on until it transforms into pure noise. Sounds produced by Karenin acquire a threatening omnipotence as they leave his body and aurally envelop the whole screen, overwhelming all visual images.⁹¹ His initially visualized voice, to borrow Michel Chion's terms, reincarnates into an *acousmêtre*, an unidentified and non-localized "monster" (24).

While Karenin personifies the clockwork inexorability of social laws, the female characters index the moral and spiritual degradation of the *beau monde*. Zarkhi reproduces Tolstoi's counterpoint of the two St. Petersburg aristocratic circles directed by a vicious Betsy Tverskaia and a hypocritical Lidiia Ivanovna. The 1967 film stresses Lidiia Ivanovna's position as Karenin's "soul mate," who strongly influences his decision to isolate Anna from her son,

⁹⁰ It is possible that Karenin's ominous steps were inspired by the Commandant's appearance at his former house as described by Aleksandr Pushkin in his version of the Don Juan legend, "The Stone Guest." Widely known by heart, Pushkin's texts constituted an important part of the Soviet people's cultural memory and could easily generate numerous allusions and associations.

⁹¹ Brown's film uses Karenin's voice in a similar way in the scene of Anna's departure from his house on Serezha's birthday. Karenin's angry words extend beyond his body when it is no longer visible onscreen and serve as a force that overwhelms his wife, as if throwing her out of the house.

whereas Betsy transcends her role as an individual character, to become an embodiment of the hypocritical nobility.

Playing the part of Betsy Tverskaia, the celebrated dancer Maia Plisetskaia perfectly delineates the superficiality of aristocratic norms through her stately bearing, an impeccably straight back, elevated chin, and elegant walk.⁹² The curious composition of one shot in the opera-house sequence illustrates the discrepancy between false bodily manners and true feelings—an opposition emphasized throughout Tolstoi's works. Executed from the depths of Betsy Tverskaia's box, a long shot delineates a suffering Anna in the background of the frame, and Betsy's in-focus back positioned in the lower right corner. It is noteworthy that, while Anna's face betrays her pain and frustration, as evident from a preceding close-up, Betsy is shown from the back that betrays no signs of agitation. Anna's "open" face confronts Betsy's "closed" back. Whereas Karenin's manners visually underscore the mechanistic aspects of high society, Betsy symbolizes the lack of true feelings masked by perfect decorum. At the same time, she is depicted as Vronskii's dangerous accomplice, reminiscent of Laclos's libertine, Madame de Merteuil, in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*.⁹³ Betsy consistently pushes Anna toward Vronskii, like a cat playing with a mouse before devouring it.

Although he individualizes the high society that was portrayed as a faceless social power in Duvivier's adaptation, Zarkhi employs language as a unifying tool to emphasize the community's malicious wholeness. More often than their literary prototypes in *Anna Karenina*

⁹² In her book *Fabrika zhestov* [Factory of Gestures], Oksana Bulgakova exhaustively analyzes how Russian and Soviet cinema directors define the social status and emotional states of characters through gesture and physical bearing. Of Evgenii Bauer's film *The Mute Witnesses* (1914), she observes that the aristocratic heroine's ability "to hold the back" (ramrod straight) is used not only as a social marker, but mostly as a sign of her moral status (58).

⁹³ There is no textual evidence that the relationship between Vronskii and his cousin Betsy is analogous to that between Valmont and Madame de Merteuil. However, their frivolous conversation in the opera house about his passion not being consummated (Chapter 2, 4) hints at this literary parallel.

and almost as much as the personages in *War and Peace*, members of the *beau monde* prefer speaking French. Its use in the 1967 adaptation is meaningful. Zarkhi resorts to the Tolstoian device of deploying the foreign language as a negative marker; a non-Russian signifier “estranges” the Russian aristocracy’s verbal discourse and implies its falsity. The more natural the characters, the less they need French. For instance, Levin avoids this language, while Stiva consistently intersperses his Russian speech with French words—an indicator of his ambiguous moral position.

Anna’s brother Stiva actually functions as a key link in the 1967 adaptation. From the very beginning, the narrative follows him as he wakes up, gets the telegram from Anna, walks to Dolly’s room through the house swarming with his unsupervised children, speaks with his wife, meets Levin at the train station, then runs into Vronskii, and finally Anna. Anna’s conversation with Dolly about Stiva is cleverly juxtaposed with Dolly and Karenin’s discussion of Anna. Stiva very often leads us to Levin, who once again receives less attention than in the novel. Still, the audience learns about Levin’s attachment to country life, his work there, and some of his thoughts. Unlike the other characters, he is shown mostly in open spaces, a *mise en scène* that underscores his closer connection to nature, an important characteristic for Tolstoi. Levin’s ugly fight with Kitty after his visit to a disgraced Anna adds complexity to the simple opposition of happy and unhappy marriages, beyond which other screen versions of *Anna Karenina* fail to venture.

Thus, all characters in the film are directly and indirectly linked to one another, and collectively they form the powerful force that throws Anna under the train. This idea structures the plot of the 1967 film, which uses visual metaphors so consistently that they become its organizing principle. The repetition of symbols embraces the whole film and predetermines the

development of events and Anna's doom. For example, Zarkhi frames the film in metaphoric candlelight unambiguously symbolizing the light that goes out when "the book of Anna's life" closes. The audience sees candles reflected in a mirror when Vronskii visits Stiva in order to meet Anna again, candles glowing at the opera when Vronskii openly declares his love for her, candles in Anna's bedroom when she recalls making love with Vronskii, and candles in Anna's hands as she approaches Vronskii's bed to kiss him before leaving forever. The film continually emphasizes the inevitability of Anna's doom from the moment of the accident at the Moscow train station.⁹⁴

Some of the unique visual metaphors in Zarkhi's film resulted from an accurate and attentive reading of the literary source. During her first talk with Kitty at Dolly's house, Anna says: "I remember and know that blue mist, like the mist on the Swiss mountains ... that mist which envelops everything at that blissful time when childhood is just, just coming to an end, and its immense, blissful circle turns into an ever-narrowing path, and you enter *the defile* [enfilade] gladly yet with dread, though it seems bright and beautiful" (72, emphasis added). Anna pictures an enfilade as the end of childhood and the beginning of adult life, which at that moment she still associates with happiness. Similarly, the adaptation interprets Anna's analogy as a metaphor for the entrapment of grown-ups in their unhappy lives and visually reinforces it throughout the film. Circular walking through a succession of doorways becomes repetitive for Stiva during the first scene at his house; for Karenin as he waits for Anna, who is late coming home; and for Anna, trapped in Karenin's house. Significantly, Anna's son enters this metaphorized special world after his mother flees from his home at Karenin's order on the

⁹⁴ While Zarkhi uses candlelight to foreshadow Anna's tragic end, Goulding incorporates it as a metaphor for Garbo-as-Anna's divinity in his 1927 *Love*.

morning of Serezha's birthday: his childhood is over, and he runs after his mother through the enfilade of doorways, where possibilities shrink and happiness disappears (Figure 28).

While Zarkhi's critical attention to textual images that are absent in the previous adaptations testifies to his orientation toward the literary source, the intelligent creativity of his interpretation empowers his adaptation with the authority of a "consummated" cinematic work. The consistent use of the same images, symbols, and markers throughout the film on the levels of plot, ideas, objects, and words generates a rigorously structured visual narrative, with a distinct concept of adultery.⁹⁵ Although depicted in correspondence with the adultery paradigm and faithful to Tolstoi's plot, Anna's affair is represented as the ordeal she must endure to prove herself as a mythic hero. In this respect, the 1967 adaptation deviates from the original, but without violating its meanings; in fact, it activates them in harmony with the Russian cultural traditions.

3.7 LEO TOLSTOY'S ANNA KARENINA (1997)

The sensational lavishness of this American adaptation by Bernard Rose, with Sophie Marceau as Anna, eclipses all other *Anna Karenina* renditions. Unquestionably, the 1997 film challenges audiences both visually and conceptually in its attempt to restructure an established visual corpus of *Anna Karenina*, thereby undermining the inner stability of its hypotext—the narrative

⁹⁵ The idea of distinguishing certain isomorphic levels in a textual structure belongs to the Russian scholar Aleksandr Chudakov, which he applied to his analyses of Russian literary texts (5).

composed of all previous films⁹⁶—and, even more crucially, to honor the novel’s author by privileging Levin’s story over Anna’s. Formally novel-oriented because of the inclusion of numerous episodes from the literary source, Rose’s film, however, is rooted in myth and corresponds to the *kinolubok* type of adaptation that rests on myths. Not only does the director modify the Anna-Karenin-Vronskii line in tune with the adultery myth,⁹⁷ but he also structures his cinematic version around a growing myth about the novel’s author. Here, the adultery myth succumbs to the Tolstoi myth. Such an ambitious approach is probably what motivated *Cineaste*’s judgment of this version as “a noble effort, but a misfire” (Menashe 64).

This version took full advantage of the post-Soviet possibility of filming the novel in its authentic environment of St. Petersburg and Moscow; as a result, it plunged viewers into a broad cultural context that is aurally and visually identifiable as Russian. Intense music by Tchaikovsky, Rakhmaninov, and Prokofiev accompanies numerous picturesque shots of spectacular Russian signifiers—for instance, the Moscow Kremlin and the golden domes of its renowned churches (Figure 30); the St. Petersburg fortress of Peter and Paul, on the bank of the Neva River. The inclusion of Russian speech in the narrative—the Russian actors speak mostly in their own native language, the others in both Russian and English⁹⁸—likewise testifies to the filmmakers’ intent to convey Tolstoi’s text as Russian.

However, unlike Brown in his 1935 adaptation, Rose relishes the Russian flavor of *Anna Karenina* as part of its universal reputation rather than as a marker of its exclusiveness. To live

⁹⁶ Robert Stam suggests considering earlier filmic adaptations as a cumulative “hypotext” for a later one, “hypertext,” which transforms previous ones, “with no clear point of origin [in the literary work]” (*Beyond Fidelity* 66, emphasis added).

⁹⁷ Moreover, like the 1935 version by Brown, the 1997 film adopts the simplistic device of gluing the plot blocks to one another, frequently without psychological connections between them.

⁹⁸ The disorienting mixture of languages and accents, similar to that which once blocked the construction of the Tower of Babel, fails to forestall the communication between the characters in Rose’s version, thus revealing the secondariness of the verbal discourse in the plot development, especially of its adultery line.

up to Rose's title by being recognized as an adaptation of Tolstoi's novel, the visual narrative has to transmit the signs that enable viewers to parallel the cinematic and the literary text, and, more precisely, to the existent conception of the latter. But since this conception draws on previous filmed versions, with their underpinning cultural myths, the 1997 film inevitably revisits some cinematic precedents: for instance, the imperative of establishing the "Russianness" of the story.

By accentuating the glamour surrounding adultery in Russian aristocratic circles, Rose has reanimated the memory of the American adaptations that emphasized the exoticism of Anna's affair. But while these films privileged the clichés related to Russian climate and appetite,⁹⁹ Rose chose a more "high-culture" approach, condensing the myths celebrating the glory of pre-revolutionary Russia's artistic achievements in literature, music, ballet, and architecture.¹⁰⁰ However, since 1990s audiences are more familiar with (inter)national cultural myths than were their 1920s-1930s ancestors, such highbrow signifiers are easy not only to decipher but even to anticipate. Thus Rose's signifiers prove not all that much more complex or original than Brown's "mass-culture" stereotypes. Yet the expanded reputation that Tolstoi's novel had acquired by 1997 allowed Rose to end up with an occasionally more sophisticated realization. Consequently, while some of his markers unimaginatively exploit Russian stereotypes—for instance, Vronskii attempts suicide through Russian roulette and indulges in a

⁹⁹ Actually, Brown uses a melody by Tchaikovsky throughout his 1935 adaptation and even stages a crowd scene from Tchaikovsky's opera *Eugene Onegin*. However, the crude signifiers of Russian identity vividly depicted in the film's opening sequence overshadow these musical hints.

¹⁰⁰ As a result of Rose's fascination with the luxury of Russian palaces, Tolstoi's aristocrats, even those with modest wealth according to the original text, occupy residences worthy of Russian tsars. The (over)use of ready-made images allegedly representing Russian old architecture leads to surprising shots—such as, for instance, an unexpected image of Anna and Stiva's sled as it travels to Stiva's house across Cathedral Square inside the Kremlin, with the breathtaking Cathedral of Annunciation in the background, or a preposterous scene in which Anna and Vronskii enjoy an intimate dinner, and then sexual intercourse, in interiors reminiscent of the Facets Palace in the Moscow Kremlin. As described in the novel, the consummation of Anna and Vronskii's affair takes place in his St. Petersburg apartment.

post-race binge with gypsies and drunken officers, all of them sprawled unconscious on the floor the morning after¹⁰¹—others enclose subtle underlying themes and hidden intertextual links.

For instance, Rose's handling of Tolstoi's theater episodes in the novel typifies the way in which this director manages to enhance a predictable screenplay—predictable by virtue of being an adaptation—with some subtle intertextual effects. At a perfunctory glance, his on-screen rendition of the novel's theater-set scenes appears merely part of his attempt to represent adequately the trinity of Russian symphonic music, ballet, and opera. In the first opera-house episode, devoted to Vronskii's conversation with Betsy Tverskaia about his affair with Anna, Rose inserts a significant musical text: unlike their literary prototypes, the cinematic Vronskii and Betsy converse during Tchaikovsky's renowned ballet *Swan Lake*. Furthermore, in the second opera-house scene, even as he ignores Tolstoi's use of it to indicate society's scorn toward the adulteress,¹⁰² Rose makes a point of introducing the opera *Eugene Onegin*¹⁰³—or, more precisely, its heroine's aria, which he juxtaposes with shots not only of Vronskii rushing into the theater but also of Anna hallucinating in her bed. To say that his changes here derive merely from his passion for classical music, so emphatically demonstrated in his 1994 film *Immortal Beloved*, and from his intent to signal the adaptation's Russianness would be an oversimplification.

Rather, these scenes from Tchaikovsky's ballet and opera, along with the melodies superimposed on almost every episode of the adaptation,¹⁰⁴ have a metafunction: namely, to

¹⁰¹ The latter is a possible tribute to the 1935 version by Brown.

¹⁰² In the 1997 adaptation, Anna prudently remains at home at Vronskii's request.

¹⁰³ Like Brown, Rose violates the historical plausibility and includes in his adaptation the opera that premiered only in 1879.

¹⁰⁴ The eloquence of the score in Rose's film frequently compensates for the actors' performances. Its blatant superiority to the acting had one Russian critic sarcastically noting that Anna's frustration is conveyed by Tchaikovsky's symphony No.6 rather than by the actress herself (Baskov 11).

initiate an intracultural dialogue between the staged performances in the theater and Tolstoi's novel. By inserting a scene from *Swan Lake* into the first theater episode, Rose implies an ironic parallel between Vronskii and Betsy Tverskaia planning to "rescue" Anna from the evil forces personified by Karenin and his admirer, Lidiia Ivanovna, and Tchaikovsky's Prince attempting to liberate his beloved Swan from the magic charms of the wicked sorcerer. Through his modification of the original description, Rose creates a unified space that embraces Vronskii and Betsy plotting in her theater box, Anna sitting between her "guardians" in the orchestra, and the dance on the stage—the movement among these points accomplished through crosscutting that is cleverly justified by having Vronskii alternately aim his lorgnette at the stage and at Anna. Like the editing, the costuming reinforces the film's analogy between the ballet and the novel: the white of Anna's gown mirrors that of the Swan's tutu, while the sinister black of the sorcerer's costume recurs in the outfits of Anna's wicked companions. Curiously, despite their shared desire to rescue Anna, Vronskii and Betsy are not linked chromatically, for Vronskii's white uniform connects him with Anna, thus foreshadowing their future union, whereas Betsy's black dress lays bare her true bond with high society and her future betrayal of Anna. In short, the elements of the *Swan Lake* plot woven by Rose into the Anna-Vronskii story indirectly comment on Anna's tragic affair to produce an unexpected and satisfying correlation between the novel and the ballet.

The second theater scene's music likewise seems carefully chosen. As if echoing scholars' hypothesis that Tolstoi used *Anna Karenina* to respond to Aleksandr Pushkin's novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin* (e.g., Sloane 11-12), Rose contrasts Pushkin's heroine, who rejects the proposal of an extramarital affair, with Tolstoi's protagonist, who fails to withstand an analogous temptation.

The uniqueness of *Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina* does not end with its visual and aural extravagance, but is similarly evident in its structure. The film's very title not only claims fidelity to the literary source, but emphasizes its director's desire to differentiate his work from earlier *Anna Karenina* adaptations that ignored Tolstoy as Anna's creator. In his mission to resurrect the author of the novel from the dead, Rose ventures to cinematically appropriate and consummate the myth of Tolstoy as a sacrosanct figure in world—rather than exclusively Russian—culture. Unlike the films that unabashedly privileged the adultery plot and the others that attempted to counterbalance it with equally significant storylines from the novel, Rose's narrative revolves around the Levin character. The director actually subordinates the Anna-Karenin-Vronskii line to that of Levin and Kitty, thus relegating the adultery myth to the background of Levin's philosophical quests, which, for the first time in the history of *Anna Karenina* adaptations, occupy a primary place in the visual narrative.

Moreover, the director somewhat confusingly blends Levin, a fictional character, and his creator, albeit in accordance with the widespread opinion that the former served as a mouthpiece for the latter. Rose obliquely integrates the image of Tolstoy with Levin not only by granting him narratorial functions—his voice-over frames the adaptation—but also by merging him with Tolstoy himself in the final shot. The narration ends in Iasnaia Poliana—the Tolstoy's estate—and Levin, pictured sitting in the field (!) with a manuscript, signs its last page as Lev Tolstoy. The multifold meaning of this ending is rather peculiar.

For one thing, such a scene crowns the transformation of the hero into the author that the film initiated in its very opening sequence, where Levin enacted a nightmare taken from Tolstoy's diary. While fleeing from the wolves, the character plunges into a pit and dangles there

to avoid being devoured by a bear below.¹⁰⁵ It is noteworthy that Rose selects written words, and Tolstoi's signature at that, to serve as the finale, to validate Levin's "cinematic" convergence with Tolstoi, for this choice acknowledges the dominant position of the literary work in his version. And besides, what could better represent a writer than his written text? Moreover, Rose surpasses his predecessors Duvivier and Zarkhi, who included the ready-made printed pages on the screen, in that he immortalizes the very moment of identification by displaying the manuscript being finished before the viewers. In this way he insists on the authenticity of his narrative, as if produced or approved by the literary colossus himself. While Duvivier and Zarkhi root their adaptations in the novel, Rose brings to the fore a widely acknowledged image of the Russian writer and his mythic reputation. At the same time, such a closure takes viewers back to the title, *Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina*, and verbally frames the visual narrative.

But even as he honored the 1990s trend of including the writers' names in the titles of cinematic adaptations to promote the onscreen versions as "authoritative, faithful to the authors because of their very presence within it" (Cartmell 26),¹⁰⁶ Rose actually tried to reshape the cinema's perception of the novel. As structured by him, the film is a series of concentric circles embracing the lives of the individual characters—the largest circle being Tolstoi's. His story encompasses and merges with that of Levin, who tells Anna's story, which is the innermost of the three circles. Through such a construction, Rose eliminates Tolstoi's parallel conception of the Anna and the Levin storylines—and indicates that as a director he is less concerned with

¹⁰⁵ This scene prompted John Tibbetts' witty generalization: "There he dangles, midway between the hungry wolves crouching above and an angry bear waiting below. At the top, we might infer, are the filmmakers waiting to dramatize his [Tolstoi's] *books*, at the bottom are the filmmakers waiting to dramatize his *life* Either way, he's in trouble" (42).

¹⁰⁶ Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* by Kenneth Branagh (1994), and Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliette* (1996) may serve as examples of this trend.

keeping the visual text within the limits of the literary text than with breaking down those limits. His original attempt to include the *Anna Karenina* story within Tolstoi's own life story, however, produces a double effect. On the one hand, it broadens the content of the film, but, on the other hand, it narrows the Anna-Vronskii plot. The universal relevance of her destiny dissolves by being tied to the life of a concrete individual, Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi, and the story of her adultery becomes an embedded narrative instead of the narrative itself.¹⁰⁷

While fleshing out Levin's plot line, Rose's adaptation reduces Anna's to a collection of the episodes marking the trajectory of her affair with Vronskii and her subsequent demise. The director also deprives the love-triangle participants of their functions other than those inherent in the adultery myth. The 1997 version shows no interest in Vronskii's or Karenin's existence outside his private life; the significance of the former's belonging to the military fraternity and of the latter's devotion to state affairs is scarcely mentioned in the film. Likewise, Rose significantly attenuates Anna's maternal side by decreasing her son's appearances in the narrative and eliminating scenes that may favorably reveal the mother-son bond. A particularly conspicuous omission is the scene in Italy, in which Anna converses with an Italian boy who reminds her of Serezha, whom she left behind in Russia. Whereas all previous filmmakers had included this episode both to indicate Anna's complex position as simultaneously a mother and an adulteress and to emphasize her goodness and inability to enjoy life fully without her son, Rose deletes it—perhaps to keep the tensions of the love triangle simple. A similar rationale might underlie his modification of the scene depicting Anna's labor: he disregards an existential moment of reconciliation between Anna's lover and her husband at her "deathbed," thus

¹⁰⁷ Graphically, Anna's story is also introduced as an inserted subplot. It opens and concludes with the same shot displaying her smiling face. Positioned in the left half of the shot, as if an illustration accompanying the text on the right, and obscured by a veil of falling snowflakes, Anna's imprinted image is reminiscent of a faded picture from the past that evokes old stories, both mediated and static.

avoiding details that complicate the adultery schema and muddle the characters' otherwise clear oppositions. In contrast to Duvivier, who attempted to depart from the adultery paradigm by redefining his 1947 characters unconventionally, Rose conforms to dated conventions in his reductive interpretation of the love triangle. Despite his focus on the figure of Tolstoi, Rose's depictions of Anna, Karenin, and Vronskii are restricted by the adultery myth rather than inspired by Tolstoi's novel.

Not only does Rose reduce the structural basis of Anna's adultery by stripping it of Tolstoi's ostensibly superfluous intricacies, but he also employs a sketchy manner of enunciation.¹⁰⁸ As if to counterbalance the lavishness of his sets, Rose austere minimizes the plot of Anna and Vronskii's affair, which emerges as more of an outline than a full-fledged narrative. Although the film includes the key stages of Anna's adultery as described in the novel, the director abridges and omits any scenes that could conceivably distract viewers from the core of the Anna-Karenin-Vronskii line. Instead of narrating the story of Anna's adulterous love, Rose merely delineates its development in a cursory and superficial fashion.

Not surprisingly, then, Anna's story as retold by the film lacks integrity and breaks conspicuously into two contrastive parts. Whereas the first part celebrating the prime of romantic passion is marked by a progressively "promising" development, the second part depicting Anna's entrapment in St. Petersburg and her subsequent suicide suffers from a stagnant inescapability. The necessity to depict Anna's violent death paralyzes the narrative flow, which ignores the adultery trajectory for quite some time and progresses in accord with the scenario of a triumphant love surmounting numerous obstacles. Although dismantling Tolstoi's tragic pathos in the first part of Anna's story, Rose cannot avert Anna's suicide, so in the second half he

¹⁰⁸ I use Francesco Casetti's term *cinematographic enunciation*, which "refers to an appropriation of the expressive possibilities of the cinema which give body and consistency to a film" (18).

returns to the tragic scenario that necessitates the death of an adulteress. The filmmaker, like his heroine, finds himself constrained by the adultery myth—a condition that leads to a structural rupture in the adaptation. Five decades earlier, the creators of *Love* confronted a similar problem—and naively resolved it through two different endings. But while these were distributed separately on different prints of Goulding’s adaptation,¹⁰⁹ Rose has essentially combined two contradictory scenarios of adulterous love within the same film.

The two parts’ discontinuity may testify to the conceptual deficiency of Rose’s adaptation. His decision to sketch in Anna’s adultery as a pursuit of romantic love without “overloading” details deprives the film’s heroine of weighty motivation for her increasing arguments with Vronskii and her suicide. Whereas Tolstoi implanted a notion of Anna’s guilt into his story from the very outset, Rose disregards her conscience in favor of a “love-affirming” perspective. Thus, despite its title, the 1997 screen version distorts the Tolstoian angle on Anna’s adultery.

The 1997 “happy” scenario of the Anna-Vronskii romance rests on the following events: Anna and Vronskii meet at the Moscow train station; they obliviously waltz at the ball; Vronskii follows Anna to St. Petersburg; Vronskii persistently declares his love to Anna; Vronskii initiates sexual intercourse; Anna confesses her illicit affair to Karenin after the races; Anna suffers during her labor; the lovers elope to Italy. In a remarkable (if probably unwitting) congruence with Tolstoi’s view of the train as a vehicle of illicit sexual desire, Rose consistently infuses these episodes with such movement and dynamism that they themselves proceed at the pace of a train unflinching gaining speed. The impression of mobility is reinforced through the abundant

¹⁰⁹ However, time played a curious joke on the 1927 film; now both its endings coexist on the only accessible copy of the 1994 version by Turner Classic Movies.

imagery of motion: various means of transportation—trains, sleds, carriages, horses—as well as the restlessness of the characters.

The quick pace and the emphasis on movement that typify the “happy” strand are evident, for example, in the staging of Anna’s confession to Karenin after the races and his violent reaction to the news the following day. The beginning of the sequence is faithful to the original and similar to previous cinematic depictions: in a shot/reverse-shot technique, the camera captures the spouses seated, quite motionless, in a carriage as Anna reveals her love for Vronskii to Karenin.¹¹⁰ In the following scene, however, Rose has Anna walk away from the carriage with her husband. Motion as the visual dominant of Anna’s developing illicit affair becomes even more explicit in the couple’s next encounter. In contrast to the novel and its earlier screen counterparts, Rose chooses to film Karenin’s single jealous attack outside his wife’s boudoir. Exteriorizing the fury raging inside the cuckolded husband, the opening tracking shot shows Karenin abruptly entering the frame from bottom off-screen space, his back to the camera, and follows him as he forcefully drags his wife through an endless series of doorways. Then, upon reaching her room, he hastily takes off his coat, violently throws Anna on the bed, and lustfully forces himself on her. After a brief, static respite for viewers while Karenin formulates the conditions on which Anna could keep her son, the final shot restores the dominant tendency by filling the frame with movement: Vronskii arrives in a carriage and approaches the Karenins’ residence, while they walk out of the house, get into another carriage, and leave their estate. Almost all the episodes of the first part are constructed in this dynamic fashion.

¹¹⁰ The carriage scene may be interpreted as a visual trope signaling the couple’s entrapment in their marital affair. Karenin’s closing of the vehicle’s window to prevent their conversation from being heard by a coachman augments the moment’s claustrophobic aura.

The culmination of this first part is Vronskii's abduction of Anna from her husband's house, executed as a perfect coda to the story of a "love that is stronger than death" and choreographed according to the archetype of a prince rescuing a princess from the villain's clutches (Figure 33). The episode's symmetry highlights the hero's spatial progress as its organizing element. In the opening high-angle shot, Vronskii confidently approaches the building where Anna is incarcerated. Despite the servants' protests, the lover storms into the house, rapidly ascends the huge staircase, and kneels in front of a napping Anna. A triumphant lovers' kiss—the only static moment in the scene—constitutes its climax. The succeeding high-angle shot embraces Vronskii descending the same staircase, with Anna in his arms, and the figures of the servants silently standing along his path, thus graphically emphasizing the trajectory of Vronskii's rescue mission.¹¹¹ The long shot of a carriage moving away, with the kissing lovers in it, appropriately signifies the finale.

The next episode, showing the couple's sojourn in Italy, slows down the movement of the narrative in preparation for the film's return to the "unhappy" scenario of Tolstoi's novel. A brief moment of equilibrium in the lovers' existence, this allegedly harmonious period in their romance sets the stage for an unmotivated—from the logic of the "happy" scenario—deterioration of Anna and Vronskii's relationship. As soon as Rose starts directing his heroine toward her suicide, the narrative time loses its progressive dimension, the immobility of the scenes displaces the dynamic energy of the first part—in short, the plot collapses! To illustrate the dead-endedness of Anna's existence, Rose outdoes Tolstoi and other filmmakers in eliminating a sense of space by confining Anna to her rooms.

¹¹¹ One may only speculate whether the rescue scene from Alfred Hitchcock's *Notorious* (1946) depicting Cary Grant leading an ailing Ingrid Bergman down the stairs while being watched by the Nazis' collaborators prompted the staging of Rose's scene. The resemblance between the two scenes is rather striking.

However, Rose's consistent metaphor of movement-for-the-happy-part and stasis-for-the-unhappy-part of Anna's story is unmotivated. In the novel, movement within space is cast negatively. Anna and Vronskii's constant movement and restlessness indicate their fundamental inability to find the spiritual "center" that defines the Levin-Kitty relationship. In other words, the horizontal axis of movement carries a minus sign for Tolstoi; the vertical axis of inner activity carries a plus sign. In the film, the lack of mobility cleverly signals the downward development of the affair, but the reasons for the romance's death remain unclear. Anna's immobility and enclosure can be read as a consequence of the second part's focus on Anna's suffering (her punishment), allegedly rooted in her previous transgressive behavior, but this explanation fails to satisfy: after all, the first part has portrayed her behavior and Vronskii's as a legitimate struggle for happiness and not as a crime against social and moral laws. As a result, it is impossible to perceive Anna's plot as a single text.

Composed of two divergent stories, the Anna plot also features two disparate Annas. Abruptly, the attractively vital Anna of the early scenes transforms into a continually irritated and mentally sick creature. For the guilty conscience that he deleted from Tolstoi's novel, Rose substitutes a medical cause-effect: the irreversible changes in her previously stable psyche stem from the opium prescribed to her for postpartum pain. In resorting to the opium as the bridge between the two parts of Anna and Vronskii's affair, he virtually creates film's first magic antidote to the all-powerful love potion central in the adultery myth. Suddenly the couple is out of love; but neither is to blame. Unlike Garas (1918) and Brown (1935), who show Anna despairing because of her lover's coolness, Rose gives his Vronskii an impeccable demeanor that persists to the end, making him beyond reproach. Meanwhile, his Anna resembles that of Duvivier (1947) and Zarkhi (1967) in suffering from a rift between self and outer world after

leaving her husband—but it is more her inadvertent addiction to the narcotic, not her flawed morality, that dooms Rose’s heroine.

Of course, Rose did not invent Anna’s use of opium, which appears in the novel itself. In his exaggerated emphasis on it as a negative influence on her psychological condition, however, he diverges sharply not only from Tolstoi’s text, but also from most previous adaptations, which fail even to mention the drug. While several films left out the drug’s influence on Anna’s frame of mind, probably because of censorship, others obliterated Anna’s dependence on it because it threatened their representations of Anna. Most likely, this detail would dilute her “divinity” in the 1927 film and her rebelliousness in the 1967 version.¹¹² By contrast, Rose so intensifies the effects of opium on Anna’s behavior that his film includes an ugly and incoherent scene of Anna feeding a doll—possibly a surrogate for her stillborn daughter—and listening to voices that incessantly haunt her. Having avoided the omens that Tolstoi included in the first part of Anna’s story, Rose suddenly condenses a great many into the second part to stress Anna’s mounting, drug-induced paranoia.

Moreover, he inflects her estrangement on the day of her suicide with the effects of the drug, showing her incapable of keeping her eyes open and her head upright as she rides in an open carriage to the train station. To signal her confused state of mind and inadequate perception, he uses slow motion in her point-of-view shots as she looks at passersby. This distortion, as well as his decision not to accompany Anna’s ride with the extensive internal monologue Tolstoi uses to convey a mind in disarray, undercuts both her consciousness and her

¹¹² Opinions of the Russian actresses—Tat’iana Drubich, Samoilova, and Evgeniia Kriukova—who portrayed Anna in the theatre and the cinema are revealing. All three, though to different degrees, reject the suggestion that Anna’s behavior and tragedy are triggered by narcotics and also deny that Tolstoi provides readers with such evidence (qtd. Iarkho 46).

conscience. Rose's adaptation presents opium as the cause of the "insanity" that throws Anna under the train, rather than her insight into her hopeless situation.

In addition to his emphasis on the incommunicability of Anna's feverish and disturbing thoughts, Rose likewise stresses the primacy of male discourse as trustworthy by silencing his heroine and allowing Levin to narrate and interpret her life.¹¹³ Unlike his literary prototype, who is also given "the last word," Rose's Levin becomes Anna's spokesman. Additionally, her story serves as a negative starting point for Levin's righteous path. Following Tolstoi, the film discredits Anna's adulterous love in favor of Levin's love for humankind, thus, consciously or subconsciously, contrasting the selfish and devastating emotions of a woman with the elevated and altruistic feelings of a man and her creator. Therefore, not accidentally, Anna's story as less significant is compressed into a mixture-compendium of the adultery myth, literary text, and its filmic embodiments, while Levin's story, in contrast to earlier adaptations, expands.

Rose's expansion in favor of this male protagonist entails adding characters and episodes from the novel that other directors excised, but only if they are advantageous for revealing Levin's spirituality and philosophy. For instance, Stiva functions in the film as Levin's friend and his contact with Kitty and her family. The central scene in the novel is a dinner at Stiva's house that unites numerous characters—Karenin among them—and presents an important debate about the challenges of female education. Albeit flamboyantly filmed, Rose's debate-dinner narrows down to Levin and Kitty's cryptographic avowals with chalk and their romantic kiss on the staircase,¹¹⁴ promising their future marriage. Also, Rose incorporates into his narrative

¹¹³ Compare Rose's move here to Vronskii and Iashvin's condescending conversation about Anna's pitiful destiny, which Brown puts close to the end of his adaptation.

¹¹⁴ The staircase occurs frequently in Rose's *mise en scène*. Unlike other filmmakers, who repeatedly use a staircase as a metaphor for isolation in the scene of Anna's departure from Karenin's house, Rose employs it as a grandiose background to increase the impressiveness of his shots.

Kitty's sarcastic friend, Princess Nordston, only to provide Levin with a chance to expatiate on country life and its benefits and on high society's obsession with spiritualism. Even the story of his brother, Nikolai, underrepresented in the corpus of cinematic adaptations, appears in the 1997 version primarily to spotlight Levin's doubts about the significance of life. Likewise the scene of Kitty's childbirth, included on screen for the first time, serves the same purpose of revealing Levin's character—in this pivotal moment, he prays. Even close to the end of the film, Rose invents a scene, absent from the original, to voice Levin's ideas: in a railway carriage, Levin "preaches" to Vronskii on the meaning of life and war as Vronskii sets out for the war in the Balkans.¹¹⁵ In Rose's adaptation, Vronskii's despair and recollections of Anna become irrelevant in the context of Levin's righteousness—to accentuate the latter is the film's objective. Finally, Levin's words summarizing God's lesson accompany his convergence with Tolstoi, which is finalized in the writer's authentic signature (Figure 35).

Obviously, then, the Levin-Kitty storyline expands owing to Rose's intent to foreground the myth of Tolstoi. The director introduces Tolstoi as an advocate of true Christian values, a proponent of a natural life in the country, and a writer manifesting his identity in his characters. In accordance with the mechanism of myth production, the personality and views of the film's Levin-Tolstoi undergo a process of purification, simplification, and idealization. Although Rose seems unable to restrain his fascination with Russian extravagance even in filming Levin's country life among peasants, these idyllic scenes are clearly—even conventionally—intended to

¹¹⁵ As Barbara Lönnqvist demonstrates in her article "The Role of the Serbian War in *Anna Karenina*," Tolstoi set a great priority on expressing his ideas about this war. When the editor of the journal *Russkii Vestnik*, where he published seven installments of his novel, proposed toning down the characters' opinions on this matter, Tolstoi refused to do so and published the eighth chapter himself in a separate booklet (35). Thus, the inclusion of this episode fits well into the filmmakers' plan to introduce Tolstoi's ideas on life and death through the Levin character. However, in the novel, they are expressed not in Vronskii's presence.

counterbalance the luxury and decadence of the aristocratic circles in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Not accidentally, a Russian film critic links Rose's images of peasantry to the nineteenth-century paintings by Aleksei Venetsianov, known for his poetic and idealized portraits of Russian peasants (Baskov 11).

In line with "beautifying" the Tolstoian ideal of a spiritually and a physically healthy lifestyle, Rose likewise "clarifies" Levin's ideas and "finalizes" his discovery of faith. Whereas Tolstoi undercuts his hero's final understanding of God's law of goodness by showing Levin still unable to reform completely or to become universally kind, Rose ends his narrative at the climactic moment of Levin's transfiguration without subverting or qualifying it. For Vladimir Alexandrov, the hero's imperfection in the concluding scenes of the novel signals "the difference between the implied author and his character" and is intended to have Levin "confront the delusional nature of some of his expectations" (170-71).¹¹⁶ For Rose, who one-sidedly insists on portraying Tolstoi through the character of Levin, such tensions have no place in the visual narrative. Though part and parcel of a mythic hero's struggle to attain the truth, tormenting moments of doubt are inappropriate for a victorious finale.

Hence, although privileging Levin over Anna may seem to be Rose's strategy for fidelity to the novel, it is actually his shortcut to the introduction of a new cinematic myth of Tolstoi-the-prophet delivering his message through his characters. In fact, Rose closes off the storylines irrelevant to his particular emphases. The Tolstoi myth occurs at the expense not only of the Anna-Vronskii line—an abridged modification of the original—but also of that of Dolly and Stiva. Indifferent to the way a family idea suffuses the original text, Rose omits the opening scene with its famous maxim about unhappy families as well as subsequent scenes contrasting

¹¹⁶ In the novel, right after his spiritual transformation, Levin fails to suppress his irritation with a coachman taking the reins from him and with his half-brother visiting Levin's family in the country.

Dolly's and Anna's matrimonial views. This choice further displaces Tolstoi's and numerous adaptations' presentation of Anna's adultery as a transgressive departure from the marital norm. Instead, the film construes it as the pursuit of a false, albeit "lovely," mirage and a deviation from an all-embracing Christian love of humankind. In all these modes, then, Rose's version goes against the grain of the novel and its previous cinematic versions.

3.8 ANNA KARENINA (2001)

Although the 1997 film by Rose showed how susceptible Tolstoi's novel still was to further exploration, a British television production directed by David Blair and starring Helen McCrory demonstrates the futility of such "violent" attempts to redirect the hypotext of the novel's adaptations. A step back from Rose's structural extravagance, Blair's screen interpretation represents a moment of equilibrium in the cinematic corpus of Tolstoi's novel as if the pendulum stopped in the middle of its parabola in response to the previous extremes. Unlike Goulding and Brown, who shot their films without looking back to the original, and Duvivier and Zarkhi, who opted for fidelity to the novel, Blair combined both approaches, to create an adaptation that "fits in with the generally-held perception of the source text at a given time" (Aragay 20). As evident from Blair's film, "today's" conception of the novel springs from its mythic reputation as *the* dominant contemporary narrative of adultery, comparable to that of *The Romance of Tristan and*

Iseult,¹¹⁷ which serves as a substratum of the 2001 adaptation. Fate in the form of myth of eternal love governs Blair's concept of love—the focus of his film.

At the same time, Blair successfully “reopens” the *Anna Karenina* hypotext by making visible the “family idea.” He rectifies the imbalance created by Rose's restructuring by giving equal weight to Anna's and Levin's plot lines. However, the story of Levin's relationship with Kitty receives more attention than his spiritual quest.¹¹⁸ Moreover, the Dolly-Stiva story line, significantly truncated in previous adaptations, finally makes its way onto the screen. Stiva is more than a key link in the narrative—the role traditionally ascribed to him by filmmakers—and develops not only into Levin's “soul mate,” but also into Anna's selflessly loving brother.¹¹⁹ If it were not for the director's fascination with the notion of chivalric love, it would be tempting to suggest that the “family idea” so precious to Tolstoi structures the 2001 film.

Most important, Blair's film not only reconfirms the adultery myth as the pivotal and most viable element of the novel's reputation, but also reinterprets Anna's adultery as a romance, thus accentuating the supremacy of love and obliterating its transgressive aspect. While Rose structured his adaptation around the Levin-Tolstoi character, thus challenging earlier celluloid versions, Blair reestablishes *Anna Karenina* as the narrative revolving around its female protagonist. The author of the novel, resurrected from the dead in Rose's film, not only vanishes from the 2001 narrative as an independent character, but also fails to remain in control of his

¹¹⁷ The last screen version of this major European myth of adultery appeared in 2006.

¹¹⁸ At the same time, Levin's frequent profound silences allow the viewers conversant with Tolstoi's novel to fill in these moments with his deep thoughts on religion, life, death, and war. Yet viewers unfamiliar with the literary source are kept in the dark about the philosophical aspect of the novel.

¹¹⁹ These features are unquestionably exaggerated in Blair's adaptation. For instance, Blair disregards the ulterior motives for Stiva's last visit to Karenin to discourage the perception that he is a shallow person. Although his intent is to obtain a divorce for Anna, he at first asks Karenin for support in his struggle for “the vacant post of Member of the Committee of the Joint Agency of the Mutual Credit Balance of Southern Railways” (Tolstoi 714).

characters and their actions. Transformed into less complex and more one-sidedly positive heroes, the lovers reenact the scenario of the all-consuming passion of Tristan and Iseult.¹²⁰

As if testing the suitability of the old Western myths and adjusting them to the twenty-first century,¹²¹ Blair creates a new narrative that is rooted in the mythic texts of forbidden love, Tolstoi's discourse of adultery, and a modern conception of (cinematic) romance. The elements of this complex are merged to such an extent that sometimes it is difficult to define whether the filmmakers have adapted the myth of adultery to the screen via the novel or the novel via the myth. Although retaining all key moments of Anna and Vronskii's affair described in the novel, Blair adheres to the "love-that-is-stronger-than-death" pattern. In line with it, he "enriches" Tolstoi's text with episodes that strengthen Vronskii's courtly demeanor and Anna's submissiveness to her passion. While Anna often recalls a child in her dependence on her lover, Vronskii, as portrayed by Kevin McKidd, acquires aggressiveness and simultaneously wisdom absent from his literary prototype.¹²²

As an exemplary lover of the new millennium, Blair's Vronskii combines "manly" daring, assertiveness, and chivalry, on the one hand, and, on the other, almost therapeutic skills

¹²⁰ To a significant extent, Blair's interpretation of Tolstoi's characters echoes Eugenie Leontovich's notes prefacing her 1973 play *Anna K*, based on Tolstoi's novel: "Most of the people in Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* are people of great human dignity. Their aristocratic backgrounds, titles and wealth have not corrupted either their souls or their consciences so when they are wounded they bleed profusely and—as in Anna's case—death is the only way to stop bleeding" (7).

¹²¹ Can this be a response to *fin-de-siècle* angst? Can this adaptation be one of the films that Sydney-Smith defines as "rites of passage films," which help us to pass from one millennium to the next and simultaneously indicate "a return to older mythologies, in particular to the chivalric romance" (185)? If so, then it partially explains a romantically mythologized interpretation of Tolstoi's novel in the 2001 adaptation.

¹²² More than any other cinematic interpretation, Blair's somewhat resonates with Vladimir Golstein's arguable suggestion that Anna's refusal to correct her adulterous mistake and thus to develop into an adult (cf. Kitty and Levin) characterizes her as a victim of what is known in psychology as the Peter Pan Syndrome. The scholar writes: "Tolstoy, perhaps not unlike the reader, is both attracted to Anna's childlike spontaneity, sincerity, integrity, and repulsed [sic] by her childish refusal to change and face up to the circumstances" (211).

in treating the “unstable” female psyche. Unlike Tolstoi, who stresses Vronskii’s slavishness in his relationship with Anna, Blair represents him almost as a father figure frequently comforting her on his lap. His personality ignites the romance. Probably, this winning combination is what inspired Morson to state that “anyone would fall in love with this Vronsky” (“Brooding Stiva” 50).

Even an incomplete list of the added episodes reveals Vronskii’s changed persona in the Blair film. During the Moscow ball, he “tempts” Anna with an opium cigarette; later, disappointed by her early departure, he follows her and conspicuously seizes her hand in front of other guests, betraying his impatience. On the night of his arrival in St. Petersburg, he recklessly appears under the Karenins’ windows, forces Anna to join him outside, confesses his love for her, and, overwhelmed with joy, plays in the snow. However, the next day Vronskii approaches Anna with an apology as she and her son are riding horseback in the park. Unlike his more cautious predecessors, Blair unveils the lovers’ sexual life, and by doing so, includes Vronskii in the gallery of hedonistic lovers. Vronskii “lovingly” bathes with Anna after their first sexual encounter, decadently enjoys sex with her on the floor next to the fireplace (Figure 40), and carefully unties Anna’s high shoes as his half-naked, pregnant beloved rests on a couch. In a chivalrous gesture, he openly terminates his friendship with Betsy because she has snubbed Anna after their return from Italy. At the same time, to stress Vronskii’s unconditional devotion to Anna, Blair omits the episodes testifying to Vronskii’s strong connection with his regiment. Like a caring husband, on Christmas Eve he brings a Christmas tree to his “family.” Finally, Vronskii’s remark to his mother that his daughter is a joy defines him as a loving father. While some of these scenes only romanticize and modernize the Vronskii character, others place the Anna-Vronskii story line within the Tristan-Iseult paradigm.

To set the old myth in motion, Blair borrows several elements of *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult* that account for the invincibility of the lovers' passion. For instance, they share a cigarette at the Moscow ball as an analogue for the love potion mistakenly drunk by Tristan and Iseult on their way to Iseult's husband.¹²³ In an empty hallway, having escaped from the crowded ballroom, Vronskii offers Anna a cigarette of "pure Egyptian opium," and she willingly accepts it (Figure 36). On the one hand, the shared cigarette dooms Tolstoi's characters to "eternal love," and on the other, it lessens their responsibility, and thus attenuates the excruciating guilt Tolstoi assigns to them—or at least, to Anna. At first glance a puzzling substitute for a love potion, this cigarette foreshadows Anna's gradual degeneration; in the end, she both smokes and takes opium on a regular basis.

While employing an old device, Blair modifies it to fit today's conception of an extramarital romance. Although the characters' illicit affair is predetermined, they start it willingly and consciously, and their union is sealed by an opium cigarette—in contemporary culture, an object invested with more "forbidden-fruit" connotations than an enchanted drink.¹²⁴ Moreover, the future lovers demonstrate their awareness that their actions are improper: Anna, for instance, betrays a guilty recognition of her unseemly behavior by glancing around to see whether they are being observed. Compositionally, this scene precedes Anna and Vronskii's waltzing together at the ball and seems to superfluously anticipate their sexual liaison; traditionally the waltz serves this function.¹²⁵ However, one could argue that, while the opium "leads" to an increase in their sexual attraction, the stasis of the cigarette-smoking scene cannot

¹²³ Goulding's *Love* only intimates a love potion in an ambiguous shot uniting Garbo and Gilbert as they symbolically share the glass of champagne—an impression evoked through editing.

¹²⁴ Curiously, the 2006 film *Tristan and Isolde* abandons the magic love potion to free the characters in their deeds, as the screenwriter admits in his interview reproduced on DVD.

¹²⁵ For more about the waltz, see my footnote 31.

substitute for the waltz steps, which were long considered too evocative of sexual movement. By disregarding the novelistic presentation of the adultery plot, Blair reveals his simultaneous commitment to *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult* as a model.

Additionally, the British director defines the fatal passion as an existential phenomenon manifesting itself through the train, which he develops almost as a full-fledged character. In the 2001 film, the train signals the external power that rules over Anna and Vronskii's liaison, but is initially hidden from the characters and revealed as Anna's romance progresses. A mythic embodiment of fate, the train is visualized as an anthropomorphic image. Usually accompanied by abundant steam, with two shining eyelike headlights on its engine, the train gradually advances from the dark blue background toward the camera. While Lumière's train produces a frightening effect through the speed of an inexorably approaching machine, Blair's achieves a similar effect by representing the train as an "extraterrestrial" creature. The viewers of the former fear the movement of the on-screen image bursting into their off-screen space. By contrast, the emergence of Blair's train evokes terror because it seems to have broken through from a mysterious beyond: through the dark blue fabric of being (*être*) covering *existence*. Such moments herald the existential thresholds approached by the characters and create existential "holes" throughout the visual narrative. Thus, Blair's train represents a force not merely ensuring (or accelerating) the development of Anna's romantic adventure and, at the narrative's end, executing the will of a higher power—be it Tolstoi or God—but, above all, controlling human existence.¹²⁶ The train's visual representation reinforces the myth of Tristan and Iseult, which governs Anna and Vronskii's very existence.

¹²⁶ For the train's functions in various adaptations, see chapter 10, which compares the representations of the key stages of Anna's adultery in *Anna Karenina* on screen.

The train is not the only manifestation of the mythic realm in the film. First of all, the train almost always appears against a dark blue background, as in many of the film's night scenes. This recurrent motif evokes a peculiar succession of meanings: blue—night—mystery—train—romance. Prophetic as it is in other ways, the shared cigarette episode also contains all these images. The camera registers Anna and Vronskii, with their backs to the camera and at some distance from each other, against a window revealing the blue night sky. With the cigarette smoke substituting for the train, the blue background communicates an enveloping sensation of mystery and isolation in the midst of the ball and intimates the prospect of Romance. It is noteworthy that, unlike the crucial moments of the affair, in which blue dominates, the shots depicting Anna and Vronskii's sojourn in Italy are filled with sunlight, as if signaling a certain rupture in the narrative and the preposterousness of expecting "family happiness" in their love story.¹²⁷ Significantly, the scenes with Kitty and Levin are usually filmed in bright, sunny colors.

A worker-peasant inspecting the train represents a second auxiliary signifier of the force advancing Anna and Vronskii's romance. Here, a railroad worker accidentally crushed at the Moscow train station and later reincarnated in Anna's dreams becomes a constituent part of the train rather than merely a frightening symbol. The worker's death, which, unlike in most adaptations, is not explicitly marked as a "bad omen" foreshadowing her death on the railroad tracks, does not presage her tragic end. More likely, Blair retains this episode not to cast a tragic aura over the lovers' first encounter, but to demonstrate the benevolence of Vronskii, who gives a generous compensation for the worker's widow. In general, Blair tones down the tragic pathos

¹²⁷ Compare to Tristan and Iseult's escape to the Wood of Morois—a brief moment of happiness on the surface appeared as a degradation of their physical condition. "They wandered in the depths of the wild wood, restless and in haste like beasts that are hunted, nor did they often dare to return by night to the shelter of yesterday. They ate but the flesh of wild animals, and missed the taste of salt. Their faces sank and grew white, their clothes ragged, for the briars tore them. They loved each other and they did not know that they suffered" (90).

of Anna's adultery and refrains from saturating it with premonitory signs. Moreover, he attenuates the peasant's sinister function in the novel by replacing him with Anna's father as a herald of death in childbirth in her nightmare. Thus, devoid of his potency as an image foreshadowing a tragic consequence of her adultery,¹²⁸ the worker-peasant loses his function as a structuring symbol and becomes an extension of the train.

Though the peasant no longer "augurs" Anna's destiny, Blair introduces a new character capable of foretelling the future: a gypsy woman who "sees" the invisible—a third component testifying to the existence of fate. A curious part of pre-Soviet Russian identity, Gypsies populate many of the cinematic adaptations of Tolstoi's novel, though only as markers of debauchery.¹²⁹ For instance, a Gypsy choir in the 1927 version assists Vronskii in his attempt to seduce Anna during the dinner, while in the 1935 and 1997 films it constitutes an essential component of military officers' drunken binges. Blair, however, employs another quality Gypsies are known for, albeit irrelevant to the novel. His Gypsy discloses the past, present, and future for the guests gathered after the opera at Betsy Tverskaia's house, when Vronskii confesses to Anna his strong desire to consummate his love.

In altering this episode's original description, Blair's interpretation relies on the 1947 British rendition by Duvivier, which deviates from the literary source by incorporating the table-tilting session into the scene. Echoing Duvivier's table-tilting episode, Blair creates an aura of mysticism by having the Gypsy read Vronskii's palm. As the fortuneteller exercises her gift, she defines him as the perfect chivalric lover: he is kind, honest, passionate, with a fierce temper, and

¹²⁸ In the novel, a peasant appears during Anna's last moments: "'God, forgive me everything!' she said, feeling the impossibility of struggling. ... A little peasant muttering something was working at the rails" (760).

¹²⁹ Richard Stites writes, "Officers and nobles [...] found utter release from 'civilization' in the great Gypsy choirs," "an emblem of freedom and looseness" (13).

“in love at the moment.”¹³⁰ Likewise, she predicts that although “he won’t live to be an old man,” he’ll have one or two children. Anna declines the fortuneteller’s services, thus preventing the disclosure of her future death—a decision indicating Blair’s unwillingness to define her romance as tragic and transgressive. The director refrains from meting out punishment to Anna and plays down its inevitability. Thus, this episode—on the surface an awkward attempt to shape the viewers’ perception of Vronskii and to suggest that his life is predetermined—nevertheless sheds light on the major precept of the 2001 film: an external power rules the lovers’ destiny, and Anna’s affair is not a crime against moral and social laws.

The notion of an external force controlling Anna and Vronskii’s romance is also emphasized by bird’s-eye and overhead shots, which visually consolidate the above-mentioned manifestations of the mythic reality. These cinematic devices are employed in such scenes as the lovers’ first meeting at the Moscow train station, their smoking together at the ball, and Anna’s dreaming of Vronskii in her conjugal bed just before consummating her affair. Significantly, the scene depicting Anna’s suicide concludes with an overhead shot of the train, which follows a medium shot of Anna’s face between the train cars that flash by. In diminishing the characters’ figures to the level of chess pieces moving across a checkerboard according to fixed rules, these shots indicate that Blair’s structure rests on the opposition between Anna’s and Vronskii’s lives and the force outside them. However, the meaning of Blair’s bird’s-eye view differs from that of Duvivier’s. Whereas Duvivier’s final eloquent bird’s-eye shot of Anna’s solitary body lying on the railroad tracks suggests the fearsome power inscribed in Tolstoi’s epigraph, “Vengeance is mine. I will repay,” Blair’s shots indicate the ubiquity rather than the menace of the external force.

¹³⁰ Unsurprisingly, the very next day Anna surrenders to Vronskii.

The scene in which Karenin reads Vronskii's love letters to Anna on his way to visit a Moscow lawyer pinpoints the function of the bird's-eye shots in the 2001 adaptation. Invented by Duvivier (Figure 18),¹³¹ this episode reappears in Blair's film with new connotations (Figure 38). Revealing Karenin as a belittled figure confined in the limits of a train compartment, the shot communicates a sense of entrapment and simultaneously defines him as a hostage to the myth.¹³² To reinforce the spatial metaphor for Karenin's position¹³³ and the meaning of the bird's-eye view, Blair eschews the "silent" intimacy of this moment as portrayed by Duvivier and "voices" the scene. While the camera focuses on the cuckolded husband, his rival's voice articulates the declarations of love in his letters. Functioning as a Chion *acousmètre*,¹³⁴ Vronskii's voiceover accompanies the shot, not so much to read the words aloud and satisfy the spectators' curiosity, as to strengthen the visual device through a disembodied voice that stresses the all-consuming power of mythic love.

Since the force defining the trajectory of Anna and Vronskii's romance is a cosmic, uncontrollable power, there is no one to blame for the lovers' misfortune. Blair obscures the trauma inflicted on Anna when her husband deprives her of her son and refuses to grant her a divorce in revenge for her open adultery and the merciless *beau monde* ostracizes her—as Zarkhi emphasizes in his 1967 interpretation. Instead, following Duvivier,¹³⁵ Blair depicts Karenin as a

¹³¹ Departing from Tolstoi's text, Duvivier inserts this scene between the episodes describing Karenin's angrily wresting the letters from Anna and his conversion with a lawyer about a divorce. One may wish to speculate more on the continuity between British versions that illustrates the extent to which the emerging cinematic counterparts of Tolstoi's novel rely on the preceding films. Are they adaptations or remakes? What are their source texts?

¹³² His helplessness is comparable to King Mark's inability and even unwillingness to put a halt to Tristan and Iseult's romance.

¹³³ Since the train symbolizes inexorable fate, Karenin's confinement is doubly significant.

¹³⁴ Another instance of this device is discussed in chapter 7 on the 1967 adaptation by Zarkhi.

¹³⁵ Blair borrows from the 1947 film the episode in which Karenin and Serezha greet Anna at the train station upon her return from Moscow. Moreover, strengthening the family ties in the British tradition of

loving husband—surprisingly young and not unattractive—capable of understanding, forgiving, and compromising to such an extent that his praiseworthy features almost atone for his unwillingness to free Anna.

Moreover, Blair's representation of Karenin as a "saint" enables viewers to interpret his personal resistance as according with the existential impossibility of the lovers' happiness—*à la* Tristan and Iseult. Suffice it to recall the scene depicting Anna's amicable departure to Italy with Vronskii.¹³⁶ The farewell episode, following the scene where Anna asks for Karenin's forgiveness, opens with a medium-long master shot showing the Karenins at the doorstep of their St. Petersburg house. The static camera captures the moment's solemn tranquility: as if on a pedestal, Karenin, holding Anna's daughter in his arms, is elevated above Serezha, standing next to him, and his wife kneeling before the boy. Placed several steps below her husband, she evokes a repentant sinner. While the characters' hierarchized positioning indicates Karenin's moral superiority, the baby in his arms establishes a link to the iconic image of the Virgin Mary. Anna's pose and a Russian-style shawl covering her head—mandatory for women in Russian churches—strengthen the religious connotations of the scene. Chromatically contrasting with Anna's white shawl, Serezha's white shirt, and the baby's white blanket, Karenin's full-length figure in a black uniform, along with his silent humility, suggests his martyrlike stance (Figure 39).

reading *Anna Karenina*—the 1985 BBC version opens with the Karenins gathered together in the boy's room—Blair adds the scene depicting Anna's husband and son bidding her farewell as she sets out for Moscow.

¹³⁶ Left to the mercy of their imagination, the adapters have to compensate for a gap produced by Tolstoi's uninformative sentence: "A month later Karenin and his son were left alone in the house, and Anna went abroad with Vronsky—not only without getting a divorce but having resolutely refused it" (433).

Blair's treatment of Anna's husband at this particular moment is similar to Tolstoi's description of Karenin's spiritual rebirth after Anna's labor; however, while the writer extensively describes Karenin's otherwise mechanical, unemotional nature and his dehumanization in Anna's absence, Blair deliberately deemphasizes the negative aspects of Karenin's personality. For instance, he interrupts and cuts short the scene depicting Anna's surreptitious visit on her son's birthday as she collides with her husband and flees from the house in terror, whereas the directors of the 1927, 1935, 1947, and 1997 films spotlight his cruelty by extending the original episode and having Karenin expel Anna from the house. Also, Blair rarely shows Karenin in his role as a government official preoccupied with affairs of the state, to avoid suggesting that he is a bureaucratic machine. Unlike most adapters, who highlight the cuckolded husband's unattractiveness and insensitivity to justify Anna's adultery and to retain the fixity of the adulterous triangle, Blair shifts the focus from Karenin the cuckolded husband to Karenin as the one willing to sacrifice himself.

Just as Karenin is represented in a more favorable light, high society is depicted in less threatening colors than in previous films. A malicious social force capable of driving Anna to extreme despair, the *beau monde* here is merely a vicious community. Vronskii's explicitly expressed scorn for its unwritten laws countermands society's influence on Anna and nullifies her confrontation with it. To a certain extent, the *beau monde* exists outside the lovers' realm, as evidenced by two scenes that are purely Blair's creations. The first takes place in a hotel lobby, where Anna nervously scans the letter forbidding her to visit her son, while the passersby comment disapprovingly on her appearance in public. Consumed by her thoughts, Anna is blind to their reaction. At the same time, Vronskii's swordlike disdainful glances at the representatives of high society when he appears, rather unexpectedly, protect the lovers with an invisible armor.

The second episode likewise demonstrates how Vronskii's courtly behavior nullifies the power of the *beau monde* to destroy his Lady. While in the 1997 film Rose excises the opera-house scene where Anna is openly exposed to society's opprobrium, Blair retains the impact of the scene but alters the setting. In his version, Anna attends one of Betsy Tverskaia's receptions, although uninvited. None of the guests, including the hostess, dares to greet her. To emphasize the rift between St. Petersburg's aristocracy and Anna, the camera "estranges" Anna's walk through the room full of guests, who remain static. Graphically, her advancement along the horizontal axis composed of human mannequins not only attests to their alienation from her, but also stresses that Anna's plane does not intersect with this society's. Openly insulted by her acquaintances' scorn on the plot level—her tears and subsequent flight from the room attest to her distress—Anna nevertheless remains untouchable and untouched on a metalevel.

This moment reveals an essential discrepancy between the adultery novel and the Tristan and Iseult myth—the two narratives that Blair strives to reconcile. While the emphasis of the former falls on retribution, whereby the adulteress suffers as a social being, the latter focuses on the lovers' triumph over various obstacles. Death, a focal point of the adultery novel, is continually postponed in the Tristan and Iseult myth, to provide more space for enactment of the love that is stronger than death. However, Tolstoi's nineteenth-century adulterous love fails to transcend death. This divergence between the film's two sources entails a certain visual incongruity when a filming technique undermines the action on the screen. To mitigate this inconsistency, Blair modifies his characters' behavior. For instance, in the scene of Anna's humiliation at Betsy's, help comes in the person of Vronskii-the-knight. Storming into the room, he vigorously attacks Betsy in a stentorian voice for hurting Anna, who "is worth five hundred of your sort," and pronounces their friendship over. Thus, as in the hotel scene, Blair shifts the

scene's climax from Anna's ostracism to society's disgrace. In doing so, he eliminates the second evil force that could be held responsible for Anna's suicide, as suggested by several adaptations.

Emphasizing the cuckolded husband's humility, which reduces the tension within the adulterous triangle, and reducing high society's potential to destroy the lovers leaves them without obstacles to surmount. Unlike Tristan and Iseult, who are deprived of a place where they can enjoy one another because they cannot escape their honorable obligations to King Mark, Anna and Vronskii are apparently free of such limitations. Although introduced as a shocking experience for Anna, her separation from her son fails to darken her passion for Vronskii, as it does in Goulding's *Love*. Moreover, unlike in the 1927, 1935, 1947 and 1997 versions, in the 2001 film Anna and Vronskii are even granted a daughter. By underscoring the lovers' unflagging devotion, modeled on the love-that-is-stronger-than-death paradigm, Blair tones down Anna's jealous attacks and the developing hostility between the lovers. Given these deviations from the novel, nothing seems to prevent Anna and Vronskii from attaining "bliss," except for Tolstoi's novelistic closure, which must be transferred to the screen.

Conveniently, the tragic conclusion of *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult* provides the British filmmaker with a way out, and it even motivates Anna's suicide—a stumbling block for all adapters of Tolstoian adultery, especially for those who adhere to the conventions of Hollywood-style romance. Blair simply conforms to the old myth. While misunderstanding caused by the false report of the sail's color leads to the death of Tristan and subsequently of Iseult, Anna's suicide and Vronskii's likely death on the battlefield formally derive from Anna's misinterpretation of Vronskii's messages and her inability to contact him directly. Blair's clever

emphasis on Vronskii's carriage waiting at the train station for Princess Sorokina—Anna's imaginary rival—augments Anna's frustration and culminates in her fatal decision, encouraged by the advancing train. As Blair's vehicle of mythic reality and the executioner of Tolstoi's will, the train prompts Anna to see death as the only resolution to her passionate affair. Her fatal encounter with the train unites the novel and the myth.

Although the Anna-Vronskii romance dominates the 2001 film, its development constitutes only a part of Blair's broader perspective on love. Paradigmatically linked to the Tristan and Iseult myth, the adultery plot is syntagmatically interwoven with the story lines of Kitty and Levin, Dolly and Stiva, and even the old Shcherbatskii couple, exemplifying divergent kinds of love. More than any other adapter, Blair subliminally refers to Plato's *Symposium* in opposing two kinds of love, physical and spiritual—a philosophical issue incorporated and “tested” in Tolstoi's novel.¹³⁷ To a certain extent, Blair responds to Tolstoi's novel, which “contains a veritable catalog of mixes of the two” (Orwin 98), and refrains from setting up a simple opposition between Anna and Vronskii's eroticized romance and the other couples' private lives. Yet the film's last episode attests to another such opposition—extraordinary/mythic love versus ordinary/earthly love rather than bodily versus platonic love (Figure 42).

The episode commences as Levin—after his brief encounter with Vronskii on his way to war—arrives at his country estate in time to observe his infant son being bathed and to hold him in his arms for the first time. In addition to this sign of Levin's rebirth, a domestic scene

¹³⁷ In the restaurant scene preceding his unsuccessful proposal of marriage to Kitty, Levin explicitly refers to Plato's dialogue and subscribes to his distinction between platonic and non-platonic love. As convincingly shown by Goscilo, Stiva and Levin's discussion of their divergent sexual tastes occurs, not accidentally, over a dinner that likewise reveals their dissimilar tastes in food. While Levin's indifference to the meal is linked to his elevated concept of love, Stiva's enthusiastic consumption of numerous European dishes signals his sexual appetite (“Tolstoyan Fare” 483-88). Expanding the meaning of the restaurant conversation, Svetlana Evdokimova, in her discussion of the generic mixture in *Anna Karenina*, views the novel “as a Platonic dialogue on the nature of love” (142).

depicting three couples enjoying a quiet evening creates an aura of serenity that Anna and Vronskii failed to achieve as a family. The camera captures old Shcherbatskii playing the piano while his wife sits next to him, Stiva lovingly embracing Dolly and tenderly kissing her while dancing, and Levin sharing a harmonious moment with Kitty on the porch. Gathered in the house away from city life and separated from the world torn apart by such fatal experiences as passions and wars, these couples form a triple idyllic union based on a love vastly different from Anna and Vronskii's all-consuming passion. Surprisingly, the mistakes made in the past or present—Stiva's philandering, Levin's lack of belief, Kitty's infatuation with Vronskii, and her mother's encouragement of this shallow relationship—cement this thriving family. This feature is an attribute of "prosaic" love. It seems that by ending with the simple delights of family, Blair celebrates earthly love as opposed to mythic love, but the arrangement of the film's concluding shots somewhat subverts this interpretation.

The director employs the bird's-eye shot as a transitional device between scenes. Compositionally, the last sequence consists of the following units: Anna committing suicide; Stiva lamenting life without Anna and being consoled by Dolly; a woman praising Russian soldiers setting off for war; a remorse-stricken Vronskii talking to Levin at the train station; Kitty bathing her son and handing him to Levin; couples relaxing in a living room; Levin joining Kitty on the porch. These units emerge from each other as the camera cranes up from the images of one scene and then down toward the characters in the next. On the one hand, the repetitive use of the bird's-eye view makes it a syntactic device enumerating disparate events as manifestations of the same phenomenon—human existence. On the other hand, the bird's-eye view links all of them and the higher instance, thus signaling an "above" perspective on the characters and their actions. This perspective also implies the couples' entrapment and alienation from the outside

world; they are puppets plunged into being, even though romanticized and idealized by Blair. Conversely, Anna and Vronskii's uncompromising love removes them to a mythic realm that appears to be less circumscribed.

Paradoxically, the presence of happy and unhappy endings for prosaic and mythic loves, respectively, does not entail a hierarchy of values, as suggested in Tolstoi's novel. Blair's happy ending unites the families, which differ significantly, according to Tolstoi's criteria of pedigree, place of residence, role distribution within the family, education of children, and commitment to conjugal fidelity. Blair neglects these distinctions because of his interest in the nature of love rather than of family—Anna's adultery is of lesser importance for him than of the romance it entails. Since the director relegates the issue of marital fidelity to the periphery, the moral dilemma for Anna dissipates and, consequently, her behavior cannot merit punishment. How, then, may one interpret her suicide? Probably, it is a consequence of breaking through the fabric of being into the existential realm of myth.

In sum, although incorporating a Tolstoian element into his narrative by juxtaposing the adulterous lovers—descendants of Tristan and Iseult—with the married couples, Blair uses Tolstoi's novel as a pretext for continuing an old dispute about love. Unlike his cinematic source of influence, Duvivier's 1947 film, which champions marriage as a source of meaning, the 2001 adaptation focuses on the nature of love in its various forms. Thus, Blair's film represents a symbiosis of the novelistic and mythic discourses, with the emphasis falling on Vronskii and Anna's myth-based romance. Like most adaptations—even those guided by the novel itself—Blair's film indicates that the prevailing memory of Tolstoi's work derives only partly from the novel itself and that the notion of romantic love still dominating Western culture provokes the aberrations in readers' and viewers' interpretations.

Although the creators of the 2001 adaptation had more time for narration than their predecessors—the film lasts four and a half hours—they used the greatly extended narrative not for reflecting Levin’s spiritual suffering in full, but, rather, for embellishing love stories woven into the film’s fabric. Therefore the traditional assumption that time constraints explain the inadequate representation of the Levin character in cinematic adaptations does not account for Blair’s—and probably, viewers’—indifference to the other aspects of the novel, routinely omitted on screen. The major reason for cinema’s indifference to the non-adultery aspect of Tolstoi’s novel is the fixation of the collective unconscious on Anna’s adultery as the novel’s trademark.

3.9 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The strategies of selecting and arranging events differ from writer to filmmaker and from one film to another. In fact, every conscientious filmmaker adapting the novel of adultery faces a fundamental choice at the very outset: whether to adapt the myth of adultery to the screen via the novel or to adapt the novel of adultery to the screen via the myth. Such a decision has serious implications for the structure of the adaptation. While the lack of certain obligatory motifs would render the novel of adultery unrecognizable as such, exclusion of some scenes relevant for the novelistic discourse may easily be omitted in the myth’s visual recreation. Tracing the fate of the novel’s central scenes—their inclusion, distortion, or omission—through its various cinematic representations illustrates this phenomenon.

An analysis of the films reveals that certain episodes from the novel are invariably included in most of the visual narratives. These key elements are as follows: Anna and

Vronskii's acquaintance, the ball, their meeting on her way to St. Petersburg, Vronskii's explicit demand for love rather than friendship, the first intercourse, the races, Anna's near-fatal labor, Vronskii's attempted suicide, Anna's confession to her husband, Vronskii's visit to Anna in Karenin's absence, the lovers' escape to Italy, Anna's visit on her son's birthday, Anna's public humiliation, the escalation of tension between Anna and Vronskii, Anna's inability to contact Vronskii before her death, and her suicide. The ways the scenes are represented and the degree of their adequacy to the original differ, but the very fact of their reappearance on the screen suggests that these motifs compose the skeleton of the Anna-Vronskii myth. Conversely, the episodes' omission in a visual correlate may prove either their irrelevance for this myth or their incompatibility with it.

The outline of the cinematic representations of the crucial moments of Anna's adultery may shed light on the filmmakers' adapting strategies. Despite the limited value of a classification based on the juxtaposition of novelistic and cinematic narratives, it is appropriate for a self-contained analysis of a concrete adaptation. No matter how vilified the criterion of fidelity has been in recent adaptation studies, the scholar can scarcely disregard it. Exposed in the process of comparison, the textual incongruities between the original and its visual correlates, as well as among adaptations themselves, indicate whether the filmmaker is myth- or novel-oriented.

Six salient episodes in the progression of the adultery theme that bolster the novelistic plot constitute the core of my cross-textual investigation: Anna and Vronskii's first encounter, the consummation of their affair, the horse race, Anna's labor, Anna's secret visit to her son on his birthday, and Anna's suicide. An analysis of the love letter—an essential component of the

adultery plot—and its dissimilar functions in the novel and its screen versions concludes the comparative chapter of my dissertation.

3.9.1 The lovers' first encounter

Setting the stage for Anna and Vronskii's first meeting at the Moscow train station, Tolstoi deliberately precedes it with the description of a scandal in Stiva and Dolly's household—a corollary to his affair with his children's governess—and of Levin's long-planned proposal of marriage to Kitty, who is already romantically attached to Vronskii. Thus, while Anna is eagerly expected by her brother as a savior of his marriage, Vronskii involuntarily constitutes an obstacle to Levin and Kitty's future happiness. Denying his readers access to Anna's perception of Vronskii, Tolstoi narrates the lovers' first encounter partially through Vronskii's eyes. It is not her elegance and grace, but the tenderness and kindness in Anna's facial expression, as well as her “subdued animation” and “excess of vitality,” that have caught Vronskii's attention (60-61). To a significant extent, the ambiguities of Anna's initial appearance, combined with the violent death of a railroad worker, portend the tragic dénouement of their romance.

The 1918 version by Márton Garas only fleetingly depicts Anna and Vronskii's meeting in a long two-shot sequence, thus diminishing the moment's relevance for the plot. Unlike the Hungarian director, Edmund Goulding and Clarence Brown in their 1927 and 1935 adaptations emphasize the initial encounter as a crucial marker of the impact Anna's beauty has on Vronskii. Their interpretations result from the filmmakers' common but differently-channeled idealization of Garbo-as-Anna. In *Love*, she removes her veil only at the inn where the “dashing young officer” Vronskii has brought her. The flame of the fireplace illuminates Anna's unveiled face and its beauty/light, which obliquely extends the light of the match that Vronskii failed to

extinguish earlier and that burned him as if it were a spark from a bigger light. Additionally, in the extravagant scene depicting the Easter service, Anna's face is appropriately illuminated by the candle in her hands, with which she later lights an icon lamp in her son's room. Thus Goulding's *mise-en-scène* consistently associates her with various manifestations of light, which she not only emanates but even occasionally seems to generate!¹³⁸ Brown's adaptation, meanwhile, deifies her more through literal elevation than light imagery: Rising out of the steam at the Moscow railroad station, Anna is positioned above a stunned Vronskii standing on the platform and looking up to her as she prepares to descend the train's steps.

In line with their elevation of Anna, both Goulding and Brown quickly sketch in "demoting" features for Vronskii. As if compensating for their minimal attention to the negative consequences of his courtship of Kitty—the only plot evidence of his immoral behavior in the novel¹³⁹—both films intensify his potential as the hero of a seduction narrative. The first episodes of Brown's film establishing Vronskii as a brisk and dashing Russian officer to an extent reiterate Goulding's characterization of Vronskii as a womanizer before he falls in love with Anna. His 'barbaric' amusements shown in the film's 'Russian-overture' episodes, his military cap continually tilted to one side, and the carnivorous glance with which he examines

¹³⁸ Garbo's interaction with the camera may add some mysterious dimension to the myth of Garbo being born from the light and producing it. On the one hand, it is known that her image was created by the special lighting technique used on the set. On the other hand, according to the witnesses' numerous recollections, the camera registered something extraordinary in Garbo's acting, invisible for the crew during filming but obvious when projected on the screen. For instance, Maureen O'Sullivan, who played Kitty in Brown's adaptation, recalls that "when working with her, one felt that she was doing nothing really, that she wasn't even very good, until you saw the results on the screen" (qtd. in Paris 319).

¹³⁹ In his summary of Vronskii's life, Tolstoi explicitly states that this character previously led a debauched life. What may relegate this information to the background of the readers'/spectators' memory is "the thinness of a mere pictorial report of things," in Percy Lubbock's words (270). Opposing the scenic (dramatic) narration to the pictorial narrative technique, Lubbock justly observes that the reported (told) events fade before the depicted (shown) events owing to the stronger dramatic impact of the latter. An analysis of the cinematic adaptations supports the relevance of this distinction; the filmmakers privilege the depicted facts because of their memorability and visibility.

Anna intimate Vronskii's promiscuity. However, unlike Garbo's Vronskii, who maintains his role as a seducer throughout the narrative, both Goulding's and Brown's male protagonists metamorphose into devoted lovers.

Julien Duvivier's 1947 *Anna Karenina*, starring Vivien Leigh, retains the American versions' emphasis on Anna's face and reproduces its striking effect on Vronskii. Significantly, however, in this adaptation Anna's visage first appears through the train window. Isolated by the frosty glass surface, the immobility of Leigh's face (Figure 16), unlike Garbo's expressive features, foreshadows the repetitive pattern of the adulteress's tragic end from the very outset. Although intentionally displacing Brown's visual of Garbo's 'divine' descent, the British filmmakers inadvertently parallel Leigh's first appearance with the concluding shot of Brown's film, which depicts Garbo's photograph in a massive shiny frame (Figure 14). Whereas Brown crowns his narrative with Anna's still image, Duvivier foregrounds it before the story unfolds. But both images connote the same thing: the turbulence caused by Anna's uncontrollable affair finds itself contained and subordinated within an inviolable, stable framework.

It was probably the lack of intrigue and the visual finality in this opening image that prevented other directors from following Duvivier's interpretation of the lovers' first encounter. Instead, succeeding adaptations restored the mystique of Garbo's divine aura. In fact, Bernard Rose's 1997 version, with Sophie Marceau in the title role, doubly restored the numinous moment, re-introducing both the steam that screens but anticipates Anna's appearance and the veiling—somewhat less impenetrable than in Goulding's film—of her face. Although the presence of a veil may be construed as an homage to Garbo-as-Anna in *Love*, the fabric's transparency may attest to the filmmakers' acknowledgement of the actress's facial uniqueness, and of their inability to reiterate the stunning effect of her face emerging from the closely woven

fabric. For the rest, however, Marceau's figure rising above the platform and her future lover convincingly finalizes the 1997 version's reliance on the cinematic template created by Garbo.

The Russian adaptation by Aleksandr Zarkhi (1967) also highlights the characters' hierarchical disposition in the scene at the train station, but in a different manner. The camera registers Anna and Vronskii's exchange of glances after he has ascended, and she has descended, the platform steps. A high-angle shot of Anna abruptly turning her head back to look up at Vronskii lays bare her vulnerability, foreshadowing her future entrapment in a relationship with him (Figure 21). In its graphic explicitness, the presentation of the first encounter simultaneously emphasizes Vronskii's dominant position and denotes the tragic dimension of Anna's adultery. Supported by violent musical chords (Rodion Shchedrin), the train station scene sets the tone for Anna's downfall, initiating a visual leitmotif evident in such scenes as those of the lovers' sexual intercourse, Vronskii's fall in the race, and Anna's suicide. Additionally, the abrupt montage of the decentralizing point-of-view shots distinguishes these episodes from the rest of the film.

Conversely, the 1985 television version by Simon Langton, starring Jacqueline Bisset, highlights the lovers' 'equality,' and positions them on the same level of the platform. The romantic melody accompanying Anna and Vronskii's first meeting, as well as all succeeding key episodes of their affair, merely marks this scene as a starting point of their adultery, and refrains from additional connotations. Similarly, David Blair's television adaptation of 2001, with Helen McCrory in the title role, almost ignores the moment's significance, registering it only in passing. But Blair's use of the bird's-eye view in this scene alludes to the characters' vulnerability in 'the eyes of God.' Some significance may be attributed to the shot, because it is employed, although inconsistently, in various scenes charting the main stages of Anna's fate. Curiously, Blair's film reiterates Leigh-as-Anna's image shown from behind the window, but the

liveliness of McCrory's facial expressions negates the meaning of the 1947 close-up. Thus, dissimilar as they are, recent interpretations of the lovers' first meeting share a tendency to dissociate themselves from the earlier screen versions starring the Divine Garbo. They stage the adultery's starting point in keeping with its novelistic description.

3.9.2 The consummation of adultery

In Tolstoi's novel, the lovers' first sexual intercourse is screened by the two lines of ellipses preceding the chapter describing the "after-effects" of Anna and Vronskii's "crime."¹⁴⁰ There is no mention of even brief gratification from the sexual encounter. Shame, humiliation, and guilt immediately overwhelm Anna, and she abruptly silences Vronskii "with disgust and horror" (149) when he mentions the happiness of the moment. Vronskii himself is subjected to the stigma of the "murder." But what usually escapes the readers' and critics' attention is that he is accused of murdering "the first period of love," not Anna. In Tolstoi's words:

The body he had deprived of life was their love, the first period of love. There was something frightful and revolting in the recollection of what had been paid for with this terrible price of shame. The shame she felt at her spiritual nakedness communicated itself to him. But in spite of the murderer's horror of the body of his victim, that body must be cut in pieces and hidden away, and he must make use of what he has obtained by the murder. Then, as the murderer

¹⁴⁰ Amy Mandelker's interpretation of these lines as Tolstoi's deliberate attempt to parody "Victorian prudery in representing the consummation of an affair by laying bare the conventional ellipsis" in Victorian literature seems misguided in light of his disgust during this period at the idea of sex used for anything but procreation (60).

desperately throws himself on the body, as though with passion, and drags it and hacks it, so Vronsky covered her face and shoulders with kisses. (148)

Does it mean that Anna and Vronskii's crime is specifically the consummation of the affair, not its prelude? What "spiritual nakedness" stifles Anna, and why? Because there is no unequivocal answer to these questions, readers hurry past these two pages and continue reading, having received only a general impression of Anna and Vronskii's shame potent enough to infect the readers themselves. Tolstoi's horror at the sexual drives ruling human existence, frequently manifested in his oeuvre, and his intolerance of sexuality in a mother combine to generate the ambiguous text that defies a straightforward interpretation.

Given Tolstoi's striking description of the lovers' confused feelings, this scene cannot be included in the film versions unless its disturbing nuances are controlled. The filmmakers embellish Tolstoi's discouraging version of the triumph of illicit passion, and thus present the climactic moment of the adultery myth purged of the Tolstoian rhetorical intonation auguring Anna's death. Leaving aside the significant differences between the earlier and later adaptations¹⁴¹ in the presentation of the lovers' naked bodies,¹⁴² I will attempt to decipher the elusive connotations of the episode.

The 1918 adaptation by Garas includes the scene of Anna's fall—or, more precisely, the consummation of her love for Vronskii. In accordance with the visual foreshadowing often used in early cinema, in this version Vronskii's disheveled hair and Anna's disordered dress are signals that sexual intercourse has taken place. The lovers' similarly dazed facial expressions and

¹⁴¹ The films of 1918, 1927, 1935, 1947 as opposed to those of 1967, 1977, 1985, 1997, and 2001.

¹⁴² Tolstoi refrains from mentioning clothes as well as their absence, but the fact that Anna quickly departs allows one to conclude that the lovers are dressed when their creator describes their admission of shame and horror. Owing to the lack of precision on this matter, directors are free to improvise, albeit within the limits imposed by the moral codes of the given era of production.

languorous movements attest to a state of bliss rather than shame and horror. Almost kneeling, Vronskii thankfully kisses the hand of his beloved as she lies on the sofa.¹⁴³ The lovers' posture conveys physical and emotional satisfaction mixed with the sadness triggered by Anna's realization of her transgression. However, the adulteress's reaction lacks the disgust and despair that Tolstoi attributes to her. The manner in which she unhurriedly straightens her dress, indecisively releases her hand from Vronskii's, tenderly runs it over his face, wraps herself in her coat as though bewildered, and finally leaves Vronskii, who gestures toward her as she departs, contradicts Tolstoi's description of the scene: "She rose quickly and moved away from him. 'Not another word!' she repeated, and with a look of cold despair, strange to him, she left him" (149). Garas's film includes the episode not so much to remain faithful to the novel as to reproduce all key components of the adultery/seduction paradigm.

Both Goulding's *Love* (1927) and Brown's *Anna Karenina* (1935) omit visual representation of Anna and Vronskii's sexual intercourse. Instead, the films make numerous allusions to its occurrence, yet at the same time prevent possible accusations of "lowering the moral standards" of the viewers by directing their sympathy to "the side of crime, wrong-doing, evil or sin" (Balio 48). These directors employ the rhetoric of sexuality while simultaneously delaying Anna's sexual fall. The latter function is entrusted to verbal discourse, both in oral/aural and written form. Securely postponed until Italy, the new stage of their relationship is visualized on the bank of a river. The exquisite kiss between Anna lying on the grass, with Vronskii leaning against her, confirms their physical intimacy. Although omitted in both of Garbo's films, the

¹⁴³ The Hollywood silent cinema spoke a similar language. For instance, in *Flesh and the Devil*, the composition of Anna-Garbo lying on the sofa and Vronskii-Gilbert resting his head on her lap signals the consummation of their love.

consummation of Anna and Vronskii's affair is presented off-screen as the triumph of romance rather than a mark of Anna's sinful fall, owing to the romantic filter in both adaptations.

Like the American versions, the British film by Duvivier (1947) postpones Anna and Vronskii's sexual encounter until Karenin's decision to pursue a divorce. Unlike his precursors, Duvivier dares to depict the scene following the lovers' first intercourse. The episode elegantly emerges from the shots in which Karenin reads his wife's love letters on the train as a thunderstorm rages outside. The disturbance in nature, on the one hand, externalizes the cuckolded husband's emotional turmoil, and, on the other hand, substitutes for the off-screen consummation of Anna and Vronskii's passion. In the scene showing the lovers, the camera captures the amorous couple resting in an armchair next to a fireplace, the flames picturesquely illuminating their peaceful figures, in contrast to the storm outside (Figure 17).¹⁴⁴ A romantic melody on the sound track communicates the lovers' shared contentment. As if explicitly challenging her original creator and revealing the filmmakers' intent to recast his interpretation of the given moment, Anna declares that she is not "ashamed" of what has happened, and that Vronskii has "brought her back to life."

While the fire in Duvivier's film creates a relaxed domestic atmosphere, in the Russian adaptation by Zarkhi (1967), the red flames of hell displace all other colors and devour the scene of Anna's fall. The prevalent red color may also foreshadow the tragic dénouement of the plot: Anna's bloody death. This version restores Tolstoi's presentation of the horror that grips Anna and Vronskii. The tragic chords of the music, repeated throughout the film, the dramatic montage

¹⁴⁴ In his 2001 adaptation, Blair "emancipates" Duvivier's allusion to the novel's imagery of heat for sexual passion (such as during Anna's return back to St. Petersburg by train after her first meeting with Vronskii) in a scene depicting the nude lovers enjoying sex in front of a fireplace.

of Anna's and Vronskii's close-ups, the disgust and fear imprinted on the lovers' faces, Anna's muddled words ("the end of everything")—all reproduce the impact of the original (Figure 22).

By contrast, though Rose's treatment of the consummation of Anna and Vronskii's affair in his 1997 film adheres to the original, though the director lavishly decorates the novelistic description. The scene of sexual intercourse is visually prepared by the symbolic ice-breaking of the Neva River, accompanied by Tchaikovsky's lush melody, and preceded by an intimate supper in the exotic interior of an old Russian mansion (*terem*). Though the scene retains the dramatic impact of the 1967 Russian rendition, the profound shame, horror, and disgust so prominent in Tolstoi's novel have vanished.

The next adaptation redirects the episode's emotional charge toward the realm of sexual passion.¹⁴⁵ Blair's adaptation of 2001 depicts the consummation scene in equally dramatic strokes, enabled by the technique of the hand-held camera, especially its mobility. However, while Tolstoi dooms his heroine to suffer such enormous guilt that it nullifies all erotic pleasure, Blair allows his Anna to succumb to sexual desire and enjoy it in full measure. The sexual drive forces her to race through the city streets, burst into Vronskii's apartment, and quickly achieve an orgasm as they embrace. The succeeding scene displays Anna and Vronskii enjoying a bath together—Blair's "modern" remake of the iconic depiction of the amorous couple sitting together in the armchair or on a sofa. No hint of shame or disgust marks the scene. More naturalistic and adjusted to the visual-sexual rhetoric of the twenty-first century, this adaptation demonstrates the filmmaker's resistance to Tolstoi's unsympathetic treatment of the lovers' physical union.

¹⁴⁵ Probably this scene is what encouraged Morson's suggestion that Blair's film endorses "sheer hedonism," in which "even romance is valued as a goad to erotic pleasure" ("Brooding" 57).

Thus, departing from the original presentation of the consummation of adultery as a shameful experience, film directors likewise forgo the device of foreshadowing, which Tolstoi uses to imply the adulteress's tragic end. Their versions of *Anna Karenina* conform to the conventional adultery paradigm that focuses on the ecstasy of sexual fulfillment, whereas for Tolstoi, "from the moment she [Anna] makes love outside marriage [...] she is on the tracks and must end on the tracks" (Segal 89-90).

3.9.3 The horse race

Included in all celluloid versions of *Anna Karenina*, the races episode encapsulates meanings essential to Tolstoi's modification of the adultery myth. The steeplechase marks an important stage in the development of the love triangle. Anna, as a result of her emotional outburst in Karenin's presence triggered by Vronskii's fall at the race's final stage, proclaims her affair during their ride home. Within the adultery myth/novel paradigm, such a discovery would lead to the lovers' demise or punishment, yet Tolstoi avoids this resolution, instead extending the characters' "peaceful coexistence": Karenin moves to Moscow, while Anna and Vronskii remain in St. Petersburg. Thus, instead of advancing the adultery plot, the scene at the races retards the novel's dénouement. What is the reason for slowing down the narrative?

Unlike any other in the novel, this event is told twice, from the participants' and the spectators' points of view, and spreads over six chapters and even reemerges eighteen chapters later in Karenin's internal monologue scrutinizing the consequences of Anna's confession. The juxtaposition of the two versions betrays its significance. The first description of the races, while privileging Vronskii and his mare Frou-Frou, foregrounds the horses and their riders; however, its succeeding description highlights the audience in the stands, with the emphasis on Anna's and

Karenin's reactions. A wholly absorbed observer following her lover's actions, Anna becomes subjected to Karenin's intent look. In the capacity of "the observed," Anna and the mare mirror one another; as Anna watches Vronskii's unsuccessful attempt to control Frou-Frou's movements, her husband witnesses her failure to control her emotions in public. At the same time, an earlier scene transforms this parallel into an all-embracing metaphor: Karenin replies to an ironic question as to whether he is racing that day, that his race is more difficult—the image paralleling the happenings on the racetrack and the spectators' own lives.¹⁴⁶

In the context of female adultery, the perception of a horse race as a metaphor for life acquires sexually predetermined connotations.¹⁴⁷ A reference to a long-honored tradition of opposing horse and rider as passion and reason may shed additional light on the racetrack scene in *Anna Karenina*. Especially revealing would be the sixteenth-century painting *Virtue Restraining Vice* by Paolo Veronese, which depicts a man reining in a bridled woman. The painter not only registers the role distribution between vice and virtue, but also denotes it in gendered terms. In line with this symbolism, it is scarcely far-fetched to interpret Tolstolian riders as tamers of unbridled female sexuality, especially since the connection is emphasized by the fact that the losers, Vronskii and Kuzovlev, are riding mares, whereas a stallion earns victory for his rider, Makhotin. Unwilling to allow their mares to control the race and simultaneously unable to harmonize with their movements, the officers destroy them. Whether Tolstoi accentuates the disastrous consequences of male over-confidence and female unrestrained sexuality or the biological incompatibility of the sexes, the horse race is one of his numerous attempts in the

¹⁴⁶ Disagreeing with Vladimir Nabokov's interpretation of Karenin's remark as an allusion to his personal problems (253), I suggest that Karenin's witty words reveal his vision of himself as a wise rider struggling with an irrational resistance in governmental circles. Karenin's success in suppressing his doubts about Anna's behavior until her confession after the races also supports my reading of his reply.

¹⁴⁷ Ancient texts abound in the allegorical images of horses. For instance, in his *Phaedrus*, Plato compares the human soul to two horses, noble and ignoble, governed by a charioteer.

novel to approach the question of women's rights, openly discussed only once, at the dinner table in Stiva and Dolly's house.

However, the allegorical meaning of the race is usually ascribed only to its tragic finale foreshadowing Anna's death. And Tolstoi's wording encourages this reading of the episode. For instance, the adjective "enchanted" (*prelestnyi*), so frequently used to describe Anna, also characterizes Frou-Frou's last glance at her master, and as the mare "thrashes" (*bit'sia*) like a fish in her death agony, Anna "thrashes" like a trapped bird in her uncertainty over Vronskii's fate. Moreover, Vronskii's and Frou-Frou's positions¹⁴⁸ are strikingly reminiscent of the specific disposition of Vronskii's and Anna's bodies after their first sexual intercourse¹⁴⁹—in both situations Vronskii is portrayed as a murderer. Boris Eikhenbaum notes that this parallel was even more conspicuous in the novel's draft, owing to the phonetic similarity between the first name of Vronskii's lover, Tatiana, and his mare's name, Tiny (in English), or Tania (in Russian) (161).

No matter how symbolic the racetrack scene in the novel, filmmakers refrain from spotlighting the link between the two objects of Vronskii's ardor, confining themselves to the challenge of capturing either the horses' movements or Anna's collapse. The only exception is the 1967 film by Zarkhi, which takes Tolstoian allegory to its visual extreme. The director parallels Anna's destiny with that of the mare by rapidly alternating their close-ups (Figure 24, 25, 26). The last low-angle shot of Vronskii, above the helplessly lying injured mare and against an innocently blue sky as he threatens Frou-Frou with a whip, cements this equation. Both Anna

¹⁴⁸ "His [Vronskii's] face distorted with passion, pale and quivering jaw, Vronsky kicked her with his heel in the belly and again pulled at the reins" (199).

¹⁴⁹ "Pale, with trembling lower jaw, he stood over her, entreating her to be calm, himself not knowing why or how. [...] the louder he spoke the lower she drooped her once proud, bright, but now dishonored head, and she writhed, slipping down from the sofa on which she sat to the floor at his feet. She would have fallen on the carpet if he had not held her" (148).

and Frou-Frou are mastered by Vronskii, both are watched with excitement by the public, and both are broken by the end of the “race” because of a wrong move by Vronskii that culminates in death. The strong emphasis on the connection between Anna’s and Frou-Frou’s fates stems from the major precept of this adaptation to insistently underscore the tragic nature of Anna’s affair and her awareness of her future death.

By contrast, the 1927 version by Goulding, setting the stage for its unique and wholly unexpected ending—Anna, Vronskii, and Serezha happily reunite after Karenin’s death—far from showing the mare’s death, permits her to rise after her fall. The long shots of the racetrack and stands are intercut with the shots celebrating Garbo-as-Anna.¹⁵⁰ Goulding’s silent adaptation structures its visual spaces around such close-ups and extensively combines them with the medium close-ups and medium shots appropriate for reflecting the protagonist’s emotions through her body. The close-ups allow a better view of Garbo wringing her clasped hands, of her convulsing body, or her heaving bosom at crucial moments of excitement (Figure 8). Anna’s anxiety and infinite despair in this sequence as portrayed by Garbo are striking when compared not only to later adaptations, but also to the 1918 silent version by Garas. The Hungarian director uses this event to showcase his camera’s capabilities and to lay bare the rupture between the spouses, with Anna blissfully following her lover’s performance and Karenin angrily dragging her from the stands. Karenin is displeased not so much by her agitation, absent from the scene, as by her loving attention to an off-screen Vronskii. By transforming into a sinister cuckolded husband, Karenin helps to narrate Tolstoi’s novel in accord with the adultery/seduction template.

Thus, Iren Varsányi’s “calm” acting as opposed to Garbo’s strenuous performance prevents one from construing Garbo’s emotionalism as a requirement of silent cinema. However

¹⁵⁰ A reviewer adduces the “remarkably well filmed” scene of the officers’ races as an example of Goulding’s directing skills (Hall 17).

strange it may sound for an adaptation that deviates from, rather than follows, a literary source, the 1927 film adequately, although probably even without its creator's awareness—reproduces on screen Tolstoi's comparison of Anna to a trapped bird. Conforming to the original and correcting "inconsistencies" in its predecessor, the 1935 adaptation by Brown modifies the 1927 version of the race. A comparison of the identical shots in the sequence depicting Anna nervously watching the contest and Karenin observing his wife's reaction illuminates the alteration in Garbo's acting style as well as the dissimilar distances between the camera and the subjects within the frame. While the 1927 adaptation selects the medium shot to recreate Anna's anxiety by framing Garbo's "speaking" body from the hips up, the 1935 adaptation privileges the close-up to mirror Anna's excitement by recording the instant alterations in Garbo's facial expression.¹⁵¹ However, with or without bodily support, both films present Garbo's face as a portal to Tolstoi's heroine.

The 1947 version by Duvivier suggests the most fascinating interpretation of the races episode: except for the establishing shot, the whole scene is shown through the audience's reaction. As soon as the camera zooms in on Anna, the viewers cannot see the track and have to rely on the spectators as they avidly follow the off-screen racers. (Dis)locating the racetrack between the two groups of viewers in the dark space between the screen and the seats in the cinema theater, the filmmakers conflate the imaginary and non-imaginary realms and thus bring to the surface the allegory of life as a race and the race as life. Also, by deemphasizing the symbolic connotations of the mare's death, Duvivier's film, like Garas's, foregrounds the Anna-Karenin conflict in accord with the film's emphasis on marriage rather than forbidden love as a source of meaning.

¹⁵¹ Paris characterizes this scene as Garbo's "sole lapse in carrying the burden of the film alone," because of her overacting "in a hysterical frenzy" (132).

Conversely, the 2001 adaptation by Blair champions the passionate and uncontrollable aspect of Anna and Vronskii's affair, thus modifying the original episode and infusing it with signs that indicate the inseparability of Anna and her lover—the effect of Egyptian opium (love potion) smoked at the ball revealing itself. The close-ups of Vronskii and Anna exchanging looks eliminate the distance between riders and spectators, thus replacing the event's spatial plausibility with the mythic notion of romantic love. While Tolstoi separates Vronskii from Anna in his first description of the races—Frou-Frou is the object of Vronskii's passion here—Blair keeps both lovers in focus and disregards those elements of Tolstoi's symbolism that he deems irrelevant to his (Blair's) interpretation of illicit love. The sweeping power of Anna's ardor likewise accelerates her "love" proclamation, leaving a puzzled Karenin at the races and seemingly liberating her—and Vronskii—from the superfluous obstacle that is her husband. Following the 1918, 1927 and 1947 films, Blair's adaptation sidelines the fatality of Vronskii's race, to celebrate a "love that is stronger than death."

Bernard Rose's film (1997) could hardly differ more from Blair's version in its treatment of this sequence. Rose not only employs a slow-motion effect in the depiction of Frou-Frou's murder, but also brands Vronskii as a killer by having him shoot his mare, unlike in the novel and its other celluloid versions. The connection between Anna and Frou-Frou becomes emphasized as the sound of the shot reverberates in Anna's body: she winces. While Blair's interpretation of the races' end echoes the tragic intonations of the 1967 rendition, his fascination with the racing horses, filmed from various angles, resembles the first adaptations' desire to showcase the camera's ability to reproduce moving objects on screen.

In conclusion, as if attempting to broaden the symbolic polyvalence of Tolstoi's imagery, the directors invent scenes absent from the literary source.¹⁵² While the 1985 version by Langton and the 2001 adaptation resort to horseback riding as a means of romanticizing Vronskii's courtship of Anna, the 1927 film adds an episode of a wolf hunt that allows the future lovers to escape the crowd and to confess their shared fascination with equestrian pleasures.¹⁵³

3.9.4 Anna's labor

In terms of the novel's development, the episode of Anna's labor is crucial for several reasons.¹⁵⁴ It marks the last attempt by all involved to escape the triangle: Anna through death, Karenin through forgiveness, and Vronskii through suicide. This is the only time in the novel that Anna, Karenin, and Vronskii are so strongly united, both physically (in isolated space) and morally (by the newborn baby, Vronskii and Anna's daughter, whom Karenin almost immediately accepts as his child). All three are distanced from the world's vanities in the face of birth/death. Karenin reaches such a high spiritual plane in his forgiveness that it completely, if temporarily, changes the relationships and roles in the triangle. His spiritual nobility destroys Vronskii, who no longer knows how to behave and, as a result, attempts to commit suicide. "He felt ashamed, humiliated, guilty, and deprived of the possibility of cleansing himself from his degradation. He felt himself

¹⁵² As an element of sexual rhetoric in nineteenth-century novels of adultery, horseback riding as it is incorporated in Tolstoi's *Anna Karenina* fulfills functions somewhat different from those in, for instance, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Fontane's *Effi Briest*, where horse riding encourages the heroines' illicit affairs. Moreover, the consummation of Emma's adultery is encoded as a break in her horse's bridle.

¹⁵³ Preposterously enough, Anna even states that she was born in a saddle (!).

¹⁵⁴ Anninskii envisions Anna's labor as a "dead point" in the novel's structure heralding its new spiral, "a second circle of the number eight" (238-39). In his turn, Morson cites this scene as an example of Russian literature's inclination to use "the novel as a theological instrument" ("Brooding" 56).

knocked quite out of the rut along which he had hitherto trodden so proudly and so lightly” (413, emphasis added).

In the novel, Anna’s split between the two Alekseis, her embodied halves—who, not accidentally, share the same name—becomes palpable. Anna longs for a reconciliation between Karenin and Vronskii, whereby she may regain her inner unity and erase her sin. She confesses to her husband: “But there is another in me as well, and I am afraid of her. She fell in love with that other one...” (411). In a perverse fashion, the reconciliation scene replays Anna’s earlier dream, in which both men satisfy her sexual desires without animosity to each other. Linked in Anna’s unconscious, the tragic “deathbed” episode evolves out of the delirious *ménage à trois* and reinforces the female protagonist’s doubling, on which Tolstoi insists throughout the novel. Noticed by the innocent—and therefore particularly perceptive—Kitty at the ball, who senses “something alien, devilish and charming in her,” Anna’s demon lurks in her alluring appearance, and, as the story unfolds, gradually appropriates her “other self.”¹⁵⁵

Tolstoi’s symbolic system parallels childbirth with liberation from evil and spiritual purification. The scene of birthing is reminiscent of an act of exorcism without a priest.¹⁵⁶ “The end was expected every moment” (412), yet no one calls for a priest for the dying Anna, while, in a similar physical condition, Nikolai Levin receives Communion and Extreme Unction. Does

¹⁵⁵ Tolstoi’s strong belief that a sexually appealing woman, or, more precisely, her body, shelters a demon becomes explicit in his later stories “The Devil” [D’iavol 1890] and “Father Sergius” [Otets Sergii 1898]. Moreover, it is specifically the demonic element that makes her charm irresistible for men. To put a halt to his incessant, tormenting lust in a peasant woman’s presence, the male protagonist of “The Devil,” Evgenii Irtenev, has to commit suicide, while Father Sergius overcomes his temptation only through cutting off his finger (a transparent sign for the phallus). It is noteworthy that Anna Karenina, unlike the female characters in these stories, is granted the ability to sense a “vile intruder” of devouring potency in herself, and consequently, the option of withstanding him—a battle Anna ultimately loses, or conversely, wins by destroying her body.

¹⁵⁶ Aspects of this scene correspond to Catherine Clément’s description of the hysteric’s and sorceress’ performances. Here, Anna plays both roles. “These women [...] chose to suffer spectacularly *before an audience of men*. This attack is also a festival, a celebration of their *guilt used as a weapon*” (Cixous 44, emphases added).

Anna not deserve absolution? Here, the epigraph “Vengeance is mine; I will repay” loses its neutral connotations, on which Eikhenbaum in his book *Tolstoi in the Seventies* insists. Tolstoi’s description of Anna’s labor contradicts Eikhenbaum’s assertion that in his epigraph the writer only meant to emphasize the inevitability of the “bitter” (*gor'koe*) consequences caused by “evil” (*durnoe*) (143).¹⁵⁷

The significance of Anna’s labor may also be deduced from the fact that Tolstoi includes Kitty’s labor in the parallel line of Levin’s story. As Sydney Schultze demonstrates in her book, *The Structure of Anna Karenina*, the major contrasts in the novel emerge in the Anna and Levin plot lines, developing as a series of juxtapositions: “Throughout *Anna Karenina*, Anna and Levin are subjected to the same trials and often the same forces; and the accumulation of prior causes, including their own personalities, determines how each will react in his or her segment” (87).

The 1918 adaptation by Garas fully reproduces the literary scene, albeit within the limits of the silent representation of a verbally charged episode. A striking detail of the *mise-en-scène*

¹⁵⁷ Eikhenbaum’s disregard of Tolstoi’s omission in the epigraph of the last words from the Bible, “saith the Lord,” is problematic because these words’ absence potentially transforms the author of the novel into an agent of vengeance. Understood as a key to the novel’s meaning, the epigraph became an apple of discord among Tolstoi’s contemporaries and modern scholars. Eikhenbaum adduces several examples of such divergent readings: M.S.Gromeka suggests that Anna is to be blamed for her unwillingness to “agree with them [the societal laws] and be happy” (138); Mark Aldanov interprets the discrepancy between the epigraph and the novel’s plot as a sign of Tolstoi’s inability “to give a meaning to his own work and its moral concept” (141); Viktor Veresaev characterizes Anna’s “crime” as a violation of the laws of “vital life” (*zhivaia zhizn'*), wherein a woman should harmoniously combine love for her husband and her children (141-42). Eikhenbaum himself refuses to perceive the epigraph as a distillation of the novel’s ideas, and conceives of it as “the expression of a kind of general idea that is present in the novel, but does not at all cover and does not explain it” (143). Nabokov points to two targets of the epigraph—the society that has no right to judge Anna, and Anna, who is wrong to punish Vronskii through her suicide (231)—and thus again concretizes it as Tolstoi’s direct response to his character’s actions. In her article sketching numerous interpretations of Tolstoi’s epigraph, Kate Holland proposes that it is precisely the discrepancy between the “divine order” of the biblical quotation and a “chaotic world of the different human discourses” of the novel that reveals its meaning (147). Vladimir Alexandrov, in his turn, cleverly concludes that “the relation between the epigraph and the body of the text is polyvalent and defines a major and possibly a permanent indeterminacy” (*Limits* 70).

compensates visually for the absence of Anna's speech. By placing Anna's bed on a pedestal, the set designer, first, 'stages' the event's significance; second, extracts Anna from her previous existence in a lower stratum; and, third, forces Karenin to ascend (physically and morally) a few steps before forgiving his wife, and, finally, leaves Vronskii on the lower first step (Figure 2). Such a graded positioning, which elevates Karenin above the lovers, prepares viewers for the succeeding intertitles, which display Vronskii's open admission of Karenin's moral superiority. This treatment of the episode in which Anna gives birth is particularly eloquent; in keeping with Tolstoi's description, it emphasizes the male lover's "baseness"—a major force operating within the seduction/adultery paradigm in Garas's version of the novel.

Unlike their Hungarian precursor, both American adaptations starring Garbo omit a depiction of Anna giving birth to an illegitimate child. Yet the scene's absence in Goulding's film of 1927 can scarcely affect the plausibility of the visual narrative, centered on Garbo's divinity and the story of all-embracing love, which constitutes the film's core. At the same time, the omission of this scene from the 1935 version by Brown, owing to the censorship reinforced by the Production Code of 1934, thwarted the filmmakers' vision in adapting the novel and redirected the initial idea. The producer, David Selznick, realized that the elimination of the episode negated an important aspect of the plot: "This decision was so heart-rending that we were sorely tempted to abandon the whole project" (Swenson 331). Nevertheless, the film was finished, but with sloppy stitches in its fabric. The necessity of excising the labor scene in a film conceived as a faithful adaptation of the novel not only disrupted the events' succession and resulted in lacunae in the plot, but also triggered an utterly changed motivation for Anna's suicide—Vronskii's departure for the war—thus ignoring the logic of both the novel and the

myth. Ultimately, the omission of the birth episode in the 1935 version deprives the film of a coherent structure.

Yet while conforming to the novelistic order of events, the 1947 and 1997 versions by Duvivier and Rose, respectively, include only the part of the episode in which Anna asks for Karenin's forgiveness and omit Karenin and Vronskii's reconciliation at Anna's "deathbed." Although this reduction strips the episode of its wealth of nuances and allusions, it does not irretrievably alter the narratives, whether novelistic or mythic. Additionally, in both adaptations the baby is born dead, though in the novel she lives and thrives under Karenin's care. While excising the scene from the 1947 film is explicable as a necessary compromise forced by the period's taboos on depicting the birth of a "bastard," avoiding the birth of Anna's daughter in the 1997 version defies rational explanation.

The 1967 adaptation by Zarkhi resuscitates the polyvalence of the labor episode. This fidelity, along with excellent acting and camera work (Leonid Kalashnikov), makes the birth/death scene one of the turning points in the film. Sharing Tolstoi's belief that physical suffering entails spiritual purification, the director transforms Anna's giving birth into an existential moment of epiphany and one of the touchstones in her life. An example of psychological elaboration, this scene may have been modeled on that from the 1914 Russian version by Gardin, which was highly praised by the critic Neia Zorkaia, in her article "Russkaia shkola ekranizatsii" (The Russian School of Cinematic Adaptation 116).¹⁵⁸

In the two-installment 2001 adaptation by Blair, the episode's relevance within the novelistic structure is highlighted by its key position at the end of the first and the opening of the second part. Visually, the scene's impact is dramatized through intercutting close-ups of the

¹⁵⁸ My efforts to view this episode failed. Currently Russian cine-archives possess only one reel of the film, which comprises four scenes, and the labor scene is not among them.

adulteress, her husband, and her lover in a fast-paced montage. Whereas the silent Hungarian film of 1918 realizes its narration through the *mise-en-scène*, the twenty-first century narrative centers on the three characters' faces, appropriately set off from the décor.

Fundamentally deviating from the novel and its celluloid versions, the 1985 film by Langton employs the scene of Anna in labor to emphasize a final confrontation between husband and wife. A fighting Anna replaces the repentant wife, creating a romantic scenario that the “elevated” husband would complicate by deflating the lovers' triumph and delaying the adultery myth's dénouement. Thus, this adaptation totally reverses the original meaning of the scene: Anna resentfully declares to Karenin that she loves Vronskii and will not die, despite Karenin's wishing her to do so. Although this substantial modification alters the significance of the scene in the novel's plot, it does not prevent the adultery myth as such from being established along simplified lines.

3.9.5 Anna's visit to her son

Although reproduced in all screen adaptations of the novel, Anna's clandestine visit to the Karenins' home on the morning of her son's birthday soon after her return from Italy with Vronskii scarcely advances the trajectory of Anna's adultery. It seems that the episode's melodramatic excess has ensured its solid place in the collective memory of the *Anna Karenina* plot and explains the scene's constant reappearance on the screen. While a sentimental encounter between the long-separated mother and son allows viewers to penetrate Anna's predicament as an adulteress and mother—the first stage in manipulating the audience's emotions—her ensuing expulsion from the Karenin house consolidates the viewers' emotional convergence with a

suffering heroine. Nevertheless, the two peak moments of the scene are presented dissimilarly in various adaptations of the novel.

Unlike its cinematic counterparts, the literary text employs Anna's visit as an index of her failure/death as a mother and subsequently as a member of a family-structured society. The episode signals the irreversibility of Anna's demise. After her elopement to Italy, not only does Karenin present Serezha with her death as a *fait accompli*, but also her incorporeal image is transferred to the illusory reality of the boy's imagination: "When the candle had been taken away he heard and felt his mother. She stood above him and caressed him with a loving look" (524). Tolstoi leads Anna through the hell of being buried alive, allowing her to resist this 'death,' but only to realize the futility of her own attempts. In the morning, she visits Serezha to "destroy that monstrous falsehood with which they [Karenin and his soul mate, Lidiia Ivanovna] surrounded the unfortunate child" (529), and, in the evening, she appears at the opera house, to at least regain her status as a social being in response to the loss of her son.

Underscoring the death of Anna the mother, Tolstoi immediately shifts his narration to what could have become the refuge for a parent deprived of a child—another child, Annie. Saturating the baby girl's description with the diminutive suffixes that convey endearment, Tolstoi introduces the mother's thoughts, which reveal a striking indifference to her daughter's charms:

She [Anna] took her [Annie] in her arms, dandled her, and kissed her fresh cheek and bare elbows; but, at the sight of this child, she realized still more clearly that what she felt for her could not even be called love in comparison with her feeling for Seryozha. Everything about this baby was sweet, but for some reason she did not grip the heart. (535)

As is evident from this passage, Tolstoi definitively extinguished the maternal glow enveloping Anna's appearance at the beginning of the novel, before her spirit succumbed to her sexuality.¹⁵⁹ However, the narrator's remarks undermining her passion for her son emerge as early as in the after-races scene. Coming as a surprise, Anna's attachment to her son is interpreted in terms of sublimation as a "partly sincere but greatly exaggerated role of a mother living for her son which she had assumed during the last five years" (289). The shallowness of Anna's maternal feelings is confirmed in her negative self-evaluation preceding her suicide: "I thought I loved him [Serezha], too, and was touched at my own tenderness for him. Yet I lived without him and exchanged his love for another's [Vronskii's], and did not complain of the change as long as the other love satisfied me" (756). Thus, functionally, Serezha's birthday signals the crossing of the Rubicon and lays bare a distance rather than a connection between Anna and her children.¹⁶⁰

Reluctant to "soil" Anna's persona and intent on strengthening her *emploi* as a suffering adulteress, screen adaptations omit "distracting" nuances and focus either on her maternal love or on Karenin's cruelty in separating the mother from her beloved son. While the former frequently necessitates the elimination (the 1927, 1935, 1947, and 1997 films) or obliteration of the Anna-Annie story line (the 1967 and 2001 versions), the latter requires cinematic effort to compensate for Tolstoi's unwillingness to condemn the cuckolded husband in this particular episode. Altering the meaning of the original scene, adapters counterbalance "the Old Testament and the New Testament methods of confronting adultery" that define the dynamic of *Anna Karenina*

¹⁵⁹ For instance, during her first Moscow visit, Anna, as an exemplary mother, shows an extraordinary interest not only in her son, but also in Dolly's children: "She [Anna] not only mentioned them all [children] by name, but remembered the years and even the months of their births, their characters, and what illnesses they had had" (67).

¹⁶⁰ Precisely the purpose of underscoring the abyss between an ostracized adulteress and her child underlies the encounter of Effi with her daughter in Fontane's *Effi Briest*.

(Tanner 14), thus combining the strictness of the law with empathy for its violator.¹⁶¹ Films transform a brief mention of the husband's silent appearance—"Karenin was advancing toward her. When he saw her, he stopped and bowed his head... She [Anna] swiftly let down her veil and with quickened steps almost ran out of the room" (534)—into a graphically arresting scene of the banishment of a fallen woman from the Garden of Eden, with her husband as the embodiment of an ultimate Law. And this thunderous finale of Anna's visit gradually displaces the focus from Anna and Serezha onto Karenin, thus revealing that in some instances interaction among film adaptations occurs independently of the literary "source" text and entails the recurrence of motifs absent from the novel.

The only film that shows Anna's forbidden encounter with Serezha in harmony with the original, although constrained by what was accessible to early cinema, is the 1918 version by Garas. The birthday scene here is succeeded by the sequence depicting Dolly's visit to Anna and emphasizing how quickly Anna's joy at her daughter yields to her "voiced" complaints about Vronskii's coolness. However, this laudatory decision to spotlight Anna's emotional priorities may result not so much from the film's adherence to Tolstoi's novel as from the seduction template that structures the Anna-Vronskii story line, according to which the final despair of a seduced and deserted woman corresponds to the immensity of her sacrifice.

Later adaptations of *Anna Karenina* avoid Anna's conflicted feelings for her children; instead, they contrast a sensitive mother to a merciless father. Undeniably, Garbo's films are responsible for such a shift. While her sympathetic portrayal of an adulteress-mother tinged with divinity cements a screen interpretation of Anna as a selfless mother, her husband's aggressive

¹⁶¹ In his article deciphering the meanings inherent in the novel's epigraph, Dragan Kujundžić likewise contrasts the Old and New Testaments' views on adultery.

behavior in the scene of the visit validates her superiority. To emphasize the spiritual and physical inseparability of mother and son, Goulding's *Love* deviates from the novel and adds such moments as Anna obliviously playing with her son, stroking his semi-nude body during his morning toilet, and checking his loose tooth. Although not reiterating these moments in her 1935 performance, Garbo emulates the encounter's sensuality, especially palpable in a medium close-up showing from the back a luxuriating Anna sitting on the floor and conversing with her son, with her head on Serezha's knees while he is still in bed (Figure 12). At the same time, this version by Brown tends to exaggerate Karenin's role in Anna's retreat. The graphic disposition of the characters—the immobile figure of Karenin at the top of the staircase towering over a humbled, despondently descending Anna—is strengthened by his thundering voice barring her from the house.

Borrowing Brown's rendition of Anna's retreat, Duvivier in his 1947 adaptation nonetheless revises it. In both films, the staircase central to her ostracism acts as a sign of separation between Anna and Karenin. While in Brown's adaptation Karenin shouts at the departing Anna from the head of the stairs, in Duvivier's film he waits for her downstairs. This different, less threatening placement is an attempt to attenuate Karenin's nastiness stemming from the film's reconceptualization of him as a complex, rather than an unequivocally negative, character.

At the same time, Duvivier shifts the emphasis from the mother delighting in her son to the wife confronting a husband adamant in his refusal to grant her a divorce. A brief conversation between a weeping Anna and an awakening Serezha seems more like a prelude to his parents' argument than a full-fledged scene unveiling the scope of the adulteress-mother's misfortune. Not only the length of the two parts of the episode—the shot depicting Anna and her

husband is twice as long as that of Anna with her son—but also their staging reveals the incongruity between the two moments. The compressed medium close-ups of Anna leaning against Serezha lying in bed contrast with the spacious long shots that embrace Anna’s exit from the room upstairs, to slowly descend the huge staircase—a pivotal element of the *mise en scène*—and approach Karenin in the hall. The static camera, which is aligned with Karenin’s (and implied audience’s) view, impartially registers the movements of Anna’s full-length figure. The solemnity of Anna’s dignified descent and her subsequent expulsion from a family “paradise” graphically overshadow her meeting with her son.

Unlike his precursor, Zarkhi, in his 1967 adaptation, shifts the emphasis back to the mother-son encounter. In tune with Tolstoi’s interpretation of Anna’s visit, this scene is constructed from Anna’s point of view, in which Karenin’s appearance simply puts a halt to her interaction with her son rather than symbolizing her forceful removal from Karenin household. Not accidentally, Anna’s excitement and absorption are communicated through her playful spinning with Serezha, which evokes her waltzing with Vronskii at the Moscow ball—a dance that initiated her love affair. Moreover, the Russian filmmakers selected a much younger boy to play Anna’s son, as if responding to Anna’s expectations: “During the time they had been parted and under the influence of that gush of love she had felt for him of late she had always imagined him as a little fellow of four, the age when she had loved him best” (530). The addition of Serezha desperately running after his mother through the enfilade, instead of Anna hurriedly leaving the house after Karenin’s verbal explosion (as presented in earlier adaptations) likewise attests to the prevalence of Anna’s perspective, privileging her son over her husband.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Analysis of this episode would not be complete without mention of a striking similarity between the posture of the embracing mother and son in the film and a drawing-illustration by the famous Russian painter Mikhail Vrubel' that probably served as a visual prototype for the Russian adaptation (Figure 27).

Finally, the 1997 and 2001 adaptations, by Rose and Blair, respectively, substantially reduce the significance of Anna's visit on Serezha's birthday. Presented as a fleeting homage to the tradition of cinematic adaptations of *Anna Karenina*, this episode simply sets the stage for irrevocable alterations in Anna's demeanor. For instance, in his rapid montage of Anna storming down the stairs and her shaking hand reaching for the opium, Rose overtly links Anna's humiliation at being expelled from the house with her drug abuse—a major reason for her suicide in the 1997 interpretation. Blair, in his turn, relies on an unsteady camera abruptly changing the distances between objects while registering Anna's brief encounter with Serezha and her horror when she collides with Karenin. The chaotic succession of shots exposes Anna's instability and prepares the ground for a rapid deterioration in her condition and subsequent inability to communicate adequately with Vronskii, resulting in her tragic death. Thus, by favoring the myth of a love that is stronger than life rather than following the maternal focus of the novel, the 1997 and 2001 films fail to represent Anna's secret encounter with her son as a key episode in their narrative structures.

3.9.6 Anna's suicide

Anticipated and repeatedly foreshadowed, Anna's death as the only resolution to her dead-end relationship with Vronskii—stressed in the chapters describing their surrogate family-like existence at Vronskii's estate, with her deteriorating state of mind triggered by jealous attacks and opium—crowns the Anna-Vronskii affair. Unlike Vronskii, who attempted suicide, and Levin, who contemplated it, Anna sees self-elimination through to the end. Unable to communicate with Vronskii and to think clearly, she reacts to the visual signs/traps set for her by her creator. A vision of a freight train reanimates a bad omen—the death of a railroad worker at

the Moscow train station—and prompts her suicide. Her desire to “punish” Vronskii and “liberate herself from everyone and herself” are the reasons Tolstoi gives for her throwing herself under the train.

The 1914 version by Gardin, while weakening the adultery myth so as to remain “true” to Tolstoi’s novel, gives birth to another myth—the train as the engine of Anna’s adultery. As a survived production still demonstrates, the concluding shot in Gardin’s adaptation imitates the Lumière train rather than literally reproducing Tolstoi’s description of the protagonist’s jump under the second carriage, and her kneeling on the rails.¹⁶³ The cinematic ready-made image displaced the literary description. Defined by Iurii Tsivian as a manifestation of “emotional memory,” such an overlap of the verbal and visual images might have established a tradition in later representations of Anna’s death on the screen, with Lumière rather than Tolstoi as the “source” for the sequence of Anna’s suicide at the train station (137-44).

With time, however, adapters did away with the image of the Lumière train, and reconstructed Tolstoi’s description of the suicide scene. While the films of 1914, 1918, 1927, and 1947 employ the canonical cinematic image of a train advancing toward the audience, some versions either omit it completely (1935, 1985) or combine a view of the approaching train with side shots of its carriages and wheels, which are intercut with Anna’s face (1967, 1997, 2001). Rose’s film constitutes an eloquent farewell to the early cinema icon. As a blurry train in the background of the frame slowly advances, Anna’s in-focus figure, positioned in the lower left corner, becomes the prevailing image on the screen and blocks out the train’s arrival. And although a moment later she leaps in front of the approaching engine, the train image itself disintegrates.

¹⁶³ The scene’s filming included such special effects as the substitution of a dummy and reverse shooting (Tsivian 137).

Were it not for the 1947 version, it would be tempting to link the appearance of sound in cinema to the disappearance of the Lumière train from the suicide scene. Presumably, the modern viewers' perceptions and expectations, as well as new cinematic techniques, gradually displaced the "old trick." Either the arrival of the train projected on the screen failed to agitate the spectators to an extent comparable to the first viewers' reaction, and thereby lost its threatening connotations, or filmmakers decided to refocus on the original verbal description. The latter approach helped them to ascribe a supernatural dimension to the train, which Anna initially senses during her ride from Moscow to St. Petersburg, and which ultimately "draws" her under the wheels. Sydney Schultze points out that "the major thematic strand of the novel [is] the relation of the individual to the life force" that determines characters' deeds (77). She links what she perceives as the deterministic spirit of *Anna Karenina* to the author's study of Schopenhauer's works and of Greek literature. The overall submissiveness of the characters to "the life force," positive and negative, is condensed in Anna's fate. The train becomes a metaphor for the mechanical impulse of the sexual drive to which Anna succumbs.

While some of the films visually focus on the sinister function of the Tolstoian train, which transcends its commonplace task of delivering the characters to their geographical destinations, others foreground the interconnection between Anna's adultery and the railroad. In the suicide episode of his 2001 adaptation, Blair reduces the colors to the opposition of dark blue and bright yellow. By virtue of this simplified palette in the extreme long shot that depicts the advance of the train, the surrounding landscape sinks into darkness, while two blinding front lights—the yellow "eyes" of the approaching engine—transform the train into an animated monstrous force (Figure 41). In 1947 and 1967, Duvivier and Zarkhi, respectively, employ the identical image in the sequence preceding the actual suicide; an extreme long shot delineates two

oncoming objects, Anna's figure and the train to her left, simultaneously moving along the platform (Figure 20, 29). Briefly uniting Anna and a concrete, mechanical version of "the force" that triggered her affair, the directors visually reinforce the tragic loss of spiritual, mental, and physical balance in Anna's existence, and therefore its inevitable destruction. The illusion of equilibrium between the adulteress and the driving force of her life lays bare the given moment's fragility.¹⁶⁴

Although the Lumière train disappears from the suicide scene, the *train fatal* retains its functional and symbolic significance within the visual narratives in accordance with the original. In her book *The Architecture of Anna Karenina*, Elisabeth Stenbock-Fermor examines the structural relevance of the four railroad episodes: Anna and Vronskii's initial chance meeting at the Moscow train station, marked by the railroad worker's accidental death; Vronskii's pursuit of Anna during her train ride to St. Petersburg; Anna's pursuit of Vronskii and her death on the tracks; and the last appearance of Vronskii on his way to the Serbian-Turkish war. The scholar suggests that together these scenes form the central arches of the novelistic edifice and provide it with the basic support that is supplemented with the less conspicuous pillars representing Levin's search for the meaning of life and the "family idea" (70-74). Even if such a reading of the novel's structure exaggerates the significance of the railroad scenes for the Stiva-Dolly and the Kitty-Levin story lines, the scenes do signal the progression of Anna's adultery. And cinema brings this function to the fore, thanks to the adaptations' preoccupation with the adultery master plot and the cinematographic power of the train in advancing the story. While presaging the

¹⁶⁴ The tragic (heroic) pathos of the scene is so strong that it brings to mind Gary Jahn's "romantic" interpretation of the Tolstoian railroad as a symbol of human beings' existence "between the Charybdis of an inescapable (determined) fate as a social being, with its danger of the ignominious loss of individuality and dignity in the swirling whirlpool of social convention and respectability, and the Scylla of unrestrained gratification of the spontaneous ego, of freedom, and of exalted individual worth, with its attendant dangers, discomforts, and ultimate and inevitable disaster" (8).

development of the adultery plot's outcome and simultaneously bridging the gap between the episodes occurring in different locales, the locomotive's motion both organizes and fills in the pauses, hence is narratively and cinematically justified.

3.9.7 Love letters

In his list of obligatory figures in the lover's discourse, Roland Barthes includes the amorous letter, characterizing its core trait as "the special dialectic" of the genre, "both blank (encoded) and expressive (charged with longing to signify desire)" (157). The dialectic pinpointed by Barthes transforms the letter into a document that testifies, on the one hand, to the finite nature and vanity of an extramarital affair, and, on the other, to its occurrence. Once lovers' shared exaltation disappears, the letters become mute. In the concluding chapters of his work, Tolstoi completely demolishes the significance of the written word exchanged between the lovers as a magic bond. Anna and Vronskii's written, inadequately interpreted notes—a tellingly reduced form of the lovers' discourse, paralleling their diminished love—cause frustration, despair, and finally lead to suicide.

In Tolstoi's novel, Vronskii's letters to Anna merely function as evidence of Anna's adultery, to be used by the deceived husband in court—a scenario that never eventuates. Importantly, owing to her earlier confession to Karenin, the love letters do not reveal Anna's secret. In this regard, they are superfluous, an unnecessary detail in the plot—a fossil of the adultery myth. Although not always devoid of genuine communication, the correspondence between Anna and Vronskii is reduced to Anna's summons to Vronskii to come to her. Moreover, there is not a single letter among those made accessible to the reader that speaks of

love. By not sharing the contents of the love letters with the reader, Tolstoi minimizes the romantic aspect of the Anna-Vronskii affair.

Whereas the love letters in Flaubert's and Fontane's novels preserve the destructive power of illicit passion,¹⁶⁵ Vronskii's love letters allegedly possess a constructive potential. If used in court, they could have liberated Anna. However, as becomes clear from the comment of the Petersburg lawyer, the love letters, unlike eyewitness testimony of adultery, fail to constitute sufficient grounds for divorce. The draconian requirements of proof of adultery—for instance, the direct confrontation of the witnesses—did not exhaust the backwardness of the Russian Imperial law. Women living separately from their husbands were deprived of the right to the custody of their children. The biological parents had no legal rights to their children if the latter were born in adultery. For instance, Anna and Vronskii's daughter legally was Karenin's. More importantly, obtaining a divorce would contradict the customary tragic trajectory of the adultery plot; therefore, Anna declines the idea of divorce when Karenin agrees to it,¹⁶⁶ and at that moment the letters accordingly cease to play a significant role in her affair.

Anna's last day, however, seemingly restores the letters' lost potency. To highlight Vronskii's lessened passion and to ensure Anna's tragic end, Tolstoi prevents their letters from being read in time and correctly. Moreover, the messages' "emptiness" and their inability to establish a link between the lovers allow Anna to interpret Vronskii's responses as evidence of

¹⁶⁵ When discovered by a shocked Charles after Emma's death, Rodolphe's letters significantly shorten his life. Crampas's letters to Effi, found six years after the affair, lead not only to the duel that proves fatal for him, but also to the disintegration of an entire family.

¹⁶⁶ This development "would require that Karenin pretend to be an adulterer" (Murav 78). Harriet Murav suggests several reasons for Anna's refusal of Karenin's offer: her unwillingness "to put herself utterly in debt to him," to let him "endure a scandal" when playing the role of adulterer in court, and to "confirm her sense of herself as a criminal," by accepting Karenin's self-sacrifice (80-81). In my reading of the novel, Anna's visceral desire to suffer and to conform to a certain pattern of behavior imposed on her by her creator explains better than any other reason her self-destructive decisions.

his infidelity. Vainly attempting to reach Vronskii with her imploring notes and unable to read his impassionate messages adequately, Anna commits suicide. Thus, the lovers' myopia manifests itself in their final letters, and culminates in the adulteress's death.

The ambivalence of the love letters in Tolstoi's novel—their simultaneous irrelevance as proof of adultery and their function as signs of the male lover's reduced affection—partly accounts for the inconsistency with which the directors introduce them into the films. Sporadically included in the visual narratives, the letters/notes frequently fail to constitute a stable marker of Anna's affair. For instance, the 1967 adaptation by Zarkhi reproduces the original episode in which Karenin looks for Vronskii's letters and later confesses his sufferings to Anna, who for once notices her husband's pain. However, omitted from the rest of the narrative, the love letters seem to catalyze Karenin's feelings rather than lay bare the adultery myth's skeleton. Moreover, to avoid obscuring her image as a victim of the moral hypocrisy prevailing in high society, the film refrains from depicting the misunderstanding arising from Anna and Vronskii's confused exchange of notes on the day of her suicide.

Conversely, Goulding's silent film of 1927 resorts to the love letter exclusively as a marker of the progressing romance. Vronskii's letter expressing his love and demanding Anna's—which never appears in the novel—is projected on the screen precisely in the middle of the film (the eleventh scene out of twenty-two), and thus formally establishes its centrality to the adultery plot. Rose's version of 1997 exposes the love letter's function in a metaphorical manner. While excluding love letters from the narrative, the film introduces a scene in which Anna starts writing, undoubtedly, to Vronskii. This brief episode is preceded by Vronskii's refusal to be friends instead of lovers, and is followed by a depiction of the violent gush of the Neva River

from under the winter ice. Thus, a visual cliché denoting the release of passions replaces the traditional cinematic device of displaying or reading the love letter.

However, only three adaptations—those by Garas (1918),¹⁶⁷ Duvivier (1947), and Blair (2001)—reaffirm the myth underlying Tolstoi’s text by emphasizing the love letters’ significance for both the consummation and the termination of adultery. Projecting on the screen either Anna’s nervously written note (Blair’s version) or Vronskii’s response, which confirms his postponed arrival (Garas’s and Duvivier’s adaptations), the filmmakers stress the reverse side of a love letter: its inability to link the lovers once the affair grows stale. Additionally, Garas, Duvivier, and Blair “correct” Tolstoi’s insufficient allusion to Anna and Vronskii’s letters as their romance blossoms. While the Hungarian director prefaces the scene of Karenin’s search for his wife’s love letters with the depiction of Anna ecstatically reading Vronskii’s missive, Duvivier and Blair entrust this function to Karenin and show him reading his rival’s letters on the train to Moscow. These dissimilarities notwithstanding, all three adaptations grant full visibility to the love letters. The insertion of the episodes structured around the amorous epistles and absent from the literary source attests to the filmmakers’ orientation toward the myth rather than the novel. These adaptations redefine a love letter as a mandatory signifier of a secret affair, and sometimes its tactical function.

In conclusion, an examination of the various strategies the filmmakers adopt in rendering the key components of Tolstoi’s story of adultery illustrates the interconnection between the adapters’ choices and their intentions, which are inspired by several sources: the novel itself, the adultery myth and its modifications, and earlier screen adaptations. While maneuvering between

¹⁶⁷ Garas’s film abounds in letters. See my chapter 1, 35-37.

them, filmmakers tend to retain those scenes from the novel that do not conflict with the adultery myth and to modify them (within the limits of permissibility at the time) in accord with their own visions of the Anna-Vronskii-Karenin triangle. Moreover, their versions are rooted in the “collective memory” of the *Anna Karenina* plot, not only because this foundation may guarantee a film’s success with the mass audience, but also because the filmmakers’ conceptions of Anna’s story spring from this memory. However, the importance of this memory as a major factor in conceiving a screen counterpart of the novel changes with time. For instance, because the formation of the *Anna Karenina* cultural construct was significantly influenced by cinema, the novel’s early adaptations were less dependent on the collective memory of the literary text—almost nonexistent outside Russia—than, for instance, recent screen renditions that inevitably confront its powerful presence today. Whereas John Ellis contends that a cinematic version of a literary source consumes “a generally circulated cultural memory,” “to efface it with the presence of its own images” (3, emphasis added), I argue that most adaptations are undertaken with the hope of echoing that collective unconscious, except in those rare cases where confronting that unconscious is their aim. Such a purpose is evident in Katia Metelitsa’s postmodernist adaptation, discussed in the last chapter of my dissertation.

4.0 NOVEL AS COMICS: *AHHA KAPEHIIHA BY LEO TOLSTOY* (2000)

Within the ample corpus of visual adaptations of Tolstoi's novel, Katia Metelitsa's comic book *Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy* published in 2000 by the "World of the New Russians" is unique (Figure 43).¹⁶⁸ First and most obviously, its comic book format distinguishes it from the screen adaptations, reactivating the high-culture/low-culture tension that originally characterized the relation between nascent cinema and venerable literature but has been gradually erased by the growing prestige of film. Second, it is blatantly postmodernist, packed with allusions to modern cinema and television (e.g., cult films such as Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* [1994], Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting* (1996), James Cameron's *Titanic* [1997], the TV cartoon *The Simpsons*, and the Russian talk-show *Ia sama* [By Myself]), to virtual reality (e.g., the scene of the race is depicted as a computer game), and to the lyrics of such musical idols as Beatles, Rolling Stones, Kino, and Nirvana. In this context, whatever traits the comic does share with film versions take on significantly different values. Third, its post-Soviet identity is likewise aggressively evident in its insistent representation of the nation's new capitalist reality: Western cars, chic interiors, designer clothes, credit cards, and cell phones. Less blatant but most provocative/subversive of all is the subtext of Metelitsa's transposition of Tolstoi's novel, sacrosanct in Russian and Soviet logocentric culture, to the previously banned "frivolous" genre of comics—namely, a

¹⁶⁸ World of the New Russians Publishers is part of a bigger enterprise that professes the policy of creating "freakish, silly, and funny souvenirs," the hybrids that inscribe the New Russians into the works of traditional art.

legitimization of the New Russians' identity vis-à-vis not only traditional Russian but also Soviet culture.

On the one hand, *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy popularizes through radical, irreverent revision one of the cornerstones of what is traditionally perceived as “true” Russian Culture, and, on the other, it elevates and legitimizes the only quasi-class to have emerged in post-Soviet reality. And in this demystification of a canonized text, the New Russians gain more visibility and stature. The double function and straddling of genres make for a potentially subversive originality. Not only does the comic book deploy the characters and imagery from the film *Pulp Fiction* (e.g., the “foot massage” discussion reanimated in Anna’s dream [Figure 44] and the “dancing contest” scene enthusiastically reproduced in the volume’s popular-culture genres [Figure 45]), but it also reconceives the novel itself as a pulp fiction. At the same time, a particularly cinematic structure embraces the whole project. The author Metelitsa not only employs various cinematic techniques, but also introduces herself as a script writer (p. 2).

Similar to earlier cinematic adaptations, such as Goulding’s *Love* (1927) and Brown’s *Anna Karenina* (1935), Metelitsa’s adaptation focuses exclusively on the story of Anna’s adultery, thus ridding the literary text of everything irrelevant to the Karenin-Anna-Vronskii love triangle. However, the reasons behind the content’s substantial paring down to the Anna-Vronskii line in the films and the comic book diverge. Whereas the former—by actively erasing their literary predecessor’s individuality—reassert the myth of adultery that bolsters the nineteenth-century novel of adultery, the latter disintegrates the myth.

Parodic revision of Tolstoi’s novel inevitably tends to disregard the generic conventions of the adultery novel that dictate an operatic conclusion: the agonizing death of the adulteress. Metelitsa’s adaptation retains the key motifs and episodes of the myth of adultery with a twist

appropriate for a New Russian epoch: an unexciting marriage to an older man (emphasized through metonymic use of invariable attributes: the old-fashioned hat, glasses, cell phone, greenish skin, and cracking sound of fingers); the first meeting of future lovers (however, Anna's legs attract Vronskii's primary attention); initiation into the affair through dance (unavoidably, tango replaces waltz); the symbolism of horseback riding and train (though this train comes alive in Anna's imagination, while the horses become inanimate in virtual reality); adulterous letters (deployed as a fuel that keeps the engine of the family scandal running); hallucinations and symbolic portents (chiefly generated by Anna's excessive use of morphine and cocaine); the boredom and banality of adultery; the heroine's confused mental state before her unnatural death, and so forth. Metelitsa's triple ending, played out in the last fifteen pages—as described by Tolstoi's narrator in the novel, as imagined by Anna in her delirium, and as envisioned by Vronskii in his dream—not only confuses the reader, but also registers the inappropriateness of the original tragic outcome and the perplexity it may evoke in the modern reader accustomed to bloodless resolutions of passionate affairs.¹⁶⁹ Ultimately, the original story fails to sustain its logic when provocatively put on the edge of postmodernist irony.

Like the *Anna Karenina* films, Metelitsa's book is a graphic narrative consisting of a sequence of juxtaposed images and so to some degree seems a natural extension of the cinematic approach.¹⁷⁰ Likewise, the experienced reader/viewer is accustomed to various visual liberties and

¹⁶⁹ However, even today the degree of tolerance of adultery as a natural attribute of human existence varies in different countries.

¹⁷⁰ The independent development of the two media notwithstanding. The first recurring American continuous comic character, "Yellow Kid," appeared in 1896. The basis for the formal language of the modern comics was created by Winsor McCay, the author of a renowned strip, *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, first published in 1905. The relevance of his technical innovations for the early comics may be equated with D.W.Griffith's contribution to early cinema. At the same time, films and comics are related, especially if one agrees with Scott McCloud that "before it's projected, film is very-very-very-very slow comic" (8).

experiments with Tolstoi's text. Nevertheless, because comics has¹⁷¹ an irregular status as an art and because their circulation and reception in different cultures varies, a comic-book transformation of Tolstoi's novel seems destined to evoke diverging reactions in Western Europe, America, and Russia. Western Europe (as well as Japan) has a longer tradition of approaching comics as a respectable artistic genre. As Art Spiegelman, the author of the sensational comic book *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1986), wittily observes: "In France, a cartoonist is one step below a movie director. In America, [a cartoonist] has only slightly more status than a plumber" (quoted in Bongco 14). Anne Magnussen and Hans-Christian Christiansen echo this distinction in their analysis of Franco-Belgian and Anglo-American trends in scholarship on comics, noting regretfully that the "two traditions hardly inspire each other, and a dialogue between them has been almost non-existent" (9).

The West European is likely to be the least perplexed reader of Metelitsa's text not only because comics is a more reputable genre on the continent than in the States, but also because it recently enjoyed success in a similarly literary publication: *Gemma Boverly* by the English cartoonist Posy Simmonds (1999). Its transparent title unequivocally evokes in the reader an association with Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857), the French "counterpart" of *Anna Karenina*. In both Simmonds's and Metelitsa's adaptations, the original narratives morph into graphic novels, while the modern environment substitutes for the nineteenth-century setting. Meanwhile, despite the still marginalized position of comics within the American artistic hierarchy, the tradition of rendering most literary classics into comic-book form could make an American reader receptive to this rendition of Tolstoi's masterpiece. Primarily targeting the

¹⁷¹ In his breakthrough book *Understanding Comics*, McCloud suggests using "comics" as a single noun (9).

action/adventure genres, the Gilberton *Classics Illustrated* started publishing well-known literary texts in the form of comics in 1941 (e.g., James Fennimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* [1826] or Alexander Dumas' *The Three Musketeers* [1844]).¹⁷² Moreover, lack of familiarity with the original, the predominance of visual images in contemporary cultural practices, and continual recycling of "obsolete" themes by all possible means could work to make the Russian experiment palatable to the American reader.

At the same time, and ironically, it is doubtful that the comic book *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy would appeal greatly to a general Russian audience, which most likely would evaluate the work according to a set of 'authentic' literary values and, consequently, in terms of decline and degradation. Such a negative, even hostile, reception would stem not only from the logocentrism of Russian/Soviet culture but also from the absence of comics as a medium in the Soviet cultural landscape. In the post-Soviet era, comics becomes one of the ideal training grounds for exposing through wisecracks and ridicule the absurdities of life brought by the new reforms. José Alaniz, who has dubbed comics in Russia a "stalled medium," introduces to readers the works of Vladimir Sakov's Tema studio organized in 1988, which demonstrate loyalty to the literary tradition of "the little man and the state" (14-16). In his continuing series *Prikliucheniia Kapitana Donki* (The Adventures of Captain Donki), Sakov parodies Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy* (1308-21) to foreground injustices of contemporary life in Russia. The comic book features policeman Donki's "picaresque adventures in a modern-day Heaven and Hell of decidedly Slavic cast" (Alaniz 15).

¹⁷² In 1947, "in a search for a classier logo," Gilberton displaced the initial title of the series *Classic Comics* (Sabin Comics 79).

The Soviet state condemned comics as a harmful semiliterate genre, which, besides retarding the state's ambitions for total national literacy, testified to unworthy practices in an alien bourgeois culture. And in fact the Soviets were not the only ones to censor comics. One can compare the concern of the censors about the potential of comics to lead youth astray to the biggest crisis in the comics' development in America (and to a lesser extent in Great Britain) following the release of Dr. Fredric Wertham's book *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954). The author denounced the imagery of horror and violence found in comics as a leading cause of increased juvenile delinquency.

Perceiving pictorial texts as less controllable than verbal ones because of the illusory nature of images, the Soviet authorities censored visual texts so rigorously as to regulate even the number of illustrations allowed per page! In his article, Alaniz cites state edicts of the 1930s that limited illustrations to 50 percent for very young children and to 10 percent for older children capable of abstract thinking (8). And predictably, the literature for adults excluded all visual "assistance."¹⁷³ The overall ban on visual enhancement disappeared only with the collapse of the Soviet system, with exceptions like the occasional comic-book images to be found in the children's periodicals *Murzilka* and *Veselye kartinki* (*Joyful Pictures*) or in propaganda posters, which were unable to reconcile Russian readers to comics as a legitimate vehicle of adaptation, comparable, for example, to film.

Unabashed by such dismissiveness in the past, the artist Metelitsa assigns her work to the genre of *komiksy* (comics); but perhaps the term *graphic novel* is as fitting for her work and more likely to win over her native audience. The graphic novel, a longer narrative than the comic book,

¹⁷³ Will Eisner's statement that "the reading of the comic book is an act of both aesthetic perception and intellectual pursuit" (8) disagrees with a still viable perception of the pictorial images being crutches for a handicapped reader bereft of imagination.

appeared at the end of the 1970s (after Will Eisner's *A Contract with God* was published in 1978), primarily as a marketing device intended to reach a wider public "by associating them [adult comics] with novels, and disassociating them from comics" (Sabin, *Comics* 165). The new term connoted a qualitative change—comics "dressed up" as appropriate intellectual reading for adults—that materialized in both creators' and readers' enthusiasm for more narrative and in a greater visual sophistication in the product.

Whereas this shift confers greater respectability on the graphic novel, not all art scholars recognize a genuine difference. For example, in *The Language of Comics*, Mario Saraceni states: "In fact, the distinction between 'comic books' and 'graphic novels' is nothing more than a matter of labels, and has barely anything to do with content or with any other feature" (4). By contrast, Roger Sabin, in *Adult Comics: An Introduction*, suggests that the graphic novel is a weightier achievement: "Thus, in the creative sense, we can say that the graphic novel is to the comic what the prose novel is to the short story" (236). And Eisner elevates the sub-genre even more after acknowledging its embryonic state: "... [the graphic novel] could provide a dimension of communication that contributes—hopefully on a level never before attained—to the body of literature that concerns itself with the examination of human experience" (142). Given the particular history of comic-bans in the Soviet Union, Metelitsa's ironic perspective renews the original connotations of that term as a rubric for the first comic strip "funnies." Meanwhile, in stressing an association with the literary source, the term "graphic novel" likewise seems apt for Metelitsa's approach, which retains the novel's adult focus on adultery—and expends considerable artistry and sophistication in so doing.

What might further earn the label of "graphic novel" for *Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy* is its exclusive edition, which, unlike comics, targets a select audience. The high-quality print and

glossy paper, the hard cover of the book, and limited distribution hardly characterize it as “disposable entertainment,” designed to cater to the general public. Indeed, its ironic sophistication, various allusions and references, and high price make the slim volume accessible only to New Russians, uncharacteristically well-to-do Russian intellectuals, and Western readers intimate with Russian culture and reality. Located at the cutting edge of experimentation, the comic book strives for *épatage* within its rather conservative technical execution and its restrained visual “lexicon,” except for its distinctly bright colors and collage technique.

The 87-page narrative consists of predominantly rectangular panels with straight-edged borders printed on both sides of a white page.¹⁷⁴ Although the size of the panels varies within almost every page, the panel border remains inviolate: the characters stay inside the frame. This lack of open (non-frame) panels—a sign of the artist’s controlling power—equally keeps the characters from unleashed action, and the readers from unnecessary imaginative steps. Simultaneously, employing a variety of pictorial techniques stimulates the viewer’s mobility. The pages that reflect a collage-poster technique, and thereby disrupt the successive arrangement of the panels, do not justify the audience’s expectations and are examples of challenges to the reader (Figure 46, 47). The images superimposed on the main picture compel the readers, while turning the pages, on the one hand, to react quickly to their unexpected combinations (e.g., the sign located in the Russian countryside that points to Italy), and, on the other, to slow down in order to activate their associative memory. By subliminally forcing the speed of the viewer’s mental activity through displaying the moving images of car and train, the pages (or the artist) play a trick on the viewers and challenge them as their opponents in a game of charades. The abrupt change of

¹⁷⁴ An exception is the page that displays a sequence of Anna’s distorted (and therefore oval-shaped) visions of Vronskii and the ephemeral lovers generated by her jealousy (p. 67).

spatial points of view—comparable to point-of-view shots in cinema—that the author favors not only decentralizes the stable position of the readers with the book in their hands, but also transforms such readers/viewers into a rotating camera, not unlike the result of Anna’s dissolving morphine drops (Figure 48). The viewer is forcibly transferred onto the page. The non-successive display of the differently sized panels subverts the habit of viewing the page from left to right, top to bottom, and prevents a syntagmatic reading of the page.

Although the preponderance of close-ups in Metelitsa’s adaptation attests to the artist’s reliance on a reader with enough visual literacy to deduce or remember the invisible “off-screen” material, the book differs from most modern comics by using gutters that do not challenge the readers’ imaginations, and that rarely require them to reconstruct the story through off-panel contents.¹⁷⁵ Instead, visual omissions, temporal ellipses, and informational gaps usually occur between the pages. Occasionally and not surprisingly, the page-to-page transitions presuppose the readers’ familiarity with Tolstoi’s original plot. For example, the page depicting a shameful episode at the opera (in the Bol’shoi Theatre!) immediately follows the page displaying a collage of the lovers’ trip to Italy, thus excising the episode of Anna’s secret encounter with her son. None of the previous *Anna Karenina* adaptations neglected to include the episode of Anna’s visit to Serezha on his birthday. Only the artist’s infatuation with the Anna-Vronskii love story and her reluctance to interrupt its dramatic rhythm may explain such an unprecedented omission.

Moreover, the succeeding page shows Dolly’s visit to Vronskii’s country estate—but with a significant change in that the women’s meeting begins with a game of tennis. Metelitsa’s decision to change the setting of this episode may be influenced by other products from the World of the New Russians, such as lacquer boxes showing various scenes from the life of *nouveaux*

¹⁷⁵ Gutters are the blank spaces between the panels.

riches.¹⁷⁶ While Tolstoi describes the game of lawn tennis to emphasize the playful inappropriateness of Anna and Vronskii's surrogate existence as a family, *Metelitsa* includes the panels of Anna and Dolly playing tennis to link their lifestyle with that of the New Russians—as an elitist sport, tennis remains a signifier of the players' wealth. Not accidentally, Dolly's (and the narrator's) disapproval of adults indulging themselves in a childish game is validated by the unpleasantly flirtatious behavior of Anna and her partner, Veslovskii, on the court. By thwarting the scene's original connotations, *Metelitsa* transforms a sign of an idle pastime into that of a new reality.¹⁷⁷ The tennis episode showcases *Metelitsa*'s approach to the novel of retaining the major motifs of Anna's adultery while simultaneously liberating them from the narrator's "consummating" point of view.

Although visual images dominate this *World-of-the-New-Russians* comic book, *Metelitsa* also deploys the traditional constituents of comic-art speech representation: dialogue and thought balloons, as well as captions that transcribe the narrator's voice (ostensibly Tolstoi's). However, by using the same lettering to render the characters' and narrator's speech, she equalizes various discourses and blurs the different personalities expressed through the words, and thereby ultimately relegates verbal discourse to the background of the graphic novel, transforming the *words* into superfluous "illustration." The discrepancies between the meaning of the words and the images, the gradual disappearance of the verbal discourse from the panels, and an abundance of onomatopoeia expressively handwritten in various colors all emphasize the supremacy of the visual that may be read without verbal direction-support. In this way *Metelitsa* simultaneously

¹⁷⁶ In his article, Harley Balzer parallels the shift in the public perception of the New Russians to the evolution of their images purveyed by the *World of the New Russians*, illustrating his argument with several images. One of the boxes depicts New Russians playing tennis (33).

¹⁷⁷ As Vladimir Alexandrov demonstrates in his article "Tostoy and Tennis," Tolstoi's negative perception of tennis had changed by the late 1890s, when he became a passionate tennis player.

discredits the traditional authority embodied in Tolstoi's narrative voice and the Soviet authority of the prohibition against visual enhancement. When words and pictures actually harmonize, their collaboration implies ironic juxtaposition (e.g., the one-panel page showing Anna's labor presided over by an insidious doctor reminiscent of Sigmund Freud, who relieves her sufferings with morphine injections [p. 51]).

The deliberate misuse of quotes subtly supports this visual-cum-verbal hooliganism. For instance, the authors misattribute the epigraph "Vengeance is mine. I will repay" to a nineteenth-century poet, Aleksandr Pushkin (1799-1837), whose significance for Russian culture arguably exceeds Tolstoi's. For the Soviet people, Pushkin's poems, known by heart, fulfilled the function of the Biblical text. Therefore, a Biblical verse may legitimately be ascribed to Pushkin within the "World of the New Russians," where idolatry of such cultural icons makes them interchangeable. The ostensibly "innocent" attempt to provide the customer, possibly a foreigner, with an English translation contributes to the playful mood of the comic book. The presence of the translation and simultaneously its inaccuracy, omission (p. 38, 39), or intentional distortion (p. 6) allow one to conclude that either adequate translation was not the authors' priority, or the English language was used exclusively as an additional flirtatious stroke. Moreover, several commentaries inscribed in the graphic novel target the reader familiar with both languages. For example, the panel depicting the car radio displays a line from a famous Rolling Stones' song, "I can't get no satisfaction!" with a Russian version of it: "Kak by tebe povezlo, moei neveste!" (How lucky you'd be, my bride!) The Russian line does not translate, but comments on the consequences of perpetual male dissatisfaction, opening it up to folk laughter, as defined by Bakhtin.

Within her emphasis on visual reading, Metelitsa avoids excessive detailing of the characters' faces, instead relying on the straight and curved lines of eyebrows, mouth, and eyes

for expressions and inviting the reader to interpret these lines' symbolic meaning through their continual repetition. The external resemblance of the comic book characters to renowned actors likewise equates the process of seeing with recognizing/reading faces. In order to avoid confusion, the graphic novel opens with the "reference list of personages," which enables us to correlate the visual image with Tolstoi's characters (p. 4-5).¹⁷⁸

The bifocal title *Анна Каренина* by *Leo Tolstoy* highlights the parodic nature of the adaptation. By incorporating the author's name into the adaptation's title, Metelitsa underscores her intention to re-examine the mythological reputation of the text and its creator rather than the text itself. Whereas the 1990s trend of including the author's name in the titles of cinematic adaptations carried with it the assumption of being sanctioned "as authoritative, faithful to the author because of their very presence within it" (Cartmell 26), Metelitsa openly claims her confrontation with the myth and its mediator, Lev Tolstoi. The use of different alphabets (Cyrillic and Latin) within the same title underlines the rift between the heroine's afterlife and her creator's intentions. As though an *enfant terrible*, Anna escapes the novel from which she emanates, reappears on the pages of the comic book, and finds herself involved in a new myth-generating text. In Bazin's words, she "acquires a greater autonomy, which might in certain cases lead as far as quasi-transcendence of the work" (23).¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Hardly superfluous, the offered assistance helps the reader to remember that a blue bunny (!) substitutes for Anna's son, and a pink one for Anna's daughter.

¹⁷⁹ Metelitsa's treatment of Anna reminds one of Woody Allen's short story "The Kugelmass Episode" (1975), which eliminates the boundary between fiction and life. Emma Bovary satisfies the sexual desires of today's Professor of English, who, thanks to a magician, enters the pages of the French novel (cleverly, before Rodolphe's appearance). The heroine's prolonged stay in New York turns out to be a less than pleasurable experience for the protagonist.

Simultaneously, the parodic essence of comics (if one accepts this thesis) may also result in offering an existing text anew to an ever-growing global cultural discourse.¹⁸⁰ For example, the 2000 volume of *Drawn and Quarterly* introduces the witty comic *Crime and Punishment!* by Robert Sikoryak. Inspired by Fedor Dostoevskii's novel *Crime and Punishment* (1866), and particularly by its protagonist's (Rodion Raskolnikov's) internal torments, the cartoonist cleverly revisualizes the Russian plot by means of the American classic *Batman* comics. Drawn in the authentic 1940s comic technique, the Superhero's costume so eloquently exteriorizes Raskol'nikov's moral dilemma that one has no cause to doubt the unnaturalness of this artistic amalgam. Although the presence of Dostoevskii's portrait in the upper right corner of the cover page might suggest his dominant role in the work, Sikoryak treats the stories of Batman and Raskol'nikov so even-handedly that he blurs the line between the parodizing and parodied narrative. Whereas such a perfect conjunction of two mythical texts (literary and comic) proves that comics is an integral language, the example of *Anna Karenina* by *Leo Tolstoy* supports a contradictory thesis—that comics represents a partnership of separate constituents.

In disregarding the inviolability of the nineteenth-century novel authored by such a universally-acknowledged literary colossus as Lev Tolstoi (rigorously guarded by Soviet official discourse and Russia's collective consciousness), and in eliminating the restrictions traditionally observed during the adaptation of such classics, Metelitsa exposes the verbal 'highbrow' original to modern popular culture's influence. As a result, the concluding panel of the comic book—a

¹⁸⁰ In his article "Weird Signs. Comics as Means of Parody," Ole Frahm suggests reading comics as a parody on the referentiality of signs. He writes: "The parody of comics, therefore, is to be found in the constellation of, on the one hand, the stabilising of a common object of reference of the signs and, on the other hand, its destabilising character because of the material heterogeneousness of the signs" (Magnussen 189).

mouse's body cut in half on the track—reanimates a Soviet-era anecdote, and thus satirizes the novelistic tragic dénouement in a printed format: graphic novel (Figure 49).

At the same time, the mechanisms of myth production that operate within mass culture revive the imaginary Anna as a myth and juxtapose her figure with the non-imaginary vocalists Viktor Tsoi (Kino) and Kurt Cobain (Nirvana) (Figure 50). The shared fate of a premature end unites and equates populism's favorite rebels. The comic book emphasizes Anna's independent existence in the collective consciousness and her transformation into a cult figure, a martyr unjustly murdered by her creator. The visuals underscore what some readers and critics even before the New Russians era have regarded as Tolstoi's punishing function in Anna's suicide: she throws herself under the train named "Lev Tolstoy" (p. 75), and graffiti brand him a "bloody killer" (Figure 8).

A spirit of playfulness pervades the graphic novel *Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy*. The book employs a wide range of means to assist readers in switching to an unusual reality, and transforming them into players whose activity bridges the gaps of the postmodernist adaptation. By depicting the race scene as a computer game, the graphic novel *Anna Karenina* visualizes and brings to the fore, first, the connection between the old- and new-era games, and second, the one between comics and a game (Figure 51).¹⁸¹ One of the main markers signalling the work as game is the presence in the graphic novel of easily identifiable personages, mostly actors hidden behind their cinematic doubles (e.g., the brief appearance of Viacheslav Tikhonov from Tat'iana Lioznova's TV series *Seventeen Moments of Spring* [Semnadsat' mgnovenii vesny 1973] and Bruce Willis in Michael Bay's *Armageddon* [1998]). The degree of anticipated familiarity varies: Count Vronskii acquires the appearance of John Travolta as Vincent Vega; Anna, to an extent,

¹⁸¹ The ninth part of the graphic narrative is devoted exclusively to this episode, and this fact transforms it into the climactic moment of the comic book.

recalls Sophie Marceau, who portrays the heroine in Rose's 1997 film, and Anna Karine (!), Jean-Luc Godard's wife and actress; Karenin, in his sinister, impenetrable glasses, is reminiscent of party bureaucrats.¹⁸²

Interestingly, the features of these visualized characters are capable of mutation. For instance, Vronskii is reincarnated as Tarzan on the Italian seashore [p. 58], and as Captain Pronin—the protagonist of the Thaw-era animation film *Spy Passions*—at the train station leaving for the Serbian war (p. 81). Yet the characters continually remain recognizable. The graphic novel does not simply reproduce the famous actors (masks) but actually replays their popular characters while adjusting their behaviors to Tolstoi's characterizations. For example, the ball scene evokes Vincent's passion for dance (p.19), which is central to John Badham's film *Saturday Night Fever* (1977), which, in its turn, relies on John Travolta's professional skills as a dancer.

The game-oriented strategies of the new adaptation justify linking the graphic novel to *lubok* (chap) literature.¹⁸³ In his article on the artistic nature of Russian folk pictures, Iurii Lotman highlights the similarity between the theatrical audience and *lubok's* "spectators." These spectators perceive the pages as though it were a theatrical act, and imitate the theatrical audience in constructing a united space with the actors on the stage. The non-standard ways of arranging the pictures within the page (frequently not in a linear sequence of simultaneity) and the juxtaposition of textual and pictorial material invite certain reactions on the part of the readers: they are called on to act rather than simply view. Unlike book illustrations, the *lubok's* visuals

¹⁸² In its interpretation of Karenin, the graphic novel follows Zarkhi's cinematic version, which conceives of him as an automaton, deprived of human feelings.

¹⁸³ Originating in the seventeenth century as entertainment for the upper classes, this literature contained popular prints of a crude character accompanied by a text. In the nineteenth century it was targeted mainly at lower class readers. In her book *Fol'klor. Lubok. Ekran*, Neia Zorkaia discusses at length the interconnection between *lubok* and modern visual culture.

presuppose an active audience's participation in the 'spectacle.' In a manner comparable to Socialist Realism as opposed to Sots-art, they intend to switch the readers from the passive mode of observing to the active mode of role-playing.

This feature forms the basis of perception in comic books, and partly explains the special appeal of the genre to various audiences. It may also explain the prohibition of the genre in the Soviet era, when official discourse privileged distanced observation of a spectacle rather than direct involvement in it. The former stance was especially imposed on adult audiences, since the state sought to eliminate all *balaganshchina* (cheap-thrill entertainment for masses) as a sign of ignorance and capitalism. By contrast, the World of the New Russians does not hesitate to enter the "public square," precisely because it permits carnivalesque upside-downs, and only there may rogues tell the truth through jokes.

For its rogue's costume, the World of the New Russians chooses the traditional forms of folk art, which allow for a playful combination of Old Russian traditions and a new social group of *nouveaux riches*. The publisher's choice of the comic book as the adaptation-medium is hardly accidental. First, though non-existent as a genre in the Soviet era, this visual-cum-verbal genre may trace its antecedents to such early cultural phenomena as the Russian *lubok*, and thus claim national cultural legitimacy. Moreover, like the Gzhel' and Palekh items in the World of the New Russians store on the Arbat in Moscow, a "tongue-in-cheek emporium" (Goscilo 8), the choice of a revered nineteenth-century literary text as the "model" for a contemporary revision authenticates the New Russian enterprise of inscribing its identity in the "museum" of Russian culture. Second, precisely because for a long time they have been perceived as the quintessence of illiteracy, or literary bad taste, comics are uniquely suited for the purpose of appropriating one of the 'sacred objects' enshrined within the Russian cultural legacy. Not incidentally, a comic

version of Pushkin's *Pikovaia dama* (The Queen of Spades, 1833) became the next publication on the agenda of Grigorii Bal'tser's (owner of the World of the New Russians) enterprise.

The invitation to laugh at a new class that appeared in a previously supposedly classless society is doubly deceptive. First of all, it is laughter at oneself. The tears shed on the pages do not contradict this laughter, since their over-abundance turns the tragedy back on itself and allows it to perish through its own devices. "Oneself" may refer to the whole nation, which channels its inability to reconcile itself to today's financial and spiritual discrepancies into an emotional investment in the New Russian identity—an investment that perversely consoles the masses as much as did their earlier investment in Russia's sacred literary heritage. It may also refer to the expanding group of prosperous politicians, business(wo)men, and artists, to which the author and publisher of the graphic novel belong—both of them evidently not only aware of the protective qualities of self-irony, but also committed to their 'missionary' role in reshaping Russian culture by opening it up for new Western trends and incorporation into the stream of global culture. While describing Bal'tser's personality, Helena Goscilo observes that his "self-reflexive humor and far-roaming imagination, so typical of postmodernism, in no way impinge on his earnest dedication to immortalizing New Russians' contribution to a momentous period in the nation's history" (9).

Although dissociating themselves from the author-murderer and thwarting the tragic pathos of the theme of female adultery, the creators of the graphic novel *Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy* exploit the fame of the literary colossus and his oeuvre to justify the legitimacy of the *nouveaux riches*' lifestyle. The very fact of such appropriation testifies to the novel's mythological status. Furthermore, Metelitsa's subversive adaptation lays bare the core elements of the *Anna Karenina* cultural myth—namely, Lev Tolstoi's persona as an inextricable part of the

narrative, the Anna-Vronskii-Karenin triangle as its dominant, the luxurious/exotic setting of Anna and Vronskii's affair, the train as a force advancing Anna's tragic fate, and the martyrdom of an adulteress. At the same time, the graphic novel spotlights the influence of cinema in shaping and strengthening this myth as the prevalent narrative of forbidden/chivalric/adulterous love.

In conclusion, designed and executed as a museum piece intended for a specific place within a new epoch by irreverently adapting one of the nation's most cherished artifacts, Metelitsa's *Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy* disqualifies itself as a popular rendition of the novel, thus going against the grain of most adaptations that are undertaken with the hope of reaching "best-seller" status.

5.0 CODA

In contrast to Katia Metelitsa's irreverent adaptation undertaken with the hope of shaking loose from the cultural icon, cinematic adaptations of Tolstoi's *Anna Karenina* disclose the directors' intent to support rather than to subvert the novel's elevated status, as well as the fame of its creator. Despite their different degrees of fidelity to his text, these films suggest the wise wife's decision to represent herself as loyal to her spouse because only by maintaining this bond (however illusory) can she guarantee her security in a marriage-oriented society. Similarly, filmmakers feed on Tolstoi's popularity, recognizing that a manifest link with a canonical text promises a successful reception by audiences and consequently financial rewards. Whereas Metelitsa's graphic novel is like an adulteress with conscience, declaring her rupture with the unloved husband and thus ostracizing herself, celluloid adaptations are reminiscent of libertines following the double standard and cleverly combining their conjugal duties with infidelity. However, this "frivolous" comparison—though legitimate if read in terms of the film versions' dependence on the novel as their sole source—fades if Tolstoi's novel and its adaptations are perceived as manifestations of *Anna Karenina* as a multifaceted cultural construct. This is the approach I advocate in my dissertation.

Within such a framework, the adaptation functions as a mechanism that allows for reinterpreting an existing text, while offering it anew to an ever-growing global cultural discourse and simultaneously mirroring processes of appropriation that are constantly evolving

in world cinema and culture. Interpreted as more than representations of Tolstoi's novel, but as vehicles for recycling an old story of adulterous love and versions of the mythic prototype, the *Anna Karenina* films reveal two overarching tendencies in their attempts to transpose the nineteenth-century text to the screen—tendencies they share independently of their production date, country of production, and film format. While some, such as Edmund Goulding's (1927) and David Blair's (2001), privilege the myth of adultery in favor of the novel, others, such as Julien Duvivier's (1947) and Aleksandr Zarkhi's (1967), bring the novel of adultery to the fore and edge out the underlying myth. Yet even versions deeply rooted in the literary source are influenced by a myth-oriented perspective. For example, all films discussed in my dissertation fail to include a description of Anna and Vronskii's pseudo-marital life on his estate. In line with Tolstoi's conception of adulterous love as a false basis for family bliss, this stage in the affair serves as a litmus test, revealing the lovers' essential inability to form a harmonious family unit. Though crucial for the development of a novel grounded in the "family idea," representation of Anna and Vronskii's life in the country interferes with the trajectory of a tragic love stronger than death—a myth that fundamentally rejects the possibility of lovers' union in the empirical world and emphasizes the romantic perfection of doomed lovers.

Despite each director's aspiration to differentiate his interpretation from preceding versions, and thus to lay claim to an original reading of Tolstoi's novel, all follow the key stages of the adultery myth and in varying degrees eliminate those elements from the literary text that do not pertain to the adultery plot. While maneuvering between myth and novel—the Scylla and Charybdis of *Anna Karenina* adaptations—filmmakers experience an additional "anxiety of

influence,” as formulated by Harold Bloom.¹⁸⁴ The most important component in the complex tangle of various influences is the power of cinematic antecedents.

Unlike the first adaptations, later screen versions are inevitably derived from earlier films, and occasionally such interaction occurs independently of the novel. Except for Goulding’s *Love*, most adaptations of Tolstoi’s novel simultaneously disguise and refer to their visual sources of anxiety in their very titles. In an attempt to signal the “authenticity” of his adaptation at the outset and to disavow any connection with his precursors, Bernard Rose incorporates the writer’s name in the film’s title, *Leo Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina* (1997). However, in doing so, Rose also obscures the strong influence of Clarence Brown’s version (1935) on his adaptation.

National cinematic conventions and traditions may also be discerned in filmmakers’ visions and affect their choices. For instance, British versions consistently undermine Karenin’s sinister and one-sided role as a cuckolded husband by reproducing scenes from the 1947 film by Duvivier, which show his suffering. In a similar vein, Russian adaptations reiterate Anna’s image as a victim of the hypocritical mores governing the nineteenth-century aristocracy, while American films incessantly privilege the exotic appeal of Anna and Vronskii’s affair—specifically, its “Russianness.” Moreover, the novels of adultery obliquely associated with Tolstoi’s, such as Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* and Fontane’s *Effi Briest*, and their screen adaptations constitute an additional source of anxiety for filmmakers. For instance, Vronskii’s “romantically” reckless appearance under the Karenins’ windows when he summons Anna

¹⁸⁴ Developing Bloom’s idea, Mikhail Iampol'skii in his intriguing analysis of D.W.Griffith’s films suggests that there are always two sources: “One, the more pertinent for the successor’s text, is displaced and becomes the object of aggression. The second, less pertinent for the artist, since the connection with it lacks profundity, shifts the first text-precursor to the level of a text-displacer. The connection with the first text is disguised by the declaration of connection to the second, safe, text” (100, my translation).

outside, as well as their passionate encounters in the woods—episodes introduced by Blair in his 2001 film—originate in Flaubert’s text rather than Tolstoi’s (Figure 37).

Not only do these cinematic factors contribute to the loss of the novel’s unequivocal authority as a source for the films, they also facilitate today’s resuscitation of the adultery myth, which previously had been elaborated in the form of high-culture literature and germinated the *Anna Karenina* myth. On the one hand, the freedom with which filmmakers handle the allegedly well-known novel reveals the discrepancy between the literary text and its idea in the collective unconscious; on the other hand, it indicates that visual embodiments of *Anna Karenina* have become more authoritative in popular awareness than the novel itself. If this is the case, does it mean that a single definitive *Anna Karenina* no longer exists? To answer this question, one must step outside the film and embrace numerous reincarnations of Tolstoi’s novel across various cultural strata—a logical conclusion for the study of cinematic adaptations as mediators that powerfully promote the proliferation of the immemorial narrative of the faithless spouse.

Even a perfunctory glance at the numerous contemporary responses to the novel discovers both the “emptiness” of *Anna Karenina* as a linguistic sign and its “fullness” as a mythical signifier. The mythical concept identified with the character’s name distorts, or “outdistances,” in Roland Barthes’s terms, the initial “meaning” of Anna as a product of Tolstoi’s imagination and creates from an individualized heroine an emblem applicable to various phenomena. According to Barthes,

What must always be remembered is that myth is a double system; there occurs in it a sort of ubiquity: its point of departure is constituted by the arrival of a meaning. [...] the signification of the myth is constituted by a sort of constantly moving turnstile which presents alternately the meaning of the signifier and its form, a language-object and a

metalanguage, a purely signifying and a purely imagining consciousness. This alternation is, so to speak, gathered up in the concept, which uses it like an ambiguous signifier, at once intellectual and imaginary, arbitrary and natural. (109)

Frequently employed as a marketing device in mass media, references to *Anna Karenina* activate two components of the heroine's image imprinted in the "collective memory": her overwhelmingly romantic nature and her agency—her ability to make crucial choices that alter the course of her life. In tune with the selling strategies that are supposed to encourage rather than discourage a potential consumer, both visions of Anna are stripped of tragic or prosaic connotations intrinsic to her literary prototype. Moreover, these two representations of Anna as a romantic and as a strong woman never collide within the same context, thus indicating the incompatibility of the images and their affiliation with different cultural paradigms.

For instance, one of the "Editor-Picks" page in a popular magazine titled *Lucky* emphasizes "an ultra-romantic, *Anna Karenina* mood" that emanates from the clothing and accessories on display, described as "richly embellished Russian-inspired items" (66). As is apparent from the layout of the page, foregrounding the novel's title, its designers are resorting to the magic of the key words associated with the *Anna Karenina* myth—*rich*, *romantic*, and her name—to advertise their goods. At the same time, the website for *Anthropologie*, an upscale vendor of high-fashion clothing and home furnishings, simply relies on the heroine's surname, reduced to an adjective, as the best signifier for a piece of merchandise. The "karenina sweater," pink in color and transparent in texture, is described as "fluttery, open knit pointelle in a hue favored by romantic heroines." What is revealing in this reference to Tolstoi's adulteress is not so much the elusive link between Anna and a "seductively" romantic blouse, but that she is offered as a representative of all romantic heroines.

On the other hand, a disorienting blurb on the dust cover of Elizabeth Frank's 2004 novel, *Cheat and Charmer*, appeals to Anna as the decision maker. Frank's female protagonist—the loyal wife of a Hollywood playwright who continually cheats on her—is preposterously likened to Tolstoi's heroine: "Like Anna Karenina, Dinah must face the consequences of her choices and her needs." This particular invocation of the name of the famed Russian adulteress establishes the link between the two women based not on their sexual behavior, but rather on the necessity of taking responsibility for one's actions.

No matter how strange this shift in a collective idea of Anna might seem, it is gaining weight, as is evident from other sources. For instance, a recent article in *The New York Times* by Alessandra Stanley, discussing the characters of a "chick" television series, fleetingly defines Anna as a heroine "fac[ing] tough decisions (solitude or the train tracks)." Though the meaning of such possibly ironic remarks remains unclear, the very possibility of these comparisons attests to the authoritative status ascribed to Tolstoi's protagonist as occupying a particular niche in the mass unconscious. It seems that current American culture, preoccupied with the notion of making choices, reconceptualizes Anna the adulteress, activating meanings consonant with the culture's "repertoire" and thus creating Anna the self-asserting woman.

At the same time, Tolstoi's novel continues to function as the all-encompassing narrative of adultery, perpetuating in various cultural strata a familiar myth of tragic and forbidden love. In the Pulitzer prize-winning play *Anna in the Tropics* by Nilo Cruz (2002), it acts as a measuring stick and a catalyst for the events at a cigar factory. Designed to entertain the workers engaged in monotonous activity, the reading of excerpts from *Anna Karenina* inspires one of them, Conchita, to begin an adulterous relationship with a lector, but only to win her husband back. Although the "re-reading of *Anna Karenina* in *Anna in the Tropics* is only slightly relevant to

Tolstoy's novel," as Amy Mandelker justly observes in her review of the play (116), the novel forms the explicit subtext of the play's content. Thus, *Anna Karenina* is the matrix of passionate adultery.

In like fashion, *Anna Karenina* recently has invaded the operatic stage. An interview with the composer of the eponymous opera, David Carlson, published in the February 2007 issue of *Opera News*, unveils his conscientious orientation toward the novel. Not only does he employ a classical nineteenth-century orchestra, except for a vibraphone in the "bad-omen" scene, but he also incorporates a variation of the Russian *Tsar's Hymn* as the fate motif in the opera, with Tchaikovsky in mind. Just as Carlson aspires to recreate the temporal and geographical authenticity of Tolstoy's story in his music, so does the librettist Colin Graham attempt to retain the Anna-Levin parallel, concluding the opera with Levin's epiphany. At the same time, in tune with the majority of cinematic adapters, Carlson distinguishes operatic (emotional) from non-operatic (philosophical) aspects of the novel, defining the latter as not essential to the plot (McKinnon 30). However, one can adequately interpret such departures only after listening to the opera, which premieres only at the end of April 2007.

If it had been released, the long-awaited television adaptation of *Anna Karenina* by Sergei Solov'ev might also have served as proof of the text's cultural omnipresence and viability. Its production, like other adaptations of classical literature in today's Russia, could have pursued the goal either of reaffirming national loyalty to the values of the past or manifesting the new generation's attempt at separating itself from the past. The fact that in May 2006 Solov'ev exhibited to Muscovites the nineteenth-century objects and clothing used in the film suggests that the project has been undertaken with the hope of restoring the literary text in all its richness and historical specificity. Luckily, the expansive format of a television series permits such

fidelity to the novel. That Solov'ev's version is novel-oriented is confirmed by the director's 1998 article in *Iskusstvo kino*. In contrast to Metelitsa's comics-format adaptation, which playfully revises the story of Anna's adultery, Lev Nikolaev's 2001 novel *Anna Karenina*, which soberly "modernizes" the setting of Tolstoi's novel, or Oleg Shishkin's 2002 irreverent play, *Anna Karenina II*, which portrays Anna alive though as an invalid, Solov'ev film intends to return to the verbal text its status of a sacrosanct artifact enshrined in Russian and world culture.

Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "big time," which liberates a text from its epoch, interprets the multiplicity of valences inscribed in the text, and finally allows it to overcome the non-dialogical existence of the meanings that are locked inside it provides a handy prism through which to view the longevity of Tolstoi's *Anna Karenina*. Viewed as a "magisterial" work by a colossus of high culture, today the novel serves as "common coin," cited in such unexpected places as an article in a pharmacological journal about the effects of recreational drugs, which opens with Tolstoi's famous maxim about unhappy families (Parrott 3) and the confession of the designer of an elegant new bar in Grand Central Terminal that her creativity was inspired by "Anna Karenina and train stations and steam and illicit meetings" (Ramirez 2). Many believe that this remarkable diffusion of *Anna Karenina* stems from the television megastar Oprah Winfrey's promotion of a new translation of the novel by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky in 2004. In fact, this effect may more convincingly be attributed to another fairy godmother—cinema, which has been transforming Tolstoi's *Anna Karenina* into a major cultural myth for almost a century. Aleksandr Sokurov, the critically acclaimed director of *The Russian Ark* (2003), has said that he "does not know a film, which is worth interrupting the reading of *Anna Karenina*" (103), a statement that undermines the power of cinema but that ultimately

springs from the mythical reputation of the text it has helped to elevate to that status: *Anna Karenina*.

APPENDIX

ILLUSTRATIONS



Fig. 1

1914

Anna's nightmare



Fig. 2

1918

Anna's labor



Fig. 3

1918

Anna's last ride



Fig. 4

1927

Mother-son kiss



Fig. 5

1927

Garbo unveiling her face



Fig. 6

1927

Anna's secret meeting
with her son



Fig. 7

1927

Vronskii
caressing Serezha



Fig. 9

1927

Lovers' first encounter



Fig. 10

1935

“Russian” overture



Fig. 11

1935

Anna’s face appearing
from the train’s steam



Fig. 12

1935

Anna’s visit to her son



Fig. 13

1935

Epilogue



Fig. 14

1935

Captured Anna

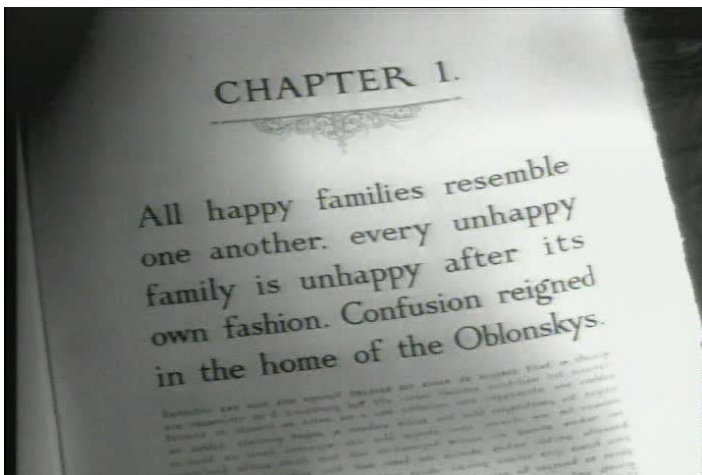


Fig. 15

1947

Opening shot



Fig. 17

1947

Resting lovers



Fig. 19

1947

Karenin's gesture



Fig. 20

1947

Anna's suicide



Fig. 21

1967

Lovers' first meeting



Fig. 22

1967

Consummation of
affair



Fig. 23

1967

Anna at the opera



Fig. 24

1967

The races



Fig. 25

1967

The races

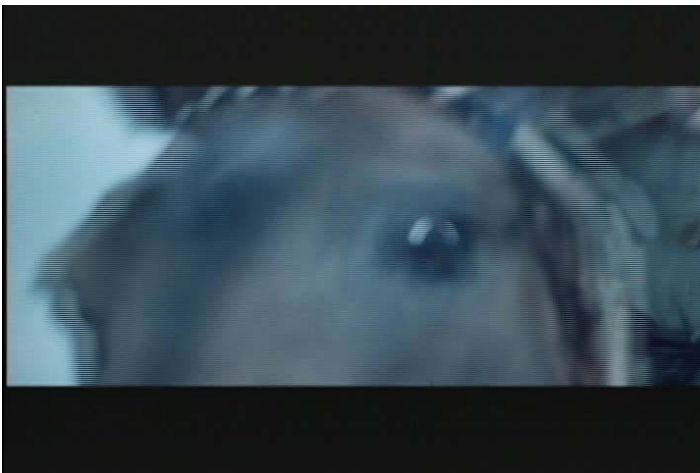


Fig. 26

1967

The races



Fig. 27

1967
Anna's secret meeting
with Serezha



Fig. 28

1967
Serezha's enfilade



Fig. 29

1967
Anna's suicide



Fig. 30

1997

Anna and Stiva on their way to his house in Moscow



Fig. 31

1997

Moscow ball



Fig. 32

1997

Kitty and Levin's wedding



Fig. 33

1997

Vronskii rescuing Anna



Fig. 34

1997

Before Anna's suicide

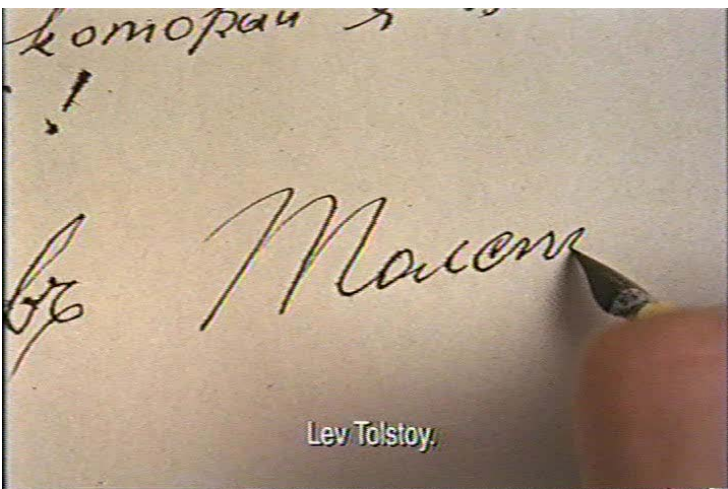


Fig. 35

1997

Concluding shot



Fig.36

2001

Egyptian opium



Fig. 37

2001

Wild encounters in the woods



Fig. 38

2001

Karenin reading love letters



Fig. 39

2001

Anna's departure for Italy



Fig. 40

2001

Italy



Fig. 41

2001

Train as a monstrous force



Fig. 42

2001

Film's closure: Kitty
and Levin embracing

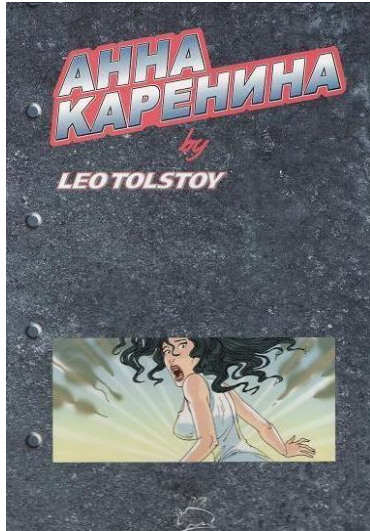


Fig. 43



Fig. 44



Fig. 45



Fig.46



Fig. 47

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